

The American Expatriate Literary Community in Paris: Collective Biographies of Margaret
Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner

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Abstract

This study challenges the notion that the American expatriate literary community in Paris ended with the roaring twenties following the departure of the main male figures in the 1930s. Through the collective biographies of Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner, this paper will demonstrate not only did the community continue to exist, but will explore the attitudes, dynamics and disregarded experiences of these four significant American literary women in Paris during the 1930s, and their navigation of a period of uncertainty, hardship and crisis.

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Introduction

The experiences of American literary women in Paris during the 1930s have largely been overlooked by historians. Most scholarship on the expatriate modernist community in Paris focuses on the 1920s and suggests that this community had dispersed by the thirties. Scholarship on the 1930s tends to focus either on new male arrivals (such as Henry Miller) or shifts focus to French writers after 1929. Craig Monk, William Wiser and Herbert Lottman all demonstrate these tendencies in their scholarship.¹ This approach has displaced the role of those expatriate modernist literary figures who remained in Paris, who were primarily women, and the continuing role they played in the literary community of Paris throughout the 1930s. The thirties was a decade that is notable for literary output and political engagement but understudied by comparison with the 1920s with respect to expatriate American artists in the French capital. Scholarship on literary women in 1930s Paris is commonly biographical or treats the themes of modernism or sexuality. These approaches have pioneered this field of study and enable my analysis. By outlining what has already been done in the field, I am able to show what my project will contribute. My study will demonstrate that not only were there prominent women in the American literary community who remained in Paris during the 1930s, but that a modernist community of writers persisted with women at its helm. By focusing on the experiences of four women central to this community, Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach, and Janet Flanner, my study will demonstrate the continued existence of a literary community in Paris during the 1930s and highlight its contributions.

¹ Craig Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation: Expatriate Autobiography and American Modernism* (University of Iowa Press, 2008); Herbert R. Lottman, *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (University of Chicago Press ed.: University of Chicago Press, 1998); William Wiser, *The Twilight Years: Paris in the 1930s* (Carroll & Graf, 2000).

The Myth of the Masculine American Literary Community

Paris was the preeminent gathering place of writers and artists during the 1920s. After the Great War, Paris became a cultural hub that people from all over the world flocked to. A large portion of these people were Americans. Paris became the home of these American expatriates, many of whom were literary figures or had writing aspirations. They were dubbed the Lost Generation, originally by Gertrude Stein and later Ernest Hemingway.² Although the 1920s saw the establishment of a dynamic American literary community in Paris, the economic crash of 1929 brought an end to the roaring 20s, and the majority of the American community returned to the United States.

The 1920s and the Lost Generation of expatriate modernists in Paris has been treated primarily as a male phenomenon and a masculine community. Craig Monk demonstrates that the autobiographies and memoirs written by men, such as Ernest Hemingway's memoir *A Moveable Feast* (1964), created the myth that the 1920s literary community in Paris was led by and centred around men who asserted their own significance and dominance in this community. This myth has obscured the contributions of women writers during the 1920s, as Monk argues, and fed the assumption that when these men left in the 1930s, the American literary community in Paris ceased to exist.³

Scholarship on this community has, for the most part, taken this myth at face value. Hugh Ford's book, *Published in Paris: American and British Writers, Printers, and Publishers in Paris, 1920-1939* (1975), is one of the first to show the contributions of the publishers and printers in Paris, rather than focusing narrowly on writers. Ford's book outlines the chronology

² Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1st Scribner Classics ed.: Scribner Classics, 1996), 61.

³ Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation*, 117.

and history behind the various written works made in Paris during this time, and he also provides an overview of the general literary scene in Paris. Ford documents the contributions of both men and women in his book, there is however more on the influence and interactions of the men, and influential women are reduced to a listing of important figures.

Ford does, however, discuss the importance of Sylvia Beach in the literary world of Paris. He states she received her fame and prominence by not only opening an English language bookstore in Paris, Shakespeare and Company, but she famously and courageously published James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was deemed obscene in the United States.⁴ Ford continually references Beach throughout the book, but mainly in relation to aiding Joyce or other famous male writers in their endeavours. He only remarks on her own experiences during the 1930s in a footnote, describing her financial struggles and the support of authors that enabled her to keep her shop open.⁵ Ford's work also mentions the importance of Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, and Janet Flanner but does not provide the same level of detail, or discussion of their experiences as he does with other figures. He especially neglects their experiences and contributions in the 1930s, although they were some of the few remaining Americans in Paris. Ford's work is representative in his treatment of the experiences of the Lost Generation, his focus on the experiences of the men, and his treatment of women largely in relation to how they contributed to the work and lives of men.

Scholars have treated the broader topic of cultural life in Paris in the 1930s in a similar way. Herbert Lottman's book, *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War*, describes politics in Paris from 1930-1960. He focuses on the

⁴ Hugh D. Ford, *Published in Paris: American and British Writers, Printers, and Publishers in Paris, 1920-1939* (Macmillan, 1975), 3-9.

⁵ Ford, *Published in Paris*, 27.

contributions of French writers and artists such as André Gide, in the changing political climate. Throughout the book he pokes fun at the Americans in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. Lottman remarks that there were not very many Americans left in Paris during the 1930s, and that those who continued to live in Paris during this time took more from the city than they contributed.⁶ Lottman quotes American writer Henry Miller who claimed the political atmosphere was distracting to his writing, clouded his head and ruined his creativity. Lottman uses Miller as an example to suggest most American writers who remained in Paris during the thirties felt similarly, aside from newspaper journalists.⁷ Sylvia Beach and Gertrude Stein are mentioned as both continuing to cater to the literary life of the city, but Lottman states that they were not engaged with the events and politics of the thirties. Lottman remarks that the bookstores of Sylvia Beach and her partner Adrienne Monnier were the meeting grounds for many French political activists during the 1930s, and a few anglophones, but that the women primarily played the role of hostesses.⁸

A recurring theme in Lottman's book is that the cultural sphere that drew so many American tourists to the Left Bank during the 1920s, was reclaimed by the French in the 1930s in a new political climate.⁹ Lottman's book demonstrates a very limited view of the role of Americans in that context. He suggests, like most, that the American literary community had disappeared and overlooks the contributions and experiences of those who remained.

William Wiser's book, *The Twilight Years: Paris in the 1930s*, looks at the lives of the people he finds to be significant as well as important events in Paris during the 1930s. He covers

⁶ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 37.

⁷ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 42-43.

⁸ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, xiii, 29-30.

⁹ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 47.

the experiences of various cultural figures in the 1930s such as Coco Chanel and Josephine Baker, but focuses on the lives of Henry Miller and James Joyce in great detail. Throughout the book, Wisner uses the writing of women to describe the cultural and political shifts and events in Paris, in particular articles by Janet Flanner. In this behind the scenes way, Wisner portrays the influence and continued presence of American literary women in Paris during the thirties, but without explicitly acknowledging it.

Wisner makes reference to Sylvia Beach often in his piece: in fact his second chapter is about Beach and her bookshop. In this chapter Wisner explains the difficulty Beach had in keeping her bookshop, Shakespeare and Company, open with fewer Americans in Paris. He discusses the long working relationship Beach had with James Joyce, as well as the terrible fallout that happened between them in the 1930s.¹⁰ Wisner also detailed Beach's continued importance in Paris. New arrivals during the 1930s (like Henry Miller) were first sent to or found their way to Shakespeare and Company, in order to find their place in the city.¹¹ Wisner concludes his book with the people who fled Paris in 1939, Janet Flanner being one of them, and with the occupation of Paris. Sylvia Beach, however, remained in Paris throughout the war.¹²

In his focus on people he found compelling in Paris during the 1930s, Wisner details the experiences of some American literary women (especially Anais Nin and Sylvia Beach) but these women are seen through their interactions with their male literary counterparts: Henry Miller for Nin, and James Joyce for Beach. These key women are treated mainly as footnotes in the lives of men, and we only get a glimpse into their experiences. In this way, Wisner feeds the myth of the masculine American literary community in Paris, despite his focus on the 1930s.

