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Sylvia Beach and women's scholarly communities under Occupation: The diary of Madeleine Blaess

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Abstract

In 1939 Madeleine Blaess, a languages graduate, left her home in England for Paris to begin doctoral research at the Sorbonne. Unable to escape Paris before the German invasion in spring 1940, she was trapped in France for the duration of the war. The letters she wrote to her parents during the Phoney War, and the diary she began in October 1940 and continued until after the Liberation, are a fascinating account of her life as a postgraduate scholar in wartime. Through these written traces we glimpse women-run social and intellectual communities and businesses to which many women students turned for scholarly and moral support and, occasionally, practical and financial succour. This article draws on Madeleine's letters and diary to describe and evaluate the importance of these extra-curricular networks in supporting women students during wartime with a particular focus on the bookshop and library Shakespeare and Company, run by Sylvia Beach.

Keywords

Sylvia Beach, diary, education, life-writing, Occupation, Paris, women

Madeleine Blaess graduated with a first-class honours degree in French from the University of Leeds in July 1939 and left for Paris to take up the offer of a place at the Sorbonne to study for a doctorate in November of the same year. In hindsight the decision to go to France in spite of the September declaration of war on Germany was ill-advised. The confidence of both the British and the French on both sides of the Channel

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that Hitler's bluster would amount to nothing proved to be spectacularly misplaced. The Phoney War stand-off ended in May 1940, but as late as 1 June Madeleine was still only planning a temporary departure for the summer months, largely because of the confidence of her tutors at the Sorbonne – mostly Great War veterans – that the Allies would stand firm against the Germans in the north. Haste had not been the watchword as she nonchalantly shopped for souvenirs to take home in the first weeks of June. Before she could take the boat-train she had booked, the German army was at the gates of Paris and Madeleine joined the many thousands of Parisians fleeing the capital for the south. It would be two months before she could return to Paris and five years before she could finally return home to her parents in York. Between October 1940 and September 1944, she diligently kept a diary which recorded the detail of almost every day she lived under Occupation. The diary is a unique and rare document on several counts. The comprehensiveness of its coverage of the period, coupled with the forensic detail of entries foregrounding everyday civilian life largely remote from the military and political context, is not typical of published diaries from this period. The diary is also rare because it was written by a British student at large in civilian France. Most British students studying in France had managed to leave, and British and Commonwealth subjects who had not managed to escape in time were interned. Madeleine's case was atypical. Even though she had been raised and educated in Britain and her mother tongue was English, she had French identity papers because she had been born in France in 1918. She could therefore pass for French with the added security of extended family living in the Paris suburbs to vouch for her.

The Occupation made Madeleine's academic ambitions much more difficult to achieve. Hardship worsened over the four years, but from the beginning the challenges were significant. Money was an issue, as it was for many students who could no longer rely on financial support from their families. Madeleine could not access her grant and her bank account had been frozen. The part-time teaching hours she had worked to supplement her bursary were no longer offered. Like most casual teaching work at the university, it had been cancelled. Madeleine's own learning had already been disrupted during the *drôle de guerre* when she found that the supervisor she had hoped to have for her thesis had been conscripted. She settled for medievalist Gustave Cohen, but only months later he was forced out of the Sorbonne along with the rest of the Jewish professoriat and he emigrated to the United States. The elderly academics who had replaced their conscripted younger colleagues also had to watch their step. Vichy replaced the Sorbonne's senior administrators with reliable allies like Jérôme Carpocino who replaced Gustave Roussy as the Rector of the University of Paris in 1940 and who connived with the sacking of teaching staff deemed 'unsuitable' because they were a bad 'fit' with the university's new ethos. Teaching staff were frequently sacked or suspended. Reports in the resistance bulletin *Université libre* regularly described multiple incidences of harassment and persecution, and on occasion claims of murder.¹ The instability and uncertainty Madeleine experienced with her studies continued throughout the Occupation. Joseph Vendryès, her subsequent supervisor and Welsh language instructor, was arrested on several occasions and finally sacked in spring 1944. There was no continuity or stability in Madeleine's social life either. Like many international students, she was part of a tight social group comprising Americans, Canadians and

Australians, only for this group to dissolve in spring 1940 when many fled to the south-west and onwards to England.

