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Michallat, W. (2023) 'Ici et par toute la terre': Paris, British universities and the French study abroad in the inter-war. *French Cultural Studies*, 34 (1). pp. 34-48. ISSN: 0957-1558

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09571558221150702>

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'Ici et par toute la terre': Paris, British universities and the French study abroad in the inter-war

French Cultural Studies

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DOI: 10.1177/09571558221150702

journals.sagepub.com/home/frc**Wendy Michallat**

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Abstract

This article begins with the recommendations of the Leathes Report of 1916 in connection with the internationalisation of language study and the reasons why the ideal of transnational mobility was slow to take root in language departments in the UK. It examines how the provision of safe, secure and affordable accommodation for women students was an effective counter to alarmist stay-at-home tales. And it looks at how feminist educators campaigned to promote international learning and teaching opportunities for women scholars. It argues that the Leathes concept of an 'immersion' experience conflicted with the University of Paris's interpretation of the 'internationalisation' of study. The Cité universitaire (CU) project, launched in the 1920s, offered the possibility for the easy placement of a growing number of students from the British red-brick universities in particular. But the conviction of British academics that the proposed Collège Franco-Britannique should house both French and British students was at odds with the University of Paris's concept of a campus of representative national houses in which only students of that country were permitted to live. It concludes that the mobilisation of the profession into subject bodies was a key factor in the evolution of study abroad programs and more broadly in the consolidation of 'modern studies' in the new civic and red-brick universities across Britain.

Keywords

Women, inter-war, France, Britain, university, education, languages

Introduction

In the wake of the slaughter of the Great War, an ethos of international understanding and reconciliation by way of education became a powerful cultural leitmotiv, promoted most powerfully by the League of Nations. Over the same period, in the new red brick universities of the United Kingdom, the study of modern languages – and of French in particular – in its new guise as

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'modern studies' emerged as a growth subject area, displacing classics as the new axis of the arts curriculum and signalling a modernising step change in line with the League's internationalist vision for education. Government's zest for curriculum reform and its readiness to directly involve academics in driving forward a new vision for modern languages was evident even during the conflict in the shape of the Leathes report it commissioned in 1916. The changes in the content of the language curriculum can be traced to recommendations in the report that a new 'Modern Studies' should include the teaching of a country's history, society and institutions alongside the language teaching which had thereto been the curriculum's primary focus. The recommendation that language learning should be taught in context – the concept of 'immersion' – was to prove to be a major stimulus for study abroad programmes. This article looks in detail at the Leathes recommendations in connection with the internationalisation of language study but also, and in particular, the reasons why the ideal of transnational mobility was slow to take root in language departments in the UK. It also looks to how the Leathes concept of an 'immersion' experience – British students in everyday contact with French people – conflicted with the University of Paris's interpretation of the 'internationalisation' of study. The Cité universitaire (CU) project, launched in the 1920s, offered the exciting possibility for the easy placement of a growing number of students from the British red-brick universities in particular. But the conviction of British academics that the proposed Collège Franco-Britannique should house both French and British students was at odds with the University of Paris's concept of a campus of representative national houses in which only students of that country were permitted to live and the project was delayed for almost a decade.

Leathes set change in motion but had no bearing on an enduring chauvinism still restricting women's freedom to study, particularly in the 1920s with the backlash against feminist political and social gains. In addition to the frustrations around the Collège Franco-Britannique, was the slow pace of social and cultural change for the women students taking up language study in increasing numbers. Discouraging tales of Paris as a dangerous place, liable to corrupt, impoverish and make ill the vulnerable women travelling there to study were widely and frequently published in the national and local press. Even in Britain, living away from home to study was not then the norm for either men or women of the new universities who were, in large part, day students at their local university. However, women had been at the forefront of providing safe and secure accommodation for women students in Paris from the late nineteenth century and feminist inspired ventures became more numerous in the inter-war. This article examines how the provision of safe, secure and affordable accommodation for women students, notice of which was also published in national and local British press, was an effective counter to alarmist stay-at-home tales. Alongside the feminist philanthropists involved in accommodation projects, academic women were also mobilising to secure career benefits and scholarly opportunities for women and their reformist outlook was centred on international mobility. This article, then, also looks at how feminist educators in newly established lobbying groups for graduate women, the British Federation of University Women (BFUW) and the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) – both of which had direct links with the Leathes committee and the Committee on Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations – campaigned to promote international learning and teaching opportunities for women scholars.