¹⁰ Wisner, *The Twilight Years*, 18-21, 26-29.

¹¹ Wisner, *The Twilight Years*, 30-31.

¹² Wisner, *The Twilight Years*, 271-273.

Monk, Ford, Lottman and Wiser's works highlight the prominence of the myth Hemingway and others created around the American literary community in Paris. My aim is to challenge that myth and show that the American literary community in Paris continued to exist in the thirties despite the main male players having left. Many women who were in this community since the 1920s remained in Paris throughout the 1930s and continued to interact as a community, albeit with new characteristics. Furthermore, they continued to write, publish, and leave their mark on the literary landscape.

Feminist Literary Analyses of Expatriate Modern Writing in the 1930s

There has been quite a bit of scholarly work on modernist writing in the past few decades. With the progression of women's history, women modernist writers have become the subjects of many studies. The contributions of American women to the Paris literary community has provided a great deal of material for study: the work of Janet Flanner and Djuna Barnes in particular, have received considerable scholarly attention.¹³

The volume of scholarship on modernist women writers stresses the influential nature of the writing and experiences of literary women. For example, Shari Benstock's book, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* is the most comprehensive study of women writers in Paris and their contributions to the cultural sphere. The book examines the lives and the literature written by women from 1900-1940 with a focus on the modernism of women -- as opposed to modernism performed and described by men -- to demonstrate a distinct female experience and undermine the masculine heterosexual values ascribed to modernism.¹⁴ To this end, Benstock

¹³ Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)Positionings* (Routledge, 1994); Mary E. Galvin, *Queer Poetics: Five Modernist Women Writers* (Praeger, 1999); Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick, *Modernist Women Writers and War: Trauma and the Female Body in Djuna Barnes, H.D., and Gertrude Stein* (Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (1st ed.: University of Texas Press, 1986), 3-4, 6.

performs a comprehensive analysis of the writing of Djuna Barnes and what it reflects about her experience in Paris, including *Nightwood* Barnes's influential novel written during the 1930s. Benstock demonstrates how the novel shows Barnes's view of what was considered to be a woman's place in the patriarchal construct. The novel portrays Paris as a dark grim city, especially at night. Through this, Barnes outlines her view of lesbianism and the lesbian community in Paris as one of turmoil, drunken mistakes and guilt. Benstock states that Barnes was one of many lesbians who was unable to escape a puritan childhood and felt guilty about her relationships in Paris.¹⁵ Through her novel *Nightwood*, Barnes also displayed the panic felt in the 1930s amid the tense political climate.¹⁶

Benstock devotes another chapter of her book to Janet Flanner's experiences in Paris. She discusses the technique of Flanner's writing and the unique voice through which she describes the cultural scene of Paris. During the 1920s, Flanner's column featured many topics, such as cooking, fashion, and filmmaking, not to mention the social and literary events in Paris. Through this column, Flanner depicted the atmosphere and experience of the Left Bank.¹⁷ Benstock remarks on the emphasis and prominence Flanner places on women as subjects of her studies and writing. Flanner continually interviewed women for profiles and ensured they received the attention and recognition they deserved.¹⁸ Benstock also suggests that during the 1920s Flanner placed herself halfway between being an American and being a European, but her perspective

¹⁵ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 266, 450.

¹⁶ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 424-27.

¹⁷ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 117.

¹⁸ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 102-113.

changed in the 1930s, to a fully a European one.¹⁹ “She viewed herself as a participant now rather than a bystander.”²⁰

Benstock’s, *Women of the Left Bank*, also discusses the reasons women moved to Paris. “For all these women, Paris offered a place to write, releasing them from the patriarchal cultural script of marriage [and] motherhood enforced in other cities of the world.”²¹ This can also be seen as a reason why women remained in Paris after the stock market crash and despite growing political conflict in Europe in the 1930s. Benstock states that the cultural scene in Paris had shifted a lot from the 1920s to the 1930s, New York was now gaining status as a cultural center. The Left Bank was quieter, the tourists were all but gone and the people who remained were working and writing.²² Benstock argues that the reason for this is a shift in the 1930s from culture to politics. It became important to write about things of social and political relevance during the 1930s rather than continuing to explore their own personal creative pursuits, although some were able to do both, such as Djuna Barnes with *Nightwood*.²³ Benstock engages with the literary works of the various women in her large study in order to pull out the experiences of these women who had all made Paris their home.

Deborah Parsons’s book, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (2000), discusses the importance of cities and their dynamics in the writing and lives of women. The chapter, “The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris”, explores the relation between the city of Paris with the experiences of women living and writing there.²⁴ In this

¹⁹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 101.

²⁰ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 119.

²¹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 447-448.

²² Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 119-120.

²³ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 397-398.

²⁴ Deborah L. Parsons, “The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris,” in *Streetwalking the Metropolis Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

chapter, Parsons remarks on the importance of Benstock's contribution to women's modernist literature and the history of the Left Bank. However, Parsons argues that Benstock's analysis diminishes the importance of the city in the women's experiences. Benstock ties the women to spaces they created, such as salons, not showing the interaction with the dynamics of the city of Paris itself.²⁵ Parsons demonstrates that the limited view Benstock provides removes women from their connection to the city.²⁶

In discussing the significant role the city played in the experiences of women writers, Parsons focuses on Janet Flanner. She states that Flanner said she did not actually exist until she moved to Paris and started to write.²⁷ Flanner's writing demonstrates how often she reflects on the city and interacts with it. Through the thirties, Flanner engages with changes in Paris, remarking on the new mesmerizing colours of the metro.²⁸ Parsons states, "Her letters are very much a social female perception of the city..."²⁹ Parsons also demonstrates the role Paris played in Anais Nin and Djuna Barnes' writing and their experiences. Anais Nin moved to Paris in 1929: her experience of Paris in the 1930s, much like Flanner, was one that emphasized self-reflection and growth. Barnes's view of the city was quite different: she represents the city of Paris as violent and corrupt.³⁰

Finally, Parsons shows that while male writers for the most part kept their American identity, the majority of women came to identify Paris as their defining place.³¹ Women viewed Paris as their home, a city that created the person they were. Paris provided a greater freedom for

²⁵ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 149-150.

²⁶ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 150.

²⁷ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 152.

²⁸ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 155-157, 160.

²⁹ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 161.

³⁰ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 161, 172-178.

³¹ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 150-151.

women: both professionally and personally.³² For Parsons, the city of Paris provided women with the space to explore their identities and voices.³³

The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers, edited by Maren Tova Linett, contains several essays discussing the literary works of various women from Europe and the United States throughout the early to mid-twentieth century. The essays link modernism with various other themes, such as trauma or ethnicity, to provide a clearer picture of what the experiences of women modernist writers were. The essays cover the period from 1895-1945.³⁴

Bonnie Kime Scott's essay in this compilation features a section on writing in the 1930s. Scott states that the writing in the 1930s shifted towards politics and darker subject matter, as illustrated by Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and Janet Flanner's "Letter from Paris" articles.³⁵ The writing of the women in the 1930s shows that a deeper political engagement could be intertwined with various aspects of modernism such as the study of perception or consciousness.³⁶ Scott uses *Nightwood* to demonstrate her point. The novel studies the relationship between Barnes and her partner Thelma Wood, her views on sexuality, as well as how she saw Paris and herself as being in danger from the rise of fascism in Europe.³⁷

Jayne Marek's essay discusses the significance of salon culture, little magazines³⁸, the various presses, and their contributions to the modernist movement. Marek argues that the salons were important in fostering conversation and, therefore, the creation of literary works. Women

³² Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 154.

³³ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 228.

³⁴ Maren Tova Linett, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁵ Bonnie Kime Scott, "Transforming the Novel," in Linett, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27.

³⁶ Scott, "Transforming the Novel", 30.

³⁷ Scott, "Transforming the Novel", 28.