It would be presumptuous to attribute to feminism the manifest determination of Madeleine and the women scholars in her entourage to carry on their studies in any explicit sense. Young women of university age were not mobilizing around equality issues in any organized way in the late 1930s. Madeleine mentions being caricatured as a suffragette by men for having her own opinions and for requesting access to restricted archives, but there is no sign anywhere in her writing that she has any knowledge about, let alone interest in, feminism. Madeleine and the inter-war generation did entertain hopes and ambitions encompassing traditional womanly 'duties' of wife and mother, but in addition they had hopes for educational and professional achievement, and in Madeleine's case social mobility. These young inter-war women who had internalized the achievements of first-wave feminism were, however, as we shall see, helped by older women who had been activists and who had gone on to study, teach and/or develop professional and altruistic connections to the scholarly community in Paris in which women students were more numerous after the First World War.

The extra-curricular all-female student study circles and social groups created by the first women scholars at Oxbridge to provide emotional and intellectual support to women students are evoked by Jill Lamberton (2007). These spaces took numerous forms. Tea parties, says Lamberton, appeared to be public displays of 'appropriate femininity' but in private were 'spaces where [women] found intellectual recognition and community' (Lamberton, 2007: 281). All-female debating societies were places to practise public speaking in a supportive environment for women unused to articulating their opinions (2007: 288). 'Literary societies, political clubs and collaborative study groups' took place both off and on campus and comprised 'networks of supportive friends who assumed roles as teachers, providing examples of successful intellectual identity performances and exposing each other to the *process* of knowledge acquisition' (2007: 296).

Carole Lécuyer describes how similar communities took root in Paris from the turn of the century, when associations and clubs were set up by women to provide financial and moral support to students. In 1898 British and American students set up Le Club de la rue de Chevreuse. In 1901 L'Association des étudiantes de Paris was set up under the patronage of Marguerite Durand (Lécuyer, 1996b). Governed by three principles – 'un principe moral de solidarité, un principe intellectuel d'ouverture d'esprit et d'échange et un principe "d'aide matérielle"' – these groups played an important part in building the students' confidence in their abilities and introducing them to 'personnalités intellectuelles' at seminars where they could also present their own work (Lécuyer, 1996b). A 1926 interview, 'Un thé chez les étudiantes parisiennes', carried out by Marguerite d'Escola and transcribed by Lécuyer, gives insight into the difficulties facing women students and 'l'énergie et la gaieté des vies courageuses' with which they faced them. The students enthusiastically described the accommodation arrangements of their 'hospitnière maison' 'dont la création et l'organisation sont dues à la plus généreuse initiative', the subsidized 'restaurants corporatifs' which solved 'victorieusement' 'le problème de la vie chère' and the private lessons 'qu'elles donnent bravement en dehors des heures réservées à leur travail personnel . . . à couvrir leurs frais d'études ou d'examens sans imposer à leurs familles des charges trop lourdes' (Lécuyer, 1996b).

By the mid 1920s, US and UK universities had set up residential colleges in Paris to cater for larger numbers of students coming from abroad, encouraged by the University of Paris, which, to generate badly needed revenue, offered bespoke short courses (e.g. American Civilization) in the wake of the Great War. Numbers grew because study abroad and international cooperation around education – termed ‘the international mind’ – were seen as a priority by the League of Nations for safeguarding future peace. Entirely connected with the ethos of the ‘international mind’ was the University of Paris’s Cité universitaire project, a new campus development comprising colleges funded and run by countries across the world. The Belgium ‘maison’ was the first to be inaugurated in 1924, followed by the Canadian one in 1925. The United States ‘house’ was inaugurated in 1930 and Britain’s came later in 1937. Students like Madeleine Blaess, who had benefited as day students from the massive provincial expansion of higher education, which had enabled many more of the lower-middle class to go to university, now had a route to study abroad, aided also by the favourable cultural and political disposition towards international reconciliation and understanding through education. The international community of student women in Paris thus began to thrive in the inter-war period.