Leathes and 'modern studies'

The heavy lifting for the internationalisation of study had been done in Britain during the Great War when, in 1916, the British government appointed a committee 'to enquire into the position of

modern languages in the educational system of Great Britain'. The committee, composed of sixteen politicians, civil servants, schoolteachers and university academics, presented its report – which came to be known as the 'Leathes Report,' named after its chairman Stanley Leathes – to Parliament two years later on 26 August 1918. The authors of the published report amended the government's vague initial description of it as an inquiry 'into the position of Modern Languages in the educational system of Great Britain' to one more assertive and precise in its wording. It was now an inquiry into 'what measures are required to promote their study, regard being had to the requirements of a liberal education, including an appreciation of the history, literature and civilisation of other countries and to the interests of commerce and public service'. The report, the work of two years canvassing of university academics up and down the country, had landed as the 'voice of the profession'. If modern languages was to be accepted as properly academic then it had to be more than just language learning. Literature, social and political history and the history of institutions should combine with language to become 'Modern Studies', a discipline upon which specialist academic positions would be grafted and postgraduate programs could be built. However, somewhat controversially, 'foreign' nationals were not included in this vision. The report was protectionist in outlook for British-based French studies. It recommended the creation of employment opportunities in schools for British graduates of UK universities at the expense of the French native speaker teacher. The justification given for this change in schools was blunt: 'Not only are foreigners found less effective for discipline, not only is it more difficult for them to exercise an easy and salutary influence over their pupils, but it is natural to suppose that the studies themselves will be more successfully presented to the classes by teachers who approach them from the British point of view'. In respect of universities, the report concluded: 'The direction of Modern Studies in our Universities should be in the hands of British scholars [...] but foreign Assistants, employed on a temporary basis, and working under the direction of the Professor, are a most valuable adjunct to any school of Modern Studies' (Leathes Report, 1918: 63). There may have been some pushback from universities on this point but despite there being 'no settled conviction' the authors of the Report stuck to their guns: 'We must therefore emphasise the firm conclusion at which we have arrived. In our opinion Modern Studies in our Universities have suffered greatly in the past through the absence of British control and direction. The excessive philological and antiquarian bias which has so long prevailed in Modern Studies at our Universities can be directly traced to foreign influence [...] nor can Modern Studies ever be thoroughly at home in Britain until they are directed in a comprehensive spirit in conformity with the national needs, the national traditions of education and the national character. This can only be done by British scholars'. (Leathes Report, 1918: 44). This recommendation created jobs for British educated academics and teachers and created an employment pathway – teaching – for young people, crucial to the growth of the discipline.

An inevitable consequence of excluding French native speakers from employment in British schools and universities meant that British students, who took up the baton from them, now had to speak the language well enough to be able to teach it. To do that, they were expected to spend time abroad. Leathes was explicit on the importance of study abroad. Article 22, 'Provision of Travelling Scholarships and funds for Research' makes clear the importance of study abroad for both undergraduate and postgraduate students: 'Every student of foreign languages should consider it part of his training to spend practically the whole of each Long Vacation abroad [...] The ordinary student who has not yet taken a degree will find it necessary to devote his time to the learning of the modern languages, the life and institutions of the foreign people, its art as expressed in its galleries [...] for the research and postgraduate student his professor will probably have marked out for him a special subject of study which will make it necessary for him to spend a considerable part of his time in some particular library [...] Funds for this are almost entirely

lacking' (Leathes Report, 1918: 81). A letter received by the Report's Committee from thirty-one university professors of modern languages from Oxford, Cambridge and London but mostly from the new civic red brick universities, was published in Appendix IV of the Report. It showed how closely the recommendations of university academics had been followed. In addition to the demand for the new 'Modern Studies' approach and complaints about the 'lowest level of salaries', 'worst equipped staffs' and 'the meanest apparatus' – all in the main body of the Report – was the importance attached in the letter to student and staff international mobility and the desirability of studying in a partner university as part of an honours degree. It is recognised that although this was not easily affordable for their students from more modest backgrounds because 'so large a proportion of the students at the newer universities are living in their own homes and cannot afford to migrate'. The universities of Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield were already approving courses for study at the University of Caen and counting the studies there 'as equivalent' to courses undertaken in home universities. The government did not enforce, as such, the recommendations in Leathes but they were read by universities as a blue-print to legitimate how modern language departments should be developed and ultimately this would have a big impact on the approach to study abroad.

Despite these combined energies, international, national and local, universities were slow to integrate a compulsory period of residence into their courses. Indeed, frustrations were aired at the IFUW Conference in 1922 about the slowness of the internationalisation effort because of 'the difficulties in the way of interchange between universities and, even more, between schools, have proved so obstructive that progress has necessarily been slow' (IFUW, 1922: 2). Rather, the onus, well into the 1930s, was on the student to make his or her own arrangements and although academics were keen that students should go abroad, those willing modern languages to assert itself as a 'serious' academic discipline saw expertise in literature, history of the language and history as more important. These attitudes were still finding expression in the professional associations set up in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Language learning did not have scholarly merit and should be done off the student's own bat. In the first session of the day at the third annual conference of University Teachers of French held on March 25th and 26th 1950 at which 110 members were present and W. G. Moore was in the chair, Enid Starkie 'introduced a discussion on the teaching of French literature in British universities'. Starkie said:

The chief function of university teachers is to inspire, and to encourage their pupils but not actually teach them. Why then do the modern language departments in our universities exist? Certainly not in order to produce teachers who will, in their turn, produce further teachers and so on until the end of our civilisation. Their function is not primarily to teach the language – that could more easily and less expensively be achieved by residence abroad as a waiter, or in a Berlitz school. Ideally, those who come up to university should possess it beforehand. (University Teachers of French, March 25–16, 1950: 1)