³⁸ Little magazine is a term used to describe literary magazines that features experimental writing and literary criticism and are not produced for profit.

such as Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein ran weekly salons. Little magazines curated modernist writing and gave opportunities to writers to publish their work. Margaret Anderson was the editor of the famous modernist little magazine *Little Review*. Presses enabled the publication of modernist works: Sylvia Beach published James Joyce's acclaimed novel *Ulysses*.³⁹

The scholarship on women's modernist writing provides insight into the experiences of women writers in Paris. The essays within Maren Tova Linett's book display various themes that are seen in modernist writing by women, while Benstock and Parsons' contributions focus more specifically on women's experiences in Paris through their written work. My study will build on the foundation created by these important works by demonstrating the continuation of the American literary community in Paris, the key roles played by its prominent women members, and the new priorities and dynamics the community assumed during the 1930s.

Sexuality and the Paris American Literary Community

The four women who are the subjects of this study -- Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner -- were all lesbians. Paris was viewed as more progressive and encouraging of various lifestyles than other places. This was part of the reason for the influx of expatriates after the First World War.⁴⁰ The theme of sexuality within the Paris American literary community has also been extensively studied by scholars. Benstock covers the topic of sexuality thoroughly in *Women of the Left Bank*. She states that histories of sexuality have tended to claim that women in patriarchal societies either imitate masculine forms, or react against them. This however gives all women the same history, it puts the experiences of women in two boxes.

³⁹ Jayne Marek, "Magazines, presses, and salons in women's modernism" in Linett, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 64-65, 71-73.

⁴⁰ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 447-448.

Benstock denounces that claim, as her study shows the different experiences women had, further exploring the experiences of homosexual women and heterosexual women.⁴¹

Benstock links the theme of sexuality with the salons that are the focus of her analysis. She explains that the two main salons of the Paris literary community were both run by lesbians (Gertrude Stein and Natalie Barney), however they were run in very different ways. While both of the salons welcomed gay and straight writers, Stein and Barney's styles and approaches to their salons were very different. Barney reacted against patriarchal values, she ran her salon like a party, however she thought all lesbians must dress like women and not imitate heterosexual values. Gertrude Stein, on the other hand, replicated heterosexual norms in her salon and in her relationship, having the men and herself discuss literature in a separate room than the wives whom she left with her partner Alice B. Toklas to have tea.⁴²

Benstock further discusses the differences within women's sexuality that had been overlooked in scholarship. She suggests that, "For most women, lesbianism did not offer a release from the code of compulsory heterosexuality of the modern world, but rather bound them in continued opposition and imitation of that code."⁴³ Benstock argues that there were very few lesbians in Paris who were happy and confident in their sexuality. Janet Flanner was described as a minority in her view of homosexuality: she was confident and happy, which was not the norm for lesbian American women in Paris, according to Benstock. Flanner kept her private life private, however, and freely associated in both the heterosexual and homosexual circles in Paris.

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⁴¹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 7-8.

⁴² Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 10-15.

⁴³ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 306.

⁴⁴ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 115-116.

Benstock also argues that there was a large difference between the homosexual and heterosexual women in terms of their experiences with the masculine framework of society. The interests of men were considered more important and took precedence over those of heterosexual women.⁴⁵ She states that homosexual women were able to break from the standard form of heterosexual relationships in which one person is the alpha and the other is the beta.⁴⁶ She states, “While homosexual women were ‘on the margins’ of society, they were far less marginalized than heterosexual women, who were unable to establish any firm power base within masculine culture and were threatened by the company of homosexual women.”⁴⁷ Benstock’s analysis of the sexuality of expatriate women in Paris shows a greater difference in women’s experience than had previously been documented.

Gregory Woods’s book, *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World*, discusses the homosexual communities in Europe during the twentieth century. Chapter four of the book discusses the society of homosexuals in Paris, and specifically Americans, who found Paris to be more liberating than the United States. In the chapter, “France and its Visitors”, Woods focuses on Natalie Barney, Sylvia Beach and Gertrude Stein and their roles in the community. Woods demonstrates how Barney created her salon to be a cultural hub for homosexuals, and charts her influence through her strict ideas about how lesbians should behave and what they should wear.⁴⁸ Woods mentions the role of Stein and Alice Toklas in creating a community for writers and artists, and also for homosexuals, one that was different from and

⁴⁵ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 451.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 451-452.

⁴⁸ Gregory Woods, *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World* (Yale University Press, 2016), 117-120.

almost opposite to Barney's.⁴⁹ He also discusses Beach's role in Paris, arguing that she created a haven for not only Americans but for homosexuals in her bookshop.⁵⁰ Woods explains how these three women all created very different spaces in which gay writers like themselves could be comfortable.

The scholarship on women's sexuality, specifically in the expatriate community in Paris, have portrayed the significance of certain actors such as Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein. This study adds Janet Flanner, Sylvia Beach, Margaret Anderson and Djuna Barnes to that list of influential women who shaped and supported a lesbian community in Paris.

Women in Memoirs and Biographies

Scholars have found biography to be an important tool for historical analysis. Many studies use memoirs and biographies to determine the experiences of individuals. Collective biography has the potential to enlighten studies even further. Craig Monk in his book, *Writing the Lost Generation Expatriate Autobiography and American Modernism*, tackles the autobiographies written by the literary figures of the Lost Generation. He discusses how the myth of the 1920s has been portrayed in memoirs and sustained in popular culture. He states that autobiographies such as those by Malcolm Cowley and Ernest Hemingway mystify the experience and serve to promote their authors.⁵¹

Monk discusses the memoirs of women during this period, though he focusses on those by Janet Flanner and Sylvia Beach because of their stylistic differences. Flanner formatted her memoir to have excerpts from her "Letter from Paris" articles, which enabled her to stay very true to the past, and included her later comments on the pieces and situations she described.

⁴⁹ Woods, *Homintern*, 122-123.

⁵⁰ Woods, *Homintern*, 120-122.

⁵¹ Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation*, 14, 182.

Beach, on the other hand, wrote mainly about her friends.⁵² Monk compares Beach's memoir to those by Gertrude Stein and Malcolm Cowley, stating that Beach is far less self-promoting than most others.⁵³ Monk argues that women use their autobiographies to set themselves apart from the experiences detailed by the men of the community, not only in what they described, but how they told it. The autobiographies of Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner challenge the ones written by American expatriate men. Beach and Flanner adopt a more inclusive and faithful approach to relating the experiences of the American literary community in Paris.⁵⁴

Bethany Mannon also uses the memoirs of women from the literary community in her study, "Kay Boyle, Janet Flanner, and the Public Voice in Women's Memoirs", which takes a parallel view to Monk's.⁵⁵ Mannon looks at the influential memoirs of Kay Boyle and Janet Flanner, and argues that the form the memoirs -- public representation, historical account and reflection -- sets them apart. Most of the memoirs written by the men of the American literary community use self-representation as their form.⁵⁶ Mannon's exploration of Flanner's memoir demonstrates that Flanner has a unique voice, seen in both her articles for *The New Yorker* and her commentaries on writing in her memoir. She portrayed situations and people in their context and does not simply reflect her opinions. Flanner wrote detailed biographies and tributes to the Americans of Paris in her column and memoirs, in doing this she also comments on the cultural impact of a person's death, truly showing their influence on society.⁵⁷ Finally, Mannon argues that the memoirs by Kay Boyle and Janet Flanner are written "to continue their work as writers

⁵² Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation*, 17, 118, 122.

⁵³ Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation*, 118-119.

⁵⁴ Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation*, 119, 138.

⁵⁵ Bethany Ober Mannon, "Kay Boyle, Janet Flanner, and the Public Voice in Women's Memoirs," *Contemporary Women's Writing* vol. 11, no. 2 (2017), 184.

⁵⁶ Mannon, "Kay Boyle, Janet Flanner, and the Public Voice in Women's Memoirs," 185.

⁵⁷ Mannon, "Kay Boyle, Janet Flanner, and the Public Voice in Women's Memoirs," 193-194, 196.

and public figures.”⁵⁸ Their memoirs demonstrate not only their experiences but also assert their own literary significance.⁵⁹

Benstock’s book, *Women of the Left Bank*, is a large collective biography which examines women’s lives and works to determine what it was like to be a woman in literary Paris.⁶⁰ She challenges assumptions and demonstrates that the experiences of women in this period were distinct and significant.⁶¹ Most of the women have been viewed in terms of their contributions to and support of the careers of their male counterparts.⁶² In this collective biography, Benstock shows that women also held prominent positions in Paris and were more than just background figures.