Playing a key part in supporting these women students were American expatriate women booksellers, librarians and small independent publishers described by Mary Niles Maack as ‘bookwomen’, who were ‘actively engaged in the public sphere where they created new spaces that were open and welcoming to women readers’. One of these spaces was the American library run by American Countess Clara de Chambrun, a Shakespearean scholar with a doctorate from the Sorbonne who was well disposed to students of English whom she supported through their examinations (Maack, 2005: 493, 506). American philanthropist Grace Whitney funded the reconstruction of the Foyer internationale des Étudiantes, a residence for women students which was gifted to the University of Paris upon her death. It had been a fixture in Paris since its inauguration during the *belle époque*. In 1921 the *New York Times* described it as an exquisite space where ‘girls sit at their little desks, studying and occasionally exchanging greetings with other members of the hostel’ and where students could rent a cheap room with breakfast, baths, heat and lighting included and eat a ‘substantial meal’ at the cafeteria on the top floor for ‘three or four francs’ (Brody, 1921). During the Occupation, Sarah Watson, another American expatriate, determinedly kept the Foyer open.

Both Sarah Watson and Chambrun were prominent personalities linked through their altruistic yet commercially self-sustaining ventures with the women student community throughout the inter-war period. The links that their friend and fellow expatriate, the bookseller and publisher Sylvia Beach, had with the student community are far less well-known. Indeed, Beach, the publisher of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in 1922 and a central enabler of the transatlantic modernist literary avant-garde which she effectively ran from her bookshop Shakespeare and Company, was a mentor and personal friend to many of her student clients who looked to her for moral, intellectual and financial support. That such a high-profile cultural figure, feted and patronized (and financially supported through the economic crisis of the 1920s) by literary luminaries of the epoch, was so committed to her student entourage is interesting and, as we shall see, a logical continuation of Beach’s feminist activism of the inter-war, again little of which is known.

English-speaking international students were an important client base for Beach and she robustly promoted the shop and lending library in advertisements taken out in university and student publications, *L'Information Universitaire* – the weekly issue of the University of Paris's student bulletin² – and *Thélème: revue des étudiants du Collège franco-britannique*. Her personal connections with students came by way of the bookshop and library which provided reading and study space, somewhere to meet writers, academics and other students, and book purchase and borrowing at discounted student rates. For some women students she also offered part-time employment.

Beach's part in the expatriate support network which required the sustenance of women students, and which sustained them in turn, is one of many intriguing disclosures in Madeleine's diary. Blaess met Sylvia Beach at her bookshop Shakespeare and Company during the Phoney War, six months before the Germans occupied Paris in June 1940, and, like other international student friends Ruth Camp and Australian doctoral students Christine Morrow and Dorothy Clarke, she joined Beach's lending library. The library was an indispensable resource for students who, like Blaess, were expected to buy the books they needed for their research but struggled to afford them. The unavailability of books was a problem made worse because book lending from the Sorbonne library was restricted and actively discouraged, requiring 'longues démarches auprès du bureau de prêt'.³ Beach's student clients also had access to French publications, including translations of classics and academic critiques, through Beach's partner Adrienne Monnier who also ran a lending library from La Maison des amis du livre, opposite Beach's shop.⁴ The two businesses were as entwined as the lives of the women who ran them with a shared ethos of facilitating cross-cultural exchange, in particular between France, the United States and Great Britain, as evidenced in the two influential literary journals they ran from their shops – *Le Navire d'argent* and *Transitions*. Indeed, taken as a joint enterprise, La Maison des amis du livre and Shakespeare and Company could be said to have been a commercial off-shoot of the inter-war cooperative ethos behind the 'international mind',⁵ even though the modernist avant-garde fronted by James Joyce may not have been what the policy-makers had envisaged.