Women students, Leathes and scholarly associations

By the 1920s, university students from all over the world were travelling in increasing numbers to France, and to Paris in particular. Young women from Britain and Ireland and from further afield, United States, Canada and Australia, were a lucrative source of income for the University of Paris recovering from the financial loss of a generation of male students during the Great War. Women's scholarly associations had formed in the first decades of the twentieth century. The British Federation of University Women (BFUW) was established in 1907 and the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) was set up a decade later in 1919. Both were committed to promoting international mobility for women students and academics. Interestingly, in spite of relatively few women academics in British universities, those who did have university posts

were involved in the decision making around Leathes and also had a direct line of contact with the Committee on Intellectual cooperation at the League of Nations. The Leathes committee of politicians, civil servants, schoolteachers and university academics included two women educators Margaret A Gilliland Headmistress of Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls and Margaret Tuke, principal of Bedford College. Tuke was active in the BFUW and the IFUW and judging by her work at BFUW, was a powerful voice in the setting of the internationalisation agenda at both. In 1921, the BFUW had set up a Committee of International Relations and Tuke was appointed 'chairman' of the sub-committee 'on scholarships. Exchange Lectureships etc...' (BFUW, 1920–22). There was thus a direct working link between Leathes and the BFUW and its parent body, the IFUW. It was also through these scholarly bodies set up to promote the interests of women university teachers, that women school and university teachers had a point of contact with the League of Nations reformers.

In 1922 the League of Nations set up its Committee on Intellectual cooperation to focus on implementing its vision of the 'international mind' project in education. Briefly, in the League's own words, the 'international mind' concept meant opening the 'youth of today' to 'new horizons beyond its national frontiers, to put before it other points of view, to bring home to it the difficulties in the way of attempts made since the world war to organise the world – all this is to prepare those who will create the peace of tomorrow' (Osborne, 2016: 213–214). The League sent Florence Wilson, librarian at the League, to the IFUW's national conference held in Paris on July 15th–16th 1922 to present the mission of the new Committee, which was, in large part, a verbal reiteration of the League's signature concept of the 'international mind'.

Professor Gilbert Murray said when he presented the report of the Fifth Assembly Committee on Intellectual cooperation, 'The future of the League depends upon the formation of an universal conscience. This can only be created and developed if the scholars, the thinkers and the writers in all countries maintain close mutual contact and spread from one country to another the ideas which can ensure peace among the peoples [...]. The League as the world organ for international cooperation offers a means for coordinating the work of various organisations for intellectual intercourse and this Committee is asked to report on what measures should be taken by the League to facilitate intellectual exchange between Nations (Wilson, 1922a, 1922b: 1–5)

In her report on the event for Dr Nitobe, chair of the Intellectual Committee, Miss Wilson described the purpose of the IFUW as the promotion of "understanding and friendship between the university women of the nations of the world" in order to further their interests and 'develop between their countries sympathy and mutual helpfulness'. She highlighted the IFUW's current preoccupation with international exchanges: 'Their interest at present seems to be mainly 1. The exchange of Professors and Students. 2. Travelling Scholarships 3. Standardisation of Degrees 4. Organisation of Club Houses' (Wilson, 1922a, 1922b: 1–3). One of IFUW's main goals in the inter-war was to achieve exchange schemes for professors, lecturers, secondary school teachers and graduate students and this 'Organisation of Interchange, [was] seen as the means of obtaining peace through education at university level internationally.' (179). The organisation so prized this objective that it made its member national federations commit their energies to it in its constitution. In 'bye-law number 1' of the byelaws set out for national federations to follow women members were asked to create opportunities for 'the interchange' of women lecturers and students abroad by maintaining close contact with the body responsible for 'international educational relations' in the destination country. They were told that it was women's responsibility to make their voices heard when it came to 'the choice of holders of scholarships [...] by nominating lists of

candidates for the consideration of foreign institutions and by advertising foreign scholarships' and also to raise funds to supplement these awards. (IFUW, 1920: 1–9)

The aims of the Intellectual Committee and the IFUW were closely aligned, and as the Intellectual Committee put down roots over the 1920s, the parallels between the international mobility women wanted and what the League was committing to seeing come to fruition became ever clearer. Sub-committees were set up to expedite work on the 'questions principales étudiées par la Commission de Coopération Intellectuelle', around the theme of international mobility (League of Nations, 1927). For example, the 'Comité des Représentants des organisations internationales d'étudiants' concentrated attention on 'Facilités de voyage, carte internationale d'identité, échange d'étudiants, sanatorium universitaire international', the 'Directeurs des Offices universitaires internationaux' focused on 'les mouvements de professeurs et d'étudiants entre différents pays, équivalence de diplômes, cours spéciaux pour les étrangers, mesures propres à faciliter les déplacements et les séjours des étudiants. Protections des diplômes universitaires', the 'Experts Coordination des Hautes Études internationales' were tasked with examining 'une coopération plus étroite et suivie entre les institutions intéressées, notamment en vue de la coordination des programmes, des conditions d'admissions, des échanges'.

Thus, the desire for international study programmes and student mobility in the 1920s had a political complexion, buoyed by the conviction that the post-Great War will for reconciliation and a lasting peace among the nations could be achieved through education. Feminist academics, long-time pacifists among them, also sought international collaboration and cooperation to further boost the positive influence for women of an organisation which already had global reach beyond Europe and the United States.