The individual biographies of Sylvia Beach, Djuna Barnes and Janet Flanner, on the other hand, provide the intimate details of their experiences that are not depicted elsewhere. Scholars find biographies useful as they use letters and interviews with friends and family that might otherwise not be accessible.

Brenda Wineapple published a biography of Janet Flanner in 1989. The biography contains details of Flanner’s early life until her death, from her writing, letters and interviews with her friends and family. Flanner was known to be a private person when it came to her personal life therefore this biography is even more important. The book is titled, *Genêt*, which was the alias Flanner went by in her *New Yorker* column, “Letter from Paris”, which she wrote from 1925-1975.⁶³ The biography has three chapters that cover what she was doing and feeling

⁵⁸ Mannon, “Kay Boyle, Janet Flanner, and the Public Voice in Women’s Memoirs,” 197.

⁵⁹ Mannon, “Kay Boyle, Janet Flanner, and the Public Voice in Women’s Memoirs,” 198.

⁶⁰ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 3.

⁶¹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, ix.

⁶² Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, x.

⁶³ Brenda Wineapple, *Genêt, a Biography of Janet Flanner* (Ticknor & Fields, 1989).

during the 1930s. Within these chapters, Wineapple explains the open relationship Janet Flanner had with Solita Solano throughout the years, especially during the 1930s when Flanner fell in love with Noel Murphy. Flanner was in a relationship with both women during the 1930s.⁶⁴

Wineapple describes how, at the beginning of the financial crisis, Flanner was unconcerned, but into the early 30s she began to feel the effects of the crisis, as did France. Wineapple's biography provides great insight into Janet Flanner's life during the 1930s. She shows Flanner's dedication to her job and to Paris, which is the reason she chose to remain until 1939. Wineapple lays out Flanner's experiences and sentiments during the thirties, her interactions and feelings about the changes that took place. She details Flanner's nervousness about returning to the United States, which she called "a cage" compared to Paris.⁶⁵

Phillip Herring's biography, *Djuna: the Life and Work of Djuna Barnes*, details Barnes's life from her childhood to her death in 1982.⁶⁶ In describing Barnes' life during the 1930s, Herring demonstrated the conflict and depression she felt about Paris. She loved Paris but in light of her devastating split with partner Thelma Wood, and the change in atmosphere since the financial crash, Barnes was torn about remaining.⁶⁷ The majority of Herring's description of Barnes's life during the 1930s is about her interactions and relationships with men such as Charles Henri Ford, and friends like Peggy Guggenheim, as well as her writing and publication of her novel *Nightwood*.⁶⁸ Herring did remark that Barnes did not have much interest in the politics of the period, which one may claim is evident in her writing in the 1930s.⁶⁹ While most

⁶⁴ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 115.

⁶⁵ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 141.

⁶⁶ Phillip F. Herring, *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes* (Penguin Books, 1996).

⁶⁷ Herring, *Djuna*, 146-147.

⁶⁸ Herring, *Djuna*, 176, 190-195.

⁶⁹ Herring, *Djuna*, 242.

others were writing about politics, Barnes was still struggling to come to terms with the end of her relationship.

Noel Riley Fitch's biography, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties*, is written in a similar style to Beach's autobiography. The biography features not only Beach's life and experiences, but also the lives of expatriates in Paris during the 1920-1930s. Beach's bookshop was a large gathering place for all American writers in Paris, therefore her connections within the community were numerous. James Joyce is most heavily featured: Beach's life was entangled with Joyce's because she published *Ulysses* and managed his affairs.⁷⁰ The 1930s were economically difficult for Beach, however, because the main patrons of Shakespeare and Company were no longer in Paris. During the early 1930's, Beach and Joyce's relationship fell apart over royalties from *Ulysses*. Joyce did not want to share the profit with Beach, despite her being the publisher.⁷¹ As the thirties proceeded, Beach's financial situation worsened. Adrienne Monnier, Beach's partner in business and life organized, with the help of friends, a fundraiser to keep Shakespeare and Company open, for which Beach offered a reading by Hemingway who never performed readings.⁷²

Fitch demonstrates that Beach was also upset with the political changes in Paris especially after the riots of 1934, however, Beach summed up the 1930s by stating that, while the political conflict was distressing, the decade was filled with friendship and literature.⁷³ Nearing

⁷⁰ Noel Riley Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties* (1st ed.: Norton, 1983).

⁷¹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 334.

⁷² Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 351, 358-359.

⁷³ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 375.

the end of the thirties she also expressed fear for the future. Despite her fear, Beach remained in Paris at the end of 1939 and through the war, as she saw herself as one of the French.⁷⁴

The scholarship on the experiences of the women in the expatriate literary community in Paris uses a variety of approaches from analyzing memoirs to compiling collective biographies. All of these methods enable a deeper comprehension of the experiences of literary women. The analyses of memoirs by Monk and Mannon show how women perceive and voice their own experiences. The biographies by Wineapple, Herring and Fitch, and collective biography by Benstock, demonstrate the experiences of women that had not been documented and show a broader and shared connection between the women and their experience.

This historiographical review has shown what has been done in the overlapping areas significant to my research, as well as the gaps which remain. My research takes literary women out of the shadow cast by Ernest Hemingway and the other leading men, demonstrates the continuity of a community which revolved less around men than the myth suggests, and illuminates the new priorities and concerns of women writers in the 1930s. Shari Benstock questions, in *Women of the Left Bank*, whether American expatriate women in Paris truly formed a community. She suggests that it is not clear whether there was ever a real bond or interaction between them, or whether they were simply a group of acquaintances who happened to live in the same place at the same time.⁷⁵ My paper will challenge that claim by demonstrating that American women formed a literary community in Paris, that theirs was part of a much broader cultural network, and that within this network Anderson, Barnes, Beach and Flanner were leading figures.

⁷⁴ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 368, 393.

⁷⁵ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 34.

Context

One aspect of the lives of literary women in 1930s Paris which remains surprisingly neglected in the scholarship is the political and social context in which they lived and worked. The 1930s were a time of economic collapse and radical politics all over the world. The First World War had devastated France, which lost over a million men, suffered shortages of food, and struggled with a diminished workforce. Martin Kitchen argues that the French government during the 1920s was not able to make the changes needed to fix the economy and stabilize France.⁷⁶ Throughout the 1930s, the French people, like those in many other countries, turned to radical politics for solutions. Some looked to communism and the Soviet Union, others saw the answer in Fascism.⁷⁷ In Paris, a few specific events in the 1930s signaled the seriousness of the crisis and the political turmoil in Europe. One such event was the riots of February 6, 1934. Both Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner commented that this event shifted their focus to politics.

The lead up to the riots of 1934 was the Stavisky scandal of 1933. Serge Alexandre Stavisky was a businessman who had connections with politicians in France. Stavisky had embezzled millions of francs in December of 1933 and was then found dead in January 1934. The police said Stavisky died by suicide, however many on the political right believed that Stavisky was killed to cover-up the scandal of government corruption. This led to a series of accusations and dismissals from the French government of those who were connected to Stavisky, which then resulted in a center-left government. The radical right took the Stavisky scandal and the dismissals as an opportunity to undermine the government and some radical groups hoped to start a fascist revolution. A protest was called for February 6, 1934, in Place de la Concorde with

⁷⁶ Martin Kitchen, *Europe between the Wars: A Political History* (Longman, 1988), 209-210.

⁷⁷ Kitchen, *Europe between the Wars*, 218.

many fascist, nationalist and extreme right organizations and their supporters. Although the protest was poorly organized, and each group had its own grievances and goals, it drew large, violent crowds, was met by the police, and resulted in 15 deaths and 2500 wounded.⁷⁸ After the riots, President Daladier resigned, and the French government shifted to the right.⁷⁹

The riots of February 6, 1934 were an event that awoke many to the rise of radical politics and the threat the extreme right posed to peace and democracy. After this event, the Communists and the Socialists in France joined together against fascism and the radical right.⁸⁰ They formed a Popular Front government, with Léon Blum elected in May 1936.⁸¹ At the same time, Janet Flanner and Sylvia Beach became actively involved in politics, both lending their support to the Popular Front cause.