In a letter Blaess wrote home in March 1940 she relates her first encounter with Beach. Books would, Beach reassured Madeleine, keep her 'from the dangers of life my dear'. Madeleine found the conversation hilarious and said so in a letter to her parents: 'si je rencontre un homme en kilt dans la rue, il faut que je l'accoste et lui demander de me parler de Merlin, etc. etc. . . . Vous ne trouvez pas qu'elle est un "scream"?'⁶ The fun and informality of the conversation must have been attractive to a young woman who wrote in her letters home how stuffy and straitlaced she found the reading rooms of the Bibliothèque nationale where the only patrons were 'des vieux messieurs à la rosette de la légion d'honneur, ou de vieilles dames'.⁷ Madeleine joined Beach's lending library in February 1940 and was a regular borrower of books until the 'closure' of Shakespeare and Company in 1941.

Women students were important to Shakespeare and Company. The client records which include inventories of books purchases and the borrower cards from the lending library show that many subscribers and customers were students⁸ and the majority of these were women. But although this provided an important revenue stream, Beach was genuinely committed to students as an essential part of the intellectual community of

Shakespeare and Company and, like other expatriate ‘bookwomen’ of the inter-war period previously mentioned, she saw herself as having a pedagogical mission. In a letter written in reply to questions about Paris literary life asked of her by Adrienne Monnier (possibly for an article for Monnier’s *Gazette des Amis des Livres*), Beach described the importance of her student *abonnés* (in an amusing play on words she calls them her ‘bunnies’): ‘C’est que je ne suis nullement une universitaire, et pendant les années de l’existence de ma bibliothèque je me suis instruite en instruisant les étudiants. Je suis, en somme, ma plus fidèle “Bunny”.’⁹ Letters in the Princeton University Beach archive evidence her regular written correspondence with students which she caricatured in the letter to Monnier: ‘Oh Miss Beach, qu’est-ce que vous conseillez de prendre aujourd’hui? . . . Miss Beach, Miss Beach, vous m’avez si bien conseillé la dernière fois (quelquefois c’est le contraire et ils me font des reproches) y a-t-il un petit livre mais bien pour moi aujourd’hui?’

The books the French read under Occupation – a period which saw a boom in reading as a leisure activity – were, according to Monnier, dominated by the ‘classics’ of French literature. In an article written during the Occupation, Adrienne Monnier says that the French had:

acheté ou complété leurs Classiques. Ce fut même leur premier souci . . . Ils sont délectés des Fables de La Fontaine, des Caractères de la Bruyère, des Maximes de La Rochefoucauld . . . oui c’est en ces siècles, seizième et dix-septième que nous sommes tous allés d’un même élan retrouver la personne de la France pour l’embrasser et pour pleurer sur son épaule. (*Le Figaro littéraire*, 1942)

However, across the road at Shakespeare and Company, Beach’s French and international clients of all ages appeared to have more contemporary tastes. The feminist-inspired writing of British inter-war women novelists featured on the borrower cards of many of the women student readers. Titles by Colette, Woolf, Brittain, Holtby, Lehmann, Mansfield and Dorothy L. Sayers were popular and recurring choices. Beach’s feminist activism of the inter-war is little known about, but her first forays into book lending and literary writing were in the context of this activism, and in particular by way of her association with the radical socialist feminist Hélène Brion. Previously unknown and unpublished hand-written issues of Hélène Brion’s feminist journal *La Lutte féministe* reside in the Sylvia Beach archive in Princeton University Library. Written by Brion, they were circulated within a small network of feminist activists of whom Beach was one. Beach did more than read *La Lutte féministe*, she also reviewed literature for it and she, her partner Adrienne Monnier and the socialist Brion appear to have been involved in running a feminist library out of Brion’s flat during the Great War and in its immediate aftermath before Beach opened Shakespeare and Company, initially on the rue Dupuytren, in November 1919. In 1919 Brion appealed to readers to return borrowed books, ‘Nous prions instamment les camarades qui ont des livres appartenant à la bibliothèque féministe ou à HB personnellement, de vouloir bien les faire rentrer. Certains sont sortis depuis plus de trois ans: maintenant que la guerre est finie.’¹⁰ Five months later, Beach opened her bookshop and in early 1920 Brion was directing the feminist literature readers of *La Lutte féministe* to Beach and Monnier’s bookshops and lending libraries. In issue 12 of