Women and residence abroad

Although women students received little help from their university to go abroad, that did not stop many of them from going. The personal testimonies of young women scholars of the inter-war and their references for teaching jobs supplied by their tutors, show that they went abroad during vacations either to work or study, and many went more than once. In an article 'The Woman Student at the Sorbonne: A Movement on Foot' printed on September 10 1923 *The Manchester Guardian*, claimed that because money was in shorter supply for 'girls' than for 'the young men', there was now 'a movement [...] on foot [...] for girl students to follow American methods and to take on any work that may offer itself during the long vacation'. Au pair work was the norm but now girls could work as chambermaids in hotels, 'with tips, forty francs a day may be earned – it is true for exceedingly hard work [...] the desire for education among young women is increasingly keen, and it is felt that no matter what sacrifice is worthwhile provided only the desired end be accomplished'. Students at Aberdeen University were doing just this through the 1920s and into the 1930s. Winifred Black took an MA in French and German at Aberdeen between 1918 and 1922 and organised and paid for a summer residence to Tours, where she stayed as a student with the nuns in Convent des Soeurs de l'Adoration. (University of Aberdeen Oral History Archive, 1985c [Black, 1899–1989]) Winifred explained how the women had to push the university (and gee up one another) to go abroad:

I said to the crowd in the cloakroom one day, look we're going to have to travel or either a) we won't get our degree and b) we won't get a job and they said well you go and speak about it to, and I forget who the person was that they told me to go and speak to, the person who was the head of the department [...] He said yes that's right you go to the town of Tours because that's where the purest French is spoken...

We had to arrange it. He told us there were three or four, not more than four, maybe only three men who had just come home from the war and he said they'll tell you the cheapest way to get there.

Others like Roberta Morgan didn't go abroad during the undergraduate degree she finished in 1932. Like many she waited until her teaching degree, going to Compiègne to work as an au pair. (University of Aberdeen Oral History Archive, 1985b [Morgan, 1910–1994]). Isabella Robertson graduated in 1929 and her study abroad experience was an au pair placement which she and other students got by putting advertisements in French newspapers. (University of Aberdeen Oral History Archive, 1985a [Robertson, 1907–1986]) Those who did spend time abroad were well regarded for it as can be seen in the many testimonials Professor Mary Williams wrote for her former students who were applying, almost without exception, for teaching posts. The references were a recurring endorsement of the value of the learning of both language and the culture of France and the possibility of social mobility, however ephemeral. In 1931 of Miss Thelma Conwy she wrote: 'Miss Conway proved a good, intelligent member of an interesting class. She writes and speaks the language with a fair degree of correctness; having spent the three summer months of 1931 at Lille she has improved upon her performance at the previous June examination' (Williams, 1933) Miss Gwendolen Bayham was highly recommended by Williams in 1938 for having "taken advantage of every opportunity to improve her knowledge of the language, literature and institutions of France [...] she has spent all the long summer vacations in France, as well as a complete year, a session at the Ecole Professionnelle where she held the post of 'Assistante d'Anglais' followed by the summer vacation in different parts of France [...] she was invited as a guest by many families of very different ranks of society: this has given her an insight into varying aspects of French culture and intensified her interest in the subject." (Williams, 1938). A Miss Beynon was given a lukewarm reference by Williams in 1930. Again, here, the importance put on residence abroad can be seen, particularly when it had not been done: 'Miss Beynon showed some interest in her studies while in the Department, although she was not able to supplement these by visits to France. I understand she intends to do so later, however she already writes and speaks with a fair degree of accuracy and fluency' [...]. (Williams, 1930).

Paris: A den of iniquity

As long as study abroad remained optional for British students and was their responsibility to organise – meaning that they had to find their own work, courses and accommodation – then take-up could still be patchy. At a time when women did not attain majority until age 21, which, for many meant after graduation, and who only got a small grant if they were lucky, parents could stop them going even if they wanted to. Negativity about women studying and alarmist reporting of the dangers they faced living in Paris was not an attractive proposition either. At a time when there was a moral panic around the libidinous, wild independence of the flapper generation of women in France, Britain and the States, Paris was perceived as a city where 'alarming' behaviours went unchecked and students could receive a particularly bad press. One not untypical report in *The Los Angeles Times* entitled 'Wildest Orgy is Ended: Paris Latin Quarter Students' Ball is Scene of Debauchery Unconfined' told of a bacchanalian rave where women, all of whom had to prove they were students to get in, tore off their clothes, paraded around the hall, stripped naked alongside the men, performed 'grotesque rites' whilst drinking champagne 'from bottles whilst posed in daring attitudes'. 'Bare' women who'd overindulged in alcohol and cocaine were being carried out unconscious and the same partygoers were seen 'unclad [...] lurching in the Montparnasse region this afternoon.' (*The Los Angeles Times*, June 13 1921: 11).