Margaret Anderson and Djuna Barnes had a different reaction. While many took to radical politics, another common political stance was isolationism. This was the stance taken, most notably, by the United States. Many Americans felt that they should not have intervened in the Great War and should never interfere with European politics again.⁸² This non-interventionism was evident in many governments' responses to the Spanish Civil War, for example. Margaret Anderson and Djuna Barnes embraced this stance, arguing that European wars and politics were not their concern.

⁷⁸ Kitchen, *Europe between the Wars*, 220-221.

⁷⁹ Kevin Passmore, "Crowd Psychology, Anti-Southern Prejudice, and Constitutional Reform in 1930s France: The Stavisky Affair and the Riots of 6 February 1934," in Samuel Kalman and Sean Kennedy, *The French Right between the Wars: Political and Intellectual Movements from Conservatism to Fascism* (Berghahn Books, 2014), 25.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Richard Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis: 1919-1939*, (Second revised ed.: Routledge, 2010), 85.

⁸² Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, 78-79.

Another important event that was felt by all in Paris was the Munich Conference in September 1938. The leaders of France, Britain, and Italy met with Hitler in Munich to address Nazi Germany's territorial demands. Britain and France in particular were adamant that they would not be drawn into another conflict, since they had barely recovered from the First World War. France and Britain coached the Czechoslovakian government into giving Germany the Sudeten territories it demanded, in exchange for Hitler promising not to invade Czechoslovakia, thus avoiding another war.⁸³ The attitude of appeasement and peace at all costs was a common stance for many Europeans and Americans. The French and British were eager to resolve issues without war: their priority in the 1930s was to deal with the economic crisis and social unrest in their own countries. They were supported by the majority of their citizenry who never wanted to see another war.⁸⁴ Anderson, Barnes, Beach and Flanner shared those widely held views, though Beach and Flanner sought peace through political engagement, while Barnes and Anderson rejected politics and turned to art and spirituality instead.

Despite these economic and political crises of the 1930s, Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner continued to make Paris their home. These literary women had resided in Paris since the mid-1920s to pursue their aspirations and to live their lives more freely. Paris was more progressive and able to provide the four women with a less restrictive environment in which to live, love and work.⁸⁵

Relationships

Just as the political context in which American literary women lived in Paris in the 1930s has been surprisingly neglected, so has the context of their social relationships and the networks

⁸³ Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, 90.

⁸⁴ Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, 84.

⁸⁵ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 451-452.

in which they operated. Natalie Barney's salon, for example, was a cultural and a social hotspot in Paris. Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner regularly attended Barney's salon with their partners. Natalie Barney was a wealthy American expatriate who lived in Paris for the majority of her life. Barney received a large inheritance from her parents, which allowed her to live as she wished.⁸⁶ She was a member of the literary community in Paris -- she was a poet and also wrote many books, some to correct and rewrite lesbian history. Her literary accomplishments are not what she is recognized for, however. Barney is remembered as having "devoted her life to praising the joys of, and indeed promoting an ethos of, lesbianism."⁸⁷ She strived to live her life by the qualities of Sappho, which meant the freedom to love without regret and jealousy, and a love of beauty.⁸⁸ Many of the women who attended Barney's salon believed in free love also. The lesbian women in the community often had affairs with each other or each other's partners.

While Barney's main target group for the salon were women, Benstock claimed she saw that having a separate group would isolate the women, therefore her salon was a place for all expatriates.⁸⁹ Barney ran her salon every Friday night at 20 rue Jacob in Paris for almost sixty years after her arrival in 1909. Her salon hosted all the important literary figures in Paris, and she took great pride in that.⁹⁰ Barney was a patron of the arts, she would financially support writers whom she enjoyed and thought were talented. Djuna Barnes was a recipient of Barney's support.

⁹¹ Natalie Barney was described by Sylvia Beach as an optimistic, warm and feminine person

⁸⁶ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 269.

⁸⁷ Andrea Weiss, *Paris Was a Woman: Portraits from the Left Bank* (Counterpoint, 2013), 69.

⁸⁸ Weiss, *Paris Was a Woman*, 69.

⁸⁹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 12.

⁹⁰ Woods, *Homintern*, 116-117.

⁹¹ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 10-11.

who had great taste.⁹² While her salon was open to everyone, she gathered women around her. Barney's salon remained an important part of the community continuing through the 1930s.

Like Barney's salon, many of the established nodes in the network of the American expatriate literary community in Paris continued to play a role in the 1930s, some however in a different or more prominent way. Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company, branched out to include politics, and Beach and her bookshop became heavily associated with French political activists. The teachings and doctrine of George Gurdjieff became more central in the life of Margaret Anderson and members of the literary community during the 1930s. Janet Flanner focused her column on the political events in Paris and Europe, rather than the cultural and social. In the following chapters, I will explore the biographies of Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner and demonstrate the new priorities that arose and were reflected in the community they shaped.

⁹² Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 1st Bison book, New ed./introduction by James Laughlin.. ed., (University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 114-115.

Chapter 1

Politics in the 1930s: Sylvia Beach, Janet Flanner and Paris

The 1930s saw a new atmosphere in Paris. Fascism and Communism were both on the rise in Europe, a civil war broke out in Spain, and there were fears of another world war. The circumstances in which so many Americans had thrived in Paris were gone with the onset of the Great Depression. Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner remained in Paris during the thirties, however. The two women had jobs and lives there and were reluctant to leave. Through the thirties, as Paris changed, Beach and Flanner changed as well. The women had to reexamine and make sense of the new circumstances in Europe. They both did this by engaging with the political issues that dominated interwar Europe. Sylvia Beach spent most of her time with French communist writers, she attended socialist rallies, participated in political debates and stocked her bookshop with socialist and communist literature. Janet Flanner used her platform to write on the broader political situation in Europe. She traveled to Germany and England to record the perspectives and situations there. Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner's experiences in the thirties illustrate the political climate in Paris, but also highlight the literary communities that continued to thrive.

Sylvia Beach

Sylvia Beach was born in 1887 in Baltimore, Maryland. She grew up struggling with constant headaches, a condition that affected her all of her life. The severity of her headaches made it difficult to attend school, therefore Beach did not have much of a formal education. Beach spent most of her time reading and learning from books. She relied heavily on books

growing up, which led to her passion for literature.¹ Beach's father was a reverend, he was the minister at many churches over the years, but he is most famously known as the longtime pastor at Princeton. However, in 1902, Reverend Beach was the minister of a church in Paris for two years. This gave Sylvia her first taste of Paris, and she fell in love with it.² Beach lived and studied in Paris and other European cities from 1916 until she settled in Paris in 1919, opening Shakespeare and Company, an English language bookshop and library.³

Beach's bookshop became the gathering place for English language expatriate writers in Paris, and later also for French writers. Beach's connections within the various literary communities in Paris were extensive, she knew everyone, and everyone knew her. Newcomers to Paris would head to Shakespeare and Company almost immediately to network and form connections with writers and publishers. While Shakespeare and Company was an important meeting place, it was foremost a library and bookshop. Beach's enthusiasm for literature ever since she was a young girl, made her an exceptional librarian and bookseller. She would take the time to match a customer with a book that suited them best.⁴ In the 1930s, Beach discovered that French African students were counting on her bookshop for the newest African American literature, therefore she made sure that the shop's collection was always up to date.⁵ For all these reasons, Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company was an important cultural landmark in Paris from 1919-1941.

Sylvia Beach met her partner Adrienne Monnier in 1918, in Paris. Beach went into Monnier's bookshop in search of the Paul Fort review *Vers et Prose*, and the two women formed

¹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 22-23.

² Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 3-7; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 23-25.

³ Sylvia Beach and Keri Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach* (Columbia University Press, 2010), xxx.

⁴ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 52.