La Lutte féministe dated 13 March 1920 under the subtitle ‘Aidez à vivre . . . des œuvres de femmes qui sont en même temps des œuvres d’éducation!’ Brion writes:

Vous pouvez louer des volumes et revues spirités chez Mme G. Gauchenot, 168, faubourg Saint-Martin – des ouvrages anglais ou américains modernes chez Mrs Beach 18 rue Dupuytren – des ouvrages et revues français chez Mme Adrienne Monnier, 7 rue de l’Odéon et Renée Lancel, 33 rue de l’Assomption, Paris.¹¹

Madeleine Blaess’s borrower cards and the book log she began to keep in her diary when Beach shut her bookshop in December 1941 are a record of how contemporary women’s fiction came to figure among her reading choices. Beach may have shut up shop, but she continued to lend books from the apartment above it and through Monnier’s business to which had been transferred a large part of the Shakespeare and Company collection. Academic books initially featured prominently among Madeleine’s reading choices but were overtaken by contemporary writing, in particular by British women writers of the inter-war. The reading choices ranged from modernist writings of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield to the so-called ‘middlebrow’ writing of Rosamond Lehmann, Winifred Holtby, Dorothy Sayers and Vera Brittain among others.¹² This so-called ‘middlebrow’ writing was contemporary and relevant to the lives of young women. As Nicola Humble (2001) points out, the middlebrow genre addressed the conflict between what young inter-war women wanted and the traditional roles society still wanted for them. Novels like Lehmann’s *A Note in Music*, (1930) and *Invitation to the Waltz* (1932) Winifred Holtby’s *South Riding* (1936) and *The Crowded Street* (1924) had heroines the same age as Madeleine, expecting more from their post-suffrage lives than their mothers before them, yet still encountering societal and cultural pressure not to pursue ambitions beyond the domestic realm. But these novels had a more direct affinity with Madeleine’s life and the lives of other women student readers. They were university novels in as much as they were written by women who, like Madeleine, were arts graduates – indeed, some were modern languages graduates – from British universities. Certain of these novels were set in universities. Dorothy Sayers’ *Gaudy Night* was set in an imaginary women’s college in Oxford. Rosamond Lehmann’s *Dusty Answer* was set in a women’s college in Cambridge. Sayers was a language and literature graduate of Somerville College Oxford and Lehmann was a languages graduate of Girton. Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain were history graduates from Somerville College, Oxford. These books, made available by Beach to her readers, represent an important appendage to the scholarly community Beach supported. In them women students could see themselves, and if they did not always find solace in the themes that were treated, they found an affirmation of their vocation and were able to join in a mental dialogue about the challenges facing them which might otherwise have been countenanced alone and in silence. The reading was an extra-curricular female scholarly community in text form: a community of women writers of the first post-first-wave feminist generation imparting an enabling message to the women students of the next generation.

Many of Beach’s international clients had left Paris by May 1940. These included long-time subscribers to the library associated with peacetime governmental political and cultural missions as well as military personnel. Student subscriptions inevitably

diminished because most international students from Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada had fled before or during May 1940 and they were not replaced.