By the mid 1920, the stories of the horrors lying in wait for young British girls in Paris were not going unchallenged. Articles pushing back at this narrative with positivity and excitement about the city and the Sorbonne began appearing in the British press. This new message penned by anonymous ‘correspondents’ – but quite possibly by women journalists, employed as freelancers abroad by British newspaper titles who wouldn’t give them career jobs (Lonsdale, 2022: 391–393) – reached into the homes of young working class women, because they were syndicated by national titles and press agencies through the regional and the local press. Interestingly, the International Federation of University Women encouraged members to send pieces to ‘journals interested in the advancement of the position of women’ like *Time and Tide* and *The Woman’s Leader* but also *The Manchester Guardian* which frequently carried articles promoting student life to women during the inter-war. (IFUW, 1922: 3). There’s no firm proof of ‘counter-propaganda’ deliberately placed in the press by women ‘interested in the advancement of women’ but it is a possibility especially as certain of these articles appeared to be sensitively crafted so as to be relatable to young working class women, encouraging them to go to the French capital with examples of life experience they were likely to understand and value. In March 1918, *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* ran the article ‘For our lady readers: a girl student in Paris’ with cheerful reminiscences of pre-war domestic work in Paris. ‘Such a good time I had! I enjoyed every day and every hour’ says the interviewee who is also keen to describe the thrill of having had a pretty, comfortable room ‘a dainty pink and white affair [...] with a little canopied brass bed. Such a storybook feeling as that canopy gave me’. At a time when study abroad was merely encouraged and not expected, the article was a positive advertisement for the opportunity to learn French and gave lie to the prevailing idea that Paris was too expensive for students to live comfortably: ‘I had such a good time going marketing and chattering with the tradespeople. It was the best thing imaginable, as practice in speaking a foreign language, for I had the every-day household affairs and news to talk about. Whenever we did not want to cook, we had only to go out to one of the delightful little restaurants scattered all over Paris and get an excellent meal at a moderate price’.

The article ‘The Sorbonne Holiday Courses’ in *The Manchester Guardian* on July 21 1923 is an example which, bemoaning the low take-up of ‘some of the best teaching in Europe’, undertakes to address concerns about affordability of food and lodgings in the French capital which had been widely reported as a consequence of the cost of living squeeze after the Great War.

If the Sorbonne holiday classes were better known there is no doubt that foreigners would profit by them, to a far greater extent than is at present the case [...] the course only costs 100 francs a month, all told’. These courses being ‘on literature, art and history’ and advice on accommodation is given with assurances that cheap lodgings are easy to find when a room is taken by the month. ‘a room can be found at anything from 150 to 200 francs. The student can make her own breakfast in her room, A good lunch or dinner can be obtained for four or five francs [...]. Thus for a comparatively small sum for both teaching and living the student can obtain what is probably some of the best teaching in Europe.

On occasion, an article aimed to excite the imagination of young women themselves made it into print. In the article ‘Going to the Sorbonne: The French Girl and Higher Education’ published in 1927 in *The Manchester Guardian*, journalist Sybil Vincent personifies new freedoms and study at the Sorbonne by way of the French ‘lady student’, It was a satirical piece on how old fashioned the French were when it came to freedom for women and how the Sorbonne was a rare escape route from family tyranny and chaperones. Although Vincent was writing tongue-in-cheek about the ‘fuddy-duddy’ French, years behind their liberated British contemporaries, the article may well have impressed young middle or working class British women readers of the provincial north. These freedoms were not their lived experience either and it is not unreasonable to suppose that

the independence glimpsed in the article may well have resonated with frustrated young women looking to realise ambitions outside of the home:

Being a young woman of spirit she has managed to overcome all difficulties, and sets out for her first day at the Sorbonne. Her chaperone will probably accompany her as far as the door but then for the whole of the day she will be free as do as she likes. Free to go to lectures or not go; study or not study; free for the first time in her life from ceaseless supervision by her parents or their representatives. It is undoubtedly the greatest thrill of her life [...] Apart from the joy of not always having a “Mrs Grundy” continually at her back to say “Do this” and “Do that”, one of the thrills of going to the Sorbonne is in meeting all sorts of different people. For in the ordinary way she is not likely to meet anyone outside her parents set. (Vincent, 1927).