⁵ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 178-179.

a deep connection. They had a lot in common, but also introduced each other to many things. Monnier helped Beach secure a place for her bookshop. Beach ended up relocating her bookshop from 8 rue Dupuytren to 12 rue de l'Odéon, which was across the street from Monnier's French bookstore, La Maison des Amis des Livres. Monnier and Beach lived together in the flat above Monnier's shop.⁶ The women lived and worked together for many years. In 1936, however, Beach took a trip to America to visit her family. During this trip she became quite ill, as was her father, so her trip was extended by six weeks.⁷ When Beach arrived back to her home in Paris, she discovered that Monnier had moved Gisele Freund, a photographer, into their apartment. Beach quickly moved out and this marked the end of their romantic relationship. The two remained business partners and friends until Monnier's death by suicide following a long illness in 1955.⁸

Sylvia Beach stated she had three loves in her life: Shakespeare and Company, Adrienne Monnier and James Joyce.⁹ Joyce was a large part of Beach's life. Beach was responsible for the publication of his controversial book, *Ulysses*, in 1922. Indeed, *Ulysses* was her first publication. Beach admired Joyce and thought he was a genius and was determined that the book be published. Beach subsequently published many editions of *Ulysses* throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, but she was more than Joyce's publisher. Beach supported Joyce financially throughout the twenties and some of the thirties, and she handled all of his business affairs. James Joyce, for his part, took advantage of Beach's kindness and admiration of his talent. Despite all Beach had done for his career, supporting him financially, publishing his work and

⁶ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 16-20; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 33-35, 39, 91.

⁷ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 173-174.

⁸ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 411.

⁹ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 40-41; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 367.

paying his debts, Joyce did not want to share his profits with her. In the early 1930s, after much harassment (Joyce claimed that Beach was holding him back from the American market) Beach relinquished her rights as publisher and agent, forfeiting her share of the profits. In 1932, Beach officially ended her professional relationship with Joyce. After this Beach and Joyce's relationship was strained, and never really recovered.¹⁰

While Adrienne Monnier and James Joyce were, for a time, her closest companions, Sylvia Beach was friends with a great deal of people in Paris. Beach associated with the expatriate literary community, mainly the American, English and French writers. She was friends with many of the "leading men" of the literary community: Ernest Hemingway, André Gide, and Robert McAlmon.¹¹ She was also good friends with many literary women. Beach and Monnier would attend gatherings at Natalie Barney's salon, especially during the thirties, and spent time with Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes and Janet Flanner.¹² Professionally, Beach's preference was for the Anglophones, however: "there are only two good French female writers" she commented, naming Colette and Adrienne Monnier. Beach argued that the work of French women writers leaves "nothing to compare with the English and American women writers."¹³

After the economic crash of 1929, Beach's financial situation became strained. Her main preoccupation during the thirties were her finances. The usual patrons of Shakespeare and Company were no longer in Paris. Most of the Americans and English had left, and those who remained did not have the money to buy books. Not only did the lack of business worry Beach, but also the loss of her remuneration from *Ulysses*. However, since she was no longer paying

¹⁰ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 11-12, 106-108, 325-329.

¹¹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 49, 86, 116-117, 200-201.

¹² Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 73.

¹³ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 161-162; Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 109-112.

Joyce's bills and lending him money she found her day-to-day expenses less.¹⁴ Beach also began to make her shop more appealing to a French clientele, and to students whom she hoped would keep her business alive.¹⁵ She had received some financial support from her mother, who had also given her the funds to initially open Shakespeare and Company, but although her mother continued to provide her with financial support in the 1930s, Beach's financial situation was beyond her mother's ability to help. Beach knew this and did not tell her family how desperate her situation was.¹⁶ The headaches she had struggled with all her life were more frequent and, for the most part, worse during the 1930s. Beach remarked in letters that her headaches were hurting her already struggling business.¹⁷

Sylvia Beach tried many things in order to keep her bookshop viable, such as selling her Joyce manuscripts and various first editions or signed copies of books given to her by her famous literary friends. None of these produced fruitful revenue.¹⁸ As the thirties proceeded, Beach's financial situation worsened. In 1935, Adrienne Monnier, André Gide and Paul Valéry, with the help of other writers, formed a group called Friends of Shakespeare and Company where members would pledge to contribute an annual sum to help Beach keep the bookstore afloat. Parisians and expatriates valued Shakespeare and Company and rushed to its aid. As an added incentive, members of Friends of Shakespeare and Company were invited to attend private readings at the bookshop. André Gide performed the first reading in 1936, as he was the main organizer of Friends of Shakespeare and Company. Many authors helped Beach by doing

¹⁴ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 334.

¹⁵ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 145.

¹⁶ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 35, 354.

¹⁷ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 181.

¹⁸ Janet Flanner, *Paris was Yesterday*, Viking Press, 1979, 129-130; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 350-353.

readings throughout 1936 and 1937. Ernest Hemingway, who otherwise refused to read his work in public, made an exception for Beach and performed a reading of a section of his novel, *To Have and Have Not*, on May 14, 1937.¹⁹ Sylvia Beach spent much of her time in the 1930s worrying over money to keep her bookshop open, organizing readings, sending out invitations and ordering chairs. Patrons included Natalie Barney, Margaret Anderson, and Janet Flanner.²⁰ The subscriptions and readings were a great success, and Shakespeare and Company was able to remain open.²¹

While Sylvia Beach was mainly preoccupied with saving her bookshop, she also was engaged in, and distressed about, the political atmosphere in Europe. Beach claimed she was upset with the political changes in Paris, especially after the riots of 1934. “You would not know Paris!” she exclaimed to her sister in reaction to the various protests and riots happening around the city. The Paris she was witnessing was not the same as it had been during the 1920s. The Paris she knew was joyous and festive, not angry and violent. Beach and Monnier kept up with the newspapers, reading the political reactions to the events on February 6, 1934.²² Noel Riley Fitch, Beach’s biographer, stated that Beach kept herself informed on the political situation, and was involved in serious conversations about the state of France and Europe, partly because of her many politically-engaged French friends. Beach, however, claimed that she resisted being consumed by “worrisome talk.”²³ Nevertheless, while Beach continued to focus on her passions

¹⁹ Sylvia Beach Papers, Notebooks, Box 56, Folder 1, 3, 5, Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 351, 355, 358-359, 370-372.

²⁰ Sylvia Beach Papers, Letters (undated), and Notebooks. Box 56, Folder 1, 5, Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

²¹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 373-374.

²² Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 345.

²³ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 346.

-- literature and Shakespeare and Company -- she also got involved in politics and in the socialist movement in Paris.

Beach's socialist leanings went back to the First World War. She was involved in the war effort, serving as an agricultural volunteer in Touraine for two months in the middle of the war, and working for the Red Cross in Serbia as a secretary and translator in 1919 for six months.²⁴ The experience was described by Noel Riley Fitch as "her end of innocence." She gained strong opinions and views, it was her "social and political awakening." Beach had realized that "war was the worst insanity" and also that she was a feminist.²⁵ In working with the Red Cross, she became a feminist, she claims, because although the men were given higher positions, the women did all the work. Beach was also, however, critical of women who did not contribute or pull their weight.²⁶

Fitch suggests that while war work in Serbia reinforced Beach's socialist and feminist views, they were first evident in her friendship with H el ene Brion.²⁷ Brion was a French feminist, communist and teacher. The details of when Beach and Brion's friendship began are not clear, but Beach subscribed to Brion's magazine, *La Lutte f eministe*, which was published between 1918 and 1921. In its beginnings, *La Lutte f eministe* was hand-written and only had nine subscribers, Beach being one of them. Brion changed the name of the magazine in 1921 to *La Lutte f eministe pour le communisme*. Beach contributed to a few volumes of the early issues of the magazine, and she helped finance the project.²⁸ Beach's relationship with Brion perhaps

²⁴ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 203.

²⁵ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 36.

²⁶ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 37.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wendy Michallat, "H el ene Brion and the Missing Manuscripts: La Lutte F eministe, 1918." *Journal of European Studies* vol. 43, no. 2 (2013), 104-105, 114.

opened her eyes to socialism and feminism, though her experiences working for the Red Cross in Serbia confirmed and strengthened her views.