Nevertheless, Beach kept the bookshop and library open and continued to organize poetry reading and ‘disque’ soirées for her customers – the ‘disques’ being recordings of literary readings. In Madeleine’s diary it is clear that her network of student friends all have Sylvia Beach and Shakespeare and Company in common. Hélène Berr was a client of both the bookshop and the library. Her closest friend Françoise Bernheim was Beach’s bookshop assistant. Ruth Camp, Madeleine’s Canadian friend and fellow postgraduate had also worked part-time at Shakespeare and Company, as had Madeleine on occasion. Dilys Lecolleter, languages graduate from Liverpool University, and Madeleine’s friend and neighbour, was close friends with Beach, as testified by an intimate and, on occasion, tempestuous correspondence which continued until Beach’s death in 1962. There is some evidence in the diaries of Blaess and Berr, and also through the borrower cards of Camp, Blaess and Bernheim, of shared literary interest in contemporary writing and of friendships which were inspired and enlivened by the books they discussed. Beach’s lending library and bookshop not only provided a space and a forum in which women felt welcome and comfortable, but also provided a sort of textual community space for these women to meet. Also worth mentioning is the possibility that Beach and Monnier’s romantic relationship may have attracted young lesbian students to Shakespeare and Company with the reasonable expectation that it would be a safe and welcoming space. There is no firm evidence in Madeleine’s diary or letters, nor the letters of other students in her entourage, that this was an acknowledged feature of the bookshop’s community, but then, even in Sylvia Beach’s papers, references to lesbianism are scant. At the same time, Madeleine appears fascinated by lesbians – attracted and repelled in equal measure. Ruth Camp, who had worked at the bookshop, is central to this, with Madeleine returning time and again to what she describes as Ruth’s attempts to seduce her – but not in an appreciative or kind way. There are other instances in the diary which may suggest that lesbianism, or at the very least intense friendships between women in the student and academic community, were not unusual. For example, on 25 April 1941, Madeleine writes about Beach, the interned Ruth and her young doctor friend Cyla. ‘SB [Sylvia Beach] gives me new address for English. Too many compliments. Detestable. Ruth getting out soon? Deep down I’m not pleased because of Cyla which is unfair and bad of me . . . The problem is my affection for Cyla – it shouldn’t make me jealous. Cyla probably considers me just like another friend and does not share the deep attachment that I have for her’ (see Michallat, 2018).

Beach was also a very important source of practical help for Madeleine and for other students in difficulty or suffering hardship. This support, very evident during the Occupation, is documented in the letters, memoirs and diaries of the students concerned. When Madeleine’s student friend, Canadian Ruth Camp, returned from the *exode* penniless and homeless, Beach used her connections with the American expatriate community to find Camp a flat on the rue Rollin owned by a ‘Miss Longhurst’ who had returned to the United States.¹³ Madeleine moved in with Ruth Camp in October 1940, but in December Ruth was arrested at the flat and later interned in Caserne Vauban in Besançon. Beach lent the impoverished Madeleine Blaess 1000 francs for a deposit on a new flat, helped clear her belongings from the old one, paid the utility bills for both students and

stored Camp's belongings. It was an arrangement Beach noted down on Camp's library borrower card: 'Jan 29th: SB went with MB Brought all RC's things from cellar at 10 rue Rollin to rue de l'Odéon (except trunk which is empty except for clothes hangers & shoe forms). SB paid MB for gas, tips to concierge etc.'¹⁴ Beach also offered to speak with her friend Sarah Watson, who ran the Foyer des étudiantes on the Boulevard Saint-Michel to secure Madeleine bed and breakfast accommodation. Finally, it was through Beach's friend Dilys Lecolleter, that Madeleine found her flat on the rue St Jacques at 320, next door to Dilys at 322. Beach sent regular letters and supplies to the interned Ruth Camp, gestures of kindness gratefully acknowledged by Ruth. Thanking her for the parcel of food and clothes she had received on 26 December 1940, Camp wrote: 'It did me much good morally and physically . . . please send soap from my own stock. I would like my raggedy old bathrobe & white moccasins'.¹⁵ Beach's support for her student clients endured throughout the Occupation despite the permanent closure of the bookshop in December 1941. Indeed, as the Occupation wore on, the support Beach afforded to students extended, in particular to Jewish students.