‘Home from home’: Hostelling and the input of women

In Paris of the inter-war period, the way in which women helped women to pursue international study was exemplified by the setting up of women-only hostels to provide safe, secure places for young women to stay. The women setting up accommodation schemes still had to tiptoe around a crumbling, yet still grumbling, pre-suffrage generation of men and the student was a lightning rod for a stubbornly enduring moral panic. The infantilising of women as vulnerable and gullible gave rise to *foyers* where, it was supposed, women could be supervised and their good conduct ensured. In the popular press, these women-led ventures were presented as an extension of domestic orderliness, piety and probity and the women behind them as mother surrogates or ministering ‘angels’. Mancunian, Ada Leigh, formerly a student at the Sorbonne, was the first woman to get involved in opening hostels for women – including for overseas students – in Paris, in 1872. She had been so ‘stirred’ according to *The Manchester Guardian*, ‘by the tragedies which she observed among English and American girls who had gone to study or work in Paris and were there ‘stranded and helpless’ that she decided women needed safe shelter in the French capital. In a well publicised and popular campaign endorsed ‘from royalty downwards’ she raised enough money to open four homes for women of which one, Washington House, was specifically for ‘governesses, artists, students (Anonymous, 1910: 14).’ Thirty years later, the horror of student living in the private sector and the desirable alternative of the student *foyer* is a theme of Odette Pascaud’s 1935 article ‘Etudiantes de Paris’ for *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a cultural, literary and current affairs journal with a wide circulation among teachers and academics in Britain. Geneviève, a student from the French provinces studying in Paris lives a chaotic life in a ‘modeste mais agréable pension de famille’. In truth, the pension was not so ‘agréable’. Antiquated heating did not warm a cold, scruffy and untidy room and Geneviève did her studies crouching by a radiator in her dressing gown. The article presents the environment as a gateway to the dangers awaiting young women in the city. Smoking, a potent signifier for women’s errant rebelliousness at the time, is thoroughly and frowningly noted. Pascaud, offered a cigarette as soon as she sits down, describes a room full of ‘bizarre’ smoking paraphernalia and later, when guests – including male guests- arrive to party, the merry group drink and dance in a choking fug until the landlady arrives to break it up. For a deluded Geneviève, her *pension* life is ‘artistic’. Peering out from a face made pale from the lack of food at the foxed and crispy pages of an old book, she announces: ‘Des grands hommes devinrent grands, au milieu de ce dénuement: c’est du moins ce qu’on apprend en classe’. Not having full board at the *pension* doesn’t matter, says Geneviève because she can buy food in the ‘foreign’ outlets of the Latin Quarter, which is something of an adventure. Greek one day, Turkish the next, Russian for the salads. But when she says that they don’t know what’s in the food at the Chinese restaurant they visit – ‘même après l’avoir

gouté, nos suppositions quant à sa nature restent des plus vagues' – triggering a recurring theme about expensive food and poor nutrition in the student *quartier* – the horror is complete. Low moral standards in grubby freezing *pensions* contrasted unfavourably with the *foyer* sector, as Pascaud was at pains to make clear. The *Association Fénelon* run by 'présidente' Mme de Courbetin was typical of these *foyers*. In the *Fénelon foyers* (for the exclusive use of French women students) the students found 'une organisation matérielle confortable, en même temps que des relations amicales bienfaisantes, un milieu familial et un soutien intellectuel et moral, religieux pour celles qui le désirent'. Students were supervised in a familial environment where religious guidance was on hand together with advice on matters concerning the women's studies. The hostel is described as modern and luxurious with a modern heating system ('chaudières, réservoirs, pompes; puis, le vidoir dont la colonne montante dessert tous les étages'). The rooms are orderly, clean and light and the cool, crisp interior implies the moral order of other sanitised women's spaces, of a hospital ward or a convent.

les stores de leurs larges baies évoquent le givre des matins de premier printemps; mais dans ces douceurs claires, une lampe de nickel met sa note dure et précise et semble vous rappeler que nous vivons en un siècle où l'on ne rit pas tous les jours et où, plus qu'en tout autre temps, il s'agit de s'imposer une discipline pour faire soi-même sa vie.

Pascaud follows up her review of Fénelon with Paris's principal *foyer* for international students, the *Foyer international des étudiantes*. Here was a secure familial atmosphere in a building 'formerly a convent [...] surrounded by a stone wall which gives an air of seclusion'. There's even a 'church service on Sunday afternoon'. The *foyer* ensured healthy living for the body as well as the mind. The tenants can breathe easy on a roof-top garden on the *terrasse*. There's state of the art air-conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter supplied by the 1900 kilos of coal they burn a day to heat two hundred radiators. There's gas too and 'mod cons' like a solarium with 'special glass so only the rays of benefit to the body pass through' and a little chapel and a library. Good nutrition is a given. Food is cheap and available to all students whether boarders or not. Mrs Whitney Hoff, the *Foyer's* altruistic benefactor and matriarch, is presented as having been inspired to provide by her faith. Hoff, reassuringly 'feminine' (not feminist), is known for her charity work across Paris, where she helped the suffering and poor in a 'quiet way of her own'. She took a course in nursing and has a nursing uniform tucked away in her bag if the need arose 'to render such assistance as lies in her power'. She's the *loco parentis* needed by impressionable, vulnerable young women.

Catherine Brody, in her 1921 *New York Times* article 'Changing Latin Quarter': Many Students Among Innovations Since War – Sorbonne's New Plans' writes of the women, coming to Paris from abroad to study in ever bigger numbers. For her, it was the woman-built infrastructure that emerged to cater for them which was the biggest change (and not the *cit  universitaire* project everyone was talking about). Students came from 'every nook and cranny of Europe, from Poland, from Rumania, from Russia, from the Balkans, Armenia' and found a safe place to be at Hoff's *Foyer international des  tudiantes*. Physical security and mental health care, themes of the Ada Leigh project, were also a priority in this *Foyer* where loneliness and isolation were not a worry as this was a 'student hostel which opens hospitable arms to these girls, segregated in the midst of a strange county [...] where the French did 'not take strangers into the bosoms of their confidences or their families'. (Brody, 1921: 83) The value of Hoff's venture was recognised by the French too. Ten years after Brody's article, in January 1931, Paule Malardot described in her article 'La femme seule   Paris' for *Les Dimanches de la Femme* the misery of the Quartier Latin and the sanctuary offered of Hoff's *foyer*. The student arrives from abroad knowing no one, without