Beach had many close friends, like H  l  ne Brion, who were meaningfully involved in left-wing politics, such as Louis Aragon. Aragon was a French poet and a member of the French Communist Party.²⁹ Aragon had been infatuated with Beach’s sister Cyprian in 1919, and while he often went to Shakespeare and Company to look for Cyprian, he ended up becoming good friends with Beach.³⁰ Wendy Michallat claims that Beach joined in anti-fascist activities during the thirties with Aragon.³¹ Aragon and his associates saw the 1934 riot in particular as a call for “a united anti-fascist front.”³² Beach and Adrienne Monnier would often attend socialist political rallies and meetings held by their French literary friends, such as the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture and PEN club meetings.³³

Sylvia Beach’s closest friend in the French literary community was Andr   Gide. Gide and Beach became friends when she opened Shakespeare and Company in 1919: he was one of her first customers. Throughout the thirties Beach and Monnier would host gatherings with Gide and other political activists in their bookshops.³⁴ In 1932, in a letter to Robert McAlmon, Beach stated that she teased Gide about his commitment to communism, but in 1935, Beach and Monnier attended a large rally in Paris organized by Gide, Louis Aragon and other French writers, called the “International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture.”³⁵ Herbert

²⁹ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 3-4.

³⁰ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 44.

³¹ Michallat, “H  l  ne Brion and the Missing Manuscripts,” 105.

³² Angela Kershaw, *Forgotten Engagements: Women, Literature and the Left in 1930s France* (Rodopi, 2007), 56-57.

³³ PEN club, was an international organization for poets, essayists and novelists, to protect their right of freedom of speech.

³⁴ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, xiii, 29-30.

³⁵ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 148.

Lottman states that “every significant writer with a social conscience was invited.”³⁶ Beach remarked that the meeting was “strongly communistic” and was “dominated by men.” She stated, however, that she cared greatly for the writers present as well as the anti-fascist cause.³⁷

Noel Riley Fitch writes that the atmosphere of Shakespeare and Company changed in the thirties to a more steady focus on politics.³⁸ Shakespeare and Company began to stock socialist pamphlets, and only carried one magazine dedicated to the arts, *Transition*, edited by Eugene Jolas with contributors like James Joyce, Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein.³⁹ Beach continued to make herself accessible to patrons and students, ensuring they had the material they desired. A group of American graduate students studying at the Sorbonne met often with Beach during 1934-1935. One student, remembering these meetings during the 1930s, stated “apart from their discussions of the arts, they only talked politics.”⁴⁰ The student observed that Beach always had strong liberal opinions.

Beach, like many other others in this period, intently followed the Spanish Civil War, siding with the Republicans. She had several connections to the events in Spain: her friend Ernest Hemingway was there, she had lived in Spain for almost two years prior to moving to Paris, and she was also sympathetic to the anti-fascist cause. Beach raised money to help the loyalist cause in Spain by selling prints of artists in Shakespeare in Company.⁴¹

Sylvia Beach was politically influenced by Hélène Brion, Louis Aragon and André Gide, although Fitch insists that she did not convert to communism. Beach shared many views with

³⁶ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 2.

³⁷ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 354.

³⁸ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 388.

³⁹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 354.

⁴⁰ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 348-349.

⁴¹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 376, 383.

Aragon and Gide, such as the threat of fascism to peace in Europe, and some of the socialist views on wealth and work in society. Beach herself did not state her exact political views other than her left-leaning outlook.⁴² Herbert Lottman states that Beach was a hostess, and her place was only in the cultural context in the thirties. Lottman remarks Beach was not engaged with history like Gide and the others, as they were “committed to politics and prepared to defend them.”⁴³ Sylvia Beach was certainly a main figure in the cultural context in the 1930s in Paris, but she was also politically conscious and active during the 1930s as well. Beach’s political engagement and actions in the thirties should not be dismissed. Beach participated and contributed in the exchange of ideas and information within these groups. She was close friends with many of the main supporters and organizers of the Parisian communist groups, with those involved with the politics and conflict in Spain, and various others. Beach was much more than a hostess, she was in the centre of the French political community of writers. Noel Riley Fitch describes her as being “as wise as Machiavelli.”⁴⁴

In 1938, Beach remarked on everyone’s relief when the war didn’t happen, and she thought that “they should give up everything and anything for the sake of peace.”⁴⁵ Beach remarked that France was not prepared to fight, had no money to finance a war, and people to sacrifice. She also stated she believed the Germans and Italians were happy not to be at war either. As the political climate worsened, Beach and most of her Parisian friends were praying there would be some way to keep the peace.⁴⁶

⁴² Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 347, 365, 382-383.

⁴³ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, xiii, 29.

⁴⁴ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 17.

⁴⁵ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 184.

⁴⁶ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 184.

Sylvia Beach later summed up the 1930s by stating that while the political conflict was distressing, the decade was filled with friendship and literature.⁴⁷ Though she did remark that the atmosphere in Paris was dull and depressing and everyone was anxious.⁴⁸ The mix of uncertainty about the future, and gratitude towards her friends for keeping her financially afloat, caused Beach to start writing her memoirs in the 1930s.⁴⁹ Sylvia Beach is famously known as a kind and extremely loyal friend. Beach kept certain personal aspects of the lives of her friends private and she would not speak ill of her friends either, whether it was their personality traits or mistakes. In her memoirs, Beach put a rosy hue on the descriptions and interactions with her friends. This weakens her memoirs as a historical source, but it demonstrates an exceptional personality trait in Beach, which was important in the success of her bookshop.⁵⁰

Nearing the end of the thirties, Sylvia Beach expressed fear for the future. Despite her fear, Beach remained in Paris through the Second World War instead of returning to the United States, as she saw herself as a Parisian.⁵¹ She was forced to close Shakespeare and Company in 1941 due to a German soldier threatening to confiscate all of her books, because she would not sell him her last copy of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. She moved her collection as quickly as possible to the safety of her apartment. In 1942, Beach was arrested and placed into a converted hotel internment camp in Vittel because she was an American. Many of her friends and other artists were also placed in the internment camp. She was there for over six months until Jacques Benoist-Méchin helped her get released. After the war, Beach did not reopen the bookstore, her priorities changed. She became involved with helping those affected by the war. She gathered

⁴⁷ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 206; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 375.

⁴⁸ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 175-177.

⁴⁹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 374.

⁵⁰ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 383.

⁵¹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 368, 393.

food, clothing and support for the needy in Paris.⁵² Sylvia Beach's memoirs were published in 1959, she continued to live in Paris until her death in 1962.⁵³

Janet Flanner

Janet Flanner was also politically active during the 1930s in Paris. However, while Beach supported socialist causes, artists and activists, Flanner wrote about the evolving political situation in Europe during the 1930s, trying to understand it from various angles.

Janet Flanner was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1892. She grew up in a middle-class family, where she was taught etiquette and manners from her mother. While she grew up in a mostly stable household, her parents were not exactly stable. Her mother was not affectionate or even kind. She would lock Flanner in a closet when she was difficult, and she made it obvious that she regretted having children. Flanner's father became nervous, distressed and unhappy later in her childhood. In 1912, her father killed himself. Flanner blamed herself partly for his suicide and she also felt angry at her father for what she saw as abandoning their family.⁵⁴

Janet Flanner grew up quickly, from an early age she was strong-willed and opinionated. Flanner considered herself to be an adult at fourteen.⁵⁵ After she finished her schooling, she took her first trip to Europe. Her family moved abroad in 1910 for two years. This sparked her love and passion for Europe.⁵⁶

In 1917, Janet Flanner received her first writing job for the *Indianapolis Star* newspaper reviewing burlesque shows. From this Flanner received her own column to discuss her opinions

⁵² Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 215-216; Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 405-408.

⁵³ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 412-414.

⁵⁴ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 27-28.

⁵⁵ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 1-3, 15-16, 19.