In the Maurice Saillet Collection in Austin, Texas, and the Sylvia Beach Papers at Princeton are letters¹⁶ attesting to Beach's support of Jewish students, most notably her bookshop assistant doctoral student Françoise Bernheim.¹⁷ Bernheim and Madeleine were close mutual friends of Jewish student Hélène Berr, also a client at Beach's bookstore who, along with Bernheim and others in the Union générale des israélites de France (UGIF) for which both worked, were both involved in the clandestine spiriting of Jewish children out of Paris to places of safety.¹⁸ Beach's commitment to helping Jews has been noted by biographers, although firm written evidence is lacking. Leon Edel, befriended by Beach when he was a doctoral student at the Sorbonne, claimed that Beach hid Bernheim in her empty apartment above the closed bookshop (Edel, 2000: 115). This was not improbable, given the widespread use of empty accommodation to help those on the run. Shari Benstock claimed that Beach and her partner Adrienne Monnier were 'providing food, clothes and lodging for Jewish friends Gisèle Freund, Arthur Koestler and Jewish resistance workers (Benstock, 1986). In letters to Monnier, Beach makes cryptic references to checking on the 'mites' in the empty flat. Ostensibly, the 'mites' are the paper-eating pests assailing the book collection, but of course mites can also be children. It is a hint, no more than that, that Beach and Monnier may have been involved Berr and Bernheim's work to save Jewish children.¹⁹ Letters between Beach, Adrienne Monnier and Françoise Bernheim do suggest that the pair were protecting Bernheim. On 6 October 1942 a letter written by Bernheim to 'Mademoiselle' (Monnier) appears to report the outcome of a meeting set up by Monnier to help her: 'Dimanche matin, j'ai été donc voir les Craig, très gentils! Mais jusqu'à ici pas grande possibilité. Le plus important des deux "frères" est absent. L'autre ne voit pas quel prétexte alléguer pour agir! Espérons quand même'.²⁰ A letter written by Beach to Monnier dated 7 August 1943 also appears to suggest that the pair were involved in helping people on the run, and interestingly she goes to the student Foyer to keep abreast of what is happening. The August letter is also the one in which she breaks the news of Françoise's arrest to Monnier:

Je n'ai pas pu aller rue HM hier soir et ne pourrai peut-être pas avant demain. C'est que voilà plusieurs soirs à la file je dine au Foyer pour me tenir au courant des événements dont

elles palpitent en ce moment. Pendant la journée d'autres choses m'occupent. Notre ami JBM a enfin envoyé une gentille lettre et il a fallu que je rende des visites. Et maintenant j'ai fait tout ce que j'ai pu faire pour Mabel et j'attend [sic]. Mais cette pauvre petite Françoise - ce qu'on craignait pour elle est enfin arrivé. Elle est partie il y a une semaine. On a tout de même de l'espoir qu'elle s'en tirera. Ce sera tout de suite ou alors jamais. Ça nous a fait si peur.²¹

Beach and Monnier's support of Bernheim, and possibly of other Jewish students associated with their bookshops like Bernheim's close friend Héléne Berr,²² would have been important given that they received no help from the University of Paris where, as Claude Singer (1992) says, the 'gentile' professoriate abandoned their sacked Jewish colleagues 'par souci d'éviter d'être suspecté de connivence avec les opposants au régime de Vichy' and the University administration slavishly complied with the *numerus clausus* excluding most Jewish students from the university from the *rentrée* of 1941 (Singer, 1992: 177). Héléne Berr wrote of feeling abandoned by the University of Paris. She was told to be more discreet about using the library and described how the yellow star insignia she now had to wear crushed any sense of belonging she had felt in the university community: 'J'ai souffert, là dans cette cour ensoleillée de la Sorbonne, au milieu de tous mes camarades. Il me semblait brusquement que je n'étais plus moi-même, que tout était changé, que j'étais devenue étrangère' (Berr, 2008: 60).