enough money, unable to find lodging, forced into depressing hotel rooms, eating lonely meals in local eating-houses in a ‘rupture brusque avec la tendre atmosphère et les traditions familiales’. The *foyer* provided all of what they would lack elsewhere. It took the place of the ‘famille absente’, it gave them ‘un Foyer pour remplacer auprès des ces isolées la famille absente, pour leur donner un certain confort matériel, de la chaleur, de la lumière, une nourriture saine, et plus que cela, *un milieu sain*, jeune et gai [...] and, in the spirit of the age, it was open to all nationalities ‘de toutes opinions politiques, philosophiques ou religieuses, créant de ce fait un terrain de rencontre où s’évanouissent bien des préjugés, où se rapprochent les intelligences et les cœurs.’ (Malardot, 1931: 16)

Even though these women-led ventures were feminist in as much as they supported women’s aspirations to succeed at their studies and make something of their lives beyond the realm of the domestic, it was their caring and nurturing purpose – not feminism – that tended to be foregrounded in the popular press. However, occasionally, the feminist press picked up on the initiatives. In November 1923, the *Revue féministe du Sud-Ouest: ancien foyer libere: organe regionaliste mensuel* reported an interview with ‘Madame Appell’ about the new ‘Maison des étudiantes’ on the Boulevard Raspail, a project resembling Hoff’s with its cheap full board, extensive on site facilities ‘salles de travail, de conférences, un cercle, une bibliothèque’ all geared towards facilitating study. It was through the collective work of women and their mutual support that her project had come to fruition:

[...] une solidarité féminine digne de constituer l’un des plus beaux exemples de cette qualité, que nous avons pu grouper les éléments nécessaires à la réussite de notre projet. Autour de la Société universitaire des Amis de l’étudiante, se sont groupées la Société d’Accueil aux Étudiantes, la Société <<Maison des Étudiantes>> et le *Foyer Universitaire* français, que dirige Mme Cruppi. Toutes ces associations ont mis en commun leurs ressources et leur activité. (Antignac, 1923: 179).

The *foyers* also offered financial support in the shape of loans and bursaries, echoing the keenness of the IFUW to sponsor scholarships. Feminist journal *La Femme* published a letter ‘Une Caisse des prêts’ from *La Minerve*, ‘association des étudiantes de la Maison des Étudiantes’ making it known to readers that there was an emergency fund available to loan money to students experiencing sudden financial difficulties to enable them to finish their studies.. It was a valuable safety net, for women dependant on income which could not always be guaranteed. (*La Femme*, April 1912: 58). The *Foyer international des Etudiantes* also offered financial support in the form of bursaries and scholarships, at least in its early years. In a feature on the *foyer* in the *New York Times* in 1923 it is reported that ‘ambition is stimulated by the offer of scholarships and prizes’ including an art scholarship of 500 francs and a literary scholarship of 2000 francs as well as musical and art prizes.

The Cité Universitaire project and the Collège Franco-Britannique

Throughout the 1920s and most of the 1930s, the principal form of accommodation for British women students in Paris remained *pensions*, lodgings in exchange for au pair work and if the student was lucky, one of the few rooms available in a woman’s *foyer*. This was despite the University of Paris having built a new campus in the fourteenth arrondissement to cater specifically for international students. With British universities building student halls on expanding university campuses in the UK and the consensus across the British educational establishment that international study was a priority, a normalisation of on-campus living, endorsed by the new universities, looked poised to extend across the channel. However, the unanimity amongst academics that study abroad should be an immersive experience – recorded in detail in the Leathes report –

would, somewhat ironically, prevent British students from taking advantage of the new campus until shortly before the Second World War.

The Cité Universitaire (CU) project aimed to bring the young people of nations together for the furtherance of cross-cultural understanding and tolerance and, as such, was a good fit with the ethos of the League of Nations and most obviously with its Intellectual Committee, working with educators to promote and facilitate international mobility. The project was international and relied on buy-in – literal buy-in – from governments and benefactors across the world. Each country had its plot for a ‘maison’ but they had to foot the bill for it. As such, the British had an influence on what the British ‘maison’ – the Collège Franco-Britannique – would offer. British academics insisted that the British-only ‘maison’ should be shared with French students so that British students could enjoy an intensive cultural and linguistic interchange of use to their degree. They did not want their students to have ‘une sorte de prolongement de l’Angleterre à Paris’ but rather a ‘contact aussi constant que possible avec la vie française’. It’s interesting that this outlook recalls the wording around the study abroad in the Leathes report and the precision with which expectations of residence abroad were defined:

That any modern language can be best learned in the country where it is spoken is a truism; but it is a truism that requires some qualification [...] Britons in foreign surroundings are apt to seek British society; thus they lose a part of even the whole of the desired advantage. We are informed, and can readily believe, that the usefulness of the holiday courses for teachers which have been held on the Continent was greatly diminished because the British students inevitably spent their leisure in each other’s company; except in hours or organised instruction, France and the French slipped into the background. The British student abroad should, so far as possible, avoid all British associations, and deliver himself entirely to the influence of his new environment. (Leathes, Section ii: 75)