In February 1945 Madeleine Blaess finally made it home to England, and one of her first thoughts was to write a letter to Sylvia Beach asking for news of Françoise Bernheim. She returned to Paris for a brief spell in 1946 to continue her studies at the Sorbonne, and in 1948 she secured her first academic post at the University of Sheffield. Blaess's personal determination and academic ability brought her career success, but she never forgot the moral, financial and intellectual support she had received from Sylvia Beach, which had contributed in no small way to her maintaining an intellectual focus through straitened times. In an undated Christmas card sent from Sheffield possibly in the late 1950s, Madeleine wrote: 'Best wishes and thanks for what you did in 1940–41 for me. PS: I much enjoyed your book. 50 Brooklands Avenue, Fulwood, Sheffield, I don't expect a reply – will write to thank you more adequately later.'

Notes

- 1 *Université libre: organe des comités universitaires du Front national*, 1940–44.
- 2 Sylvia Beach Papers, Bookshop Correspondence, Misc. Box 87, Folder 3, Princeton University Library.
- 3 Madeleine Blaess Papers, letter, 13 November 1939, University of Sheffield.
- 4 In the journal *Le Navire d'argent* Monnier compiles a bibliography of translations of English works with prices alongside for books available in La Maison des amis du livre.
- 5 See Goodman (2010) for more on how the post-Great War ethos of international collaboration around education impacted upon educational opportunity for women in the inter-war.
- 6 Madeleine Blaess Papers, letter, 1 March 1940.
- 7 Madeleine Blaess Papers, letter, 20 January 1939.
- 8 A sample (S–Z) of the borrower cards from Beach's card index of library subscribers shows that in October 1940 there were 53 active subscribers, of whom 28 were students. In February 1941 there were 76 subscribers, 32 of whom were students. In October 1941 there were 80

- subscribers, 37 being students. Sylvia Beach Papers, Lending Library, 1922–61, Borrower Cards A–Z, Princeton University Library.
- 9 Letters from SB 1938–1943, Sylvia Beach Papers, Box 47, Folder 17, Princeton University Library.
 - 10 *La Lutte féministe*, 5 June 1919, p. 16.
 - 11 *La Lutte féministe*, 13 March 1920, p. 3.
 - 12 My article (2017) discusses the strategies Blaess and three other student women diarists use to protect their scholarly vocation throughout the Occupation. Here there is a more in-depth analysis of the purpose of Blaess's choice of middlebrow reading matter.
 - 13 Ruth Nadeau, 'A Canadian Student in Occupied Paris', CBC radio interview, 11 November 1994.
 - 14 Sylvia Beach Papers, Box 39, 1–3, Princeton University Library.
 - 15 Sylvia Beach Papers, Box 39, 1–3, Princeton University Library.
 - 16 The Maurice Saillet Collection contains letters Françoise wrote from hiding. The Sylvia Beach Papers in the Princeton archive contain letters between Adrienne Monnier and Beach discussing Françoise's arrest, a final letter from Bernheim sent before her deportation and a letter from Françoise's father to Beach in 1945 confirming Françoise's death in the camps.
 - 17 Bernheim registered for a doctorate in Sanskrit and comparative linguistics in 1941 under the supervision of Louis Renou (1896–1966) (*Annales*, 1948).
 - 18 See: www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/1.5036037.
 - 19 Sylvia Beach Papers, August 1943, Princeton University Library.
 - 20 Maurice Saillet Collection, Sylvia Beach Papers, 1943, University of Texas at Austin.
 - 21 Sylvia Beach Papers, 1942, Princeton University Library.
 - 22 Berr refers to visits to the Rue de l'Odéon, Klinck-Sieck's bookshop and Budé's bookshop in her diary. Rue de l'Odéon is presumably Shakespeare and Company. Beach's inventories show entries for Berr's book orders and purchases.

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Wendy Michallat is a Senior Lecturer in French at the University of Sheffield. She works in the area of French cultural history, life-writing and popular culture. She has published in all of these areas, including an annotated translation into English of the Madeleine Blaess diary and is currently writing a monograph about international women students in Paris during the inter-war.