Unfortunately, construction of the Collège was delayed for nearly a decade. It was a delay described as embarrassing and unnecessary by ‘A Resident’ whose article ‘British muddle in Paris’ in *The Truth* in September 1933, told of the removal of the foundation stone and the notice board while students from other countries were happily ensconced in their new buildings only having heard ‘vaguely of the British emplacement’. The insistence that the Collège should be a Franco-British project – an Anglo-French foundation to provide the accommodation for the nearby British Institute – meant responsibility for realising what had become a larger more expensive building because of the dual nationality concept (second in size after the huge United States ‘maison’) was tangled between London and Paris. The cash-strapped new British universities were not major investors in the Collège Franco-Britannique. Eighteen of them promised an annual subscription of £4000 but a total raised of £66,000, was not even half of the £150,000 needed. Further investment was not forthcoming and amid the economic slump of the early 1930s, the project was shelved. (A Resident, 6 September 1933: 353). The project finally came to fruition with the donation of 6 million francs from Mrs Edward Nathan ‘pour réaliser sous une autre forme’ the Collège project. The ‘nouvelle formule’ would welcome an equal number of British and French students so that ‘Les Anglais qui y viendraient pussent y trouver l’atmosphère française qu’ils viennent chercher à Paris’.

The inauguration of the College Franco-Britannique finally took place on 16 July 1937. In his speech, the French Minister of Education heralded the new opportunity for British students to come to the University of Paris to ‘compléter leur admirable formation’ with a stay in ‘cette vénérable Université de Paris au passé si glorieux et au présent si vivant’. (Discours prononcé par le Ministre de l’Education nationale, 1938: 21). The new Collège Franco-Britannique was, declared, Auguste Desclos, Director of the Cité universitaire, a luxurious and beautiful alternative to the

'galetas' of the Quartier latin where young people had previously been forced to stay. (Declos, Auguste, 1938: 12) Certainly, British universities appeared keen to avail of the new campus. They were well represented at the inauguration; a high profile event hosted over three days and attended by the French President and ministers of both the French and British governments. Virtually all institutions from the old and 'new' sector of British universities were there. Trinity College from Cambridge and Balliol College from Oxford, several London University colleges, Edinburgh, St Andrews and Durham, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Aberdeen, Newcastle, Exeter and Dublin and Belfast. (Anonymous, 1938: 16). Despite the event being very much a male-dominated gathering, the two women of the twenty one British guests was an indication, at the very least, that women may have had a say in the shaping of the Collège project. It is tempting to see in the invitation extended to the then head of the British Federation of University Women Miss Dorothy Chapman of Westfield College, some recognition of the BFUW in the area of international study. More likely, though, is that Chapman and Miss Helen Trudgian then of the University of Exeter, later a lecturer of French 'in the Durham colleges' (Durham University, 1978). were invited not for any altruistic work for women but because they had 'professional' experience of university campus accommodation, and that was their ticket in. Women's academic involvement in accommodation matters (or willingness to be) was being seen as a necessary 'string to their bow' when applying for an academic job. British universities were creating posts for women but with pastoral roles attached to them and as universities created more halls of residence to attract students from outside their region so opportunities for women grew. Chapman was Warden of Women Students at the University of Bangor and then Warden again at the University of Liverpool where she taught Latin. In 1922 in *Higher Education for Women in Great Britain*, (36) a publication commissioned by the International Federation of University Women Phoebe Sheavyn, Senior Tutor for Women Students at the University of Manchester wrote: 'Women lecturers are not so rare, though their numbers are still comparatively small [...] The main avenue to University teaching for women lies through the Colleges for women only, where they, of course, form the entire residential staff [...] the residential Halls attached to the mixed Universities provide posts of responsibility and prestige for a considerable number of educated women as Wardens or Principals' (Sheavyn, 160).

In the post-war period, despite the dissension of aforementioned senior academics like Enid Starkie, there was recognition among academics of the need to make study abroad more coherent and more organised for undergraduate students. The papers in the Mary Williams collection around the formation of the Association of Heads of French in 1945 are revealing in this regard, in particular, the responses to a questionnaire 'on the resumption and development of exchanges between French and British universities' sent out to all Heads or Professors of French in 1945. It comprised a set of questions on current arrangements for 'Residence of British Students in France' referring 'to such arrangements as it is desirable to make when normal conditions are re-established' with suggestions concerning 'plans for a more distant future'. The more distant future, with peacetime normality restored, largely concerned making courses be they annual, term-long or vacation and taken in Paris, at the Sorbonne and the British Institute, useful to undergraduate students and compatible with degree courses in the UK. By the start of the second war most British universities had accepted that residence abroad should be compulsory even though the stipulation varied from one year to one term or one long vacation. (Association of Heads of French, 1946: 4). Tracing the post-war evolution of study abroad programs is, like that of the inter-war, complex, requiring of another lengthy study to bring together the threads. However, it would seem that key to progressing not only on this issue but on the consolidation of 'modern studies' in the new civic and red-brick universities across the land was the mobilisation of the profession into subject bodies to cohere the professional voice.

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