⁵⁶ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 21.

and ideas around art.⁵⁷ She was invested in her career and taking advantage of all the opportunities that came her way. In 1918, Flanner married her longtime college friend, William Lane Rehm. The wedding was quick and rushed, there was not even enough notice for her sister to come home. It is unclear whether the wartime rhetoric or Flanner's wish to leave home was the motivation for the abrupt wedding. Flanner and Rehm moved to Greenwich Village to begin their short, married life together.⁵⁸ Living in New York furthered Flanner's career, and she became close with many people in the artistic community there. One of these people was Solita Solano. Flanner confided in Solano about her concerns for her marriage, and her discovery that she preferred women to men. Flanner and Solano fell in love, they both admired each other's intellect.⁵⁹ In 1921, Flanner left her husband and went abroad with Solano to begin their life together.⁶⁰

Flanner and Solano lived and worked in Europe during the early twenties. During this time, Flanner was defining her voice and developing her writing. They decided to settle in Paris in 1922.⁶¹ Flanner, looking back on her Paris years, stated that they certainly had fun during the twenties.⁶² Flanner and Solano believed in sexual freedom, they thought it was natural to have urges and it was healthy to follow them. Flanner and Solano loved each other greatly, but their relationship was not monogamous.⁶³ Janet Flanner met Noel Murphy in 1931, and by the next year they were in a relationship. Noel Murphy was a singer and the daughter of New York socialites, and she lived very comfortably just outside Paris, in Orgeval. Flanner spent much of

⁵⁷ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 33-34.

⁵⁸ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 37-40.

⁵⁹ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 51.

⁶⁰ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 53-54.

⁶¹ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 58.

⁶² Flanner, *Paris was Yesterday*, xvi-xvii; Wineapple, *Genêt*, 76.

⁶³ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 84-85.

her time with Murphy during the 1930s. Solano and Murphy were on friendly terms, and Murphy often hosted Solano at her house in Orgeval.⁶⁴ Flanner and Murphy were separated during the Second World War, but they remained in contact and continued their relationship for a time after the war.

The 1920s had brought aspiring writers and artists to Paris. Flanner was friends with many of these expatriates. Most of Flanner's friends from New York had made their way to Paris, including Djuna Barnes. Flanner remarked that Barnes was the most important woman writer in Paris.⁶⁵ Flanner admired Barnes not only for her skill, but also because she did not defer to any man: she delighted in calling James Joyce, "Jim".⁶⁶ Flanner was devoted to Barnes, and they remained friends all their lives.

Flanner also quickly became close friends with the various other expatriates, like Sylvia Beach. She made her way to Shakespeare and Company early on in her Paris days, and formed a bond with Beach. Flanner had a lot of respect for Beach and her accomplishments. Beach had constructed a cultural hub with the bookshop she built and ran, one that had a lasting legacy.⁶⁷ In those beginning years, Flanner and Solano almost ended up renting the apartment above Beach's bookshop, but ultimately decided it would be too cold in the winter. Through Beach, Flanner was introduced to Ernest Hemingway, who remained a longtime friend.⁶⁸

Margaret Anderson and Janet Flanner were also devoted friends. They met in 1927. Solita Solano subsequently became very close with Anderson, who was very attractive and passionate about art and beauty, which intrigued Solano. Margaret Anderson was a follower of

⁶⁴ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 115, 117, 119-121.

⁶⁵ Janet Flanner, "The Greatest Refreshment", *The New Yorker*, March 4, 1972.

⁶⁶ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 88.

⁶⁷ Flanner, "The Greatest Refreshment".

⁶⁸ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 67-68.

the cult leader George Gurdjieff (as we shall see). Anderson introduced this doctrine to Solano and Flanner, and brought them to lectures on Gurdjieff's teachings, called the "Fourth Way." While Solano became very involved in the Fourth Way, Flanner remained skeptical. Anderson and Flanner were very different and were often on opposite sides of arguments. Flanner thought Anderson was too optimistic, while Anderson felt Flanner did not know good art without having been told first. Despite their differences, however, the women continually worked together and were loyal friends.⁶⁹

Like Sylvia Beach, Flanner was a very well-liked figure who got along with almost everyone. This was a rare personality trait among the expatriate artists in Paris where feuds were common. Flanner managed to cultivate friendships with most everyone from varying groups. She was good friends with Gertrude Stein and regularly attended her salon. Flanner was also close with Natalie Barney and frequented her salon which competed with Stein's. Flanner also regularly had lunch with a group of Dadaists.⁷⁰ Flanner moved through Parisian and American expatriate society with ease, and she enjoyed all that made Paris the centre of the arts. She would write of her experiences and observations to her friends and family, one of whom was Jane Grant whose husband Harold Ross was starting a new magazine.⁷¹ Flanner's perspectives on life in Paris led to her job of fifty years.

In 1925, Flanner was asked by Harold Ross to write a column on culture in Paris for *The New Yorker*. His vision was for Flanner to describe cultural life in Paris, since Ross felt New York and Paris had a special connection. Flanner documented Parisian culture, but she wrote on

⁶⁹ Flanner, Janet (1944-1973), Letters (undated) Box 2, Folder, 1, *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Wineapple, *Genêt*, 89-92.

⁷⁰ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 77-78, 85-87.

⁷¹ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 95.

the things people didn't tend to see.⁷² Her column was entitled, "Letter from Paris." Flanner took the pseudonym Genêt in order to sound more French and hide her identity, which gave her the freedom to write on controversial subjects. She wrote the column from 1925-1975.⁷³ For much of that time, Flanner's partner Solita Solano assisted by editing her articles.⁷⁴ During the 1920s, Flanner's column featured topics such as cuisine, fashion, and film, in addition to artistic and literary events in Paris. Through this column Flanner depicted the atmosphere and experience of the Left Bank. She emphasized women as subjects of her studies and writing. She continually interviewed women for profiles and ensured they received attention and recognition.⁷⁵ For example, Flanner featured Josephine Baker often in her column, advertising her new acts and detailing how mesmerizing and talented she was.⁷⁶ During the 1920s, Flanner saw herself as both American and European,⁷⁷ but her perspective changed in the 1930s to a fully European one.⁷⁸

The stock market crash of 1929 sent most Americans back to the United States. Flanner remarked on her surprise at the genuine sympathy shown by the French towards the Americans, after the Americans had been flaunting their riches to the French for the previous ten years.⁷⁹ By the early 1930s, Flanner herself was beginning to feel the effects of the financial crisis, as was everyone else in France. She had to increase the number of articles she wrote in order to compensate for the decreased value of the American dollar.⁸⁰ The new writing projects she took on required her to travel. She travelled to London and to various cities in Germany throughout

⁷² Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 100.

⁷³ Flanner, "The Greatest Refreshment".

⁷⁴ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 119.

⁷⁵ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 102-113, 117.

⁷⁶ Flanner, *Paris Was Yesterday*, 3, 72-73.

⁷⁷ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 101.

⁷⁸ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 119.

⁷⁹ Flanner, *Paris Was Yesterday*, 61-62.

⁸⁰ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 132.

the thirties for her new assignments, which included profiles on the Queen of England and Adolf Hitler.⁸¹ Brenda Wineapple states that Flanner continued to focus on covering glitzy parties and social events in Paris until the riots of February 6, 1934. In the aftermath of the riots, however, Flanner realized the seriousness of the rise of radical politics and the challenge they posed to Paris. Wineapple suggests it was at this time that Flanner's writing shifted from focusing predominantly on the cultural scene in Paris to the political scene in Europe.⁸²

Flanner's "Letter from Paris" columns illustrate a change in her writing during the 1930s, with a much greater focus on politics. Shari Benstock remarks how often in France, art, literature and politics usually go hand in hand, as many figures were active in multiple areas,⁸³ and suggests that the focus of Flanner's writing had in fact shifted towards the political as early as 1933, when she began profiling André Gide and Léon Blum and their political endeavours.⁸⁴ Flanner wrote about André Gide and his book, *Return from the USSR*, which discussed his observations on communism in the Soviet Union. Flanner also wrote a profile on Léon Blum in 1936, when he was about to become France's Prime Minister.⁸⁵ Her work also became more broadly European. Flanner wrote an extensive three segment profile on Adolf Hitler in 1936, and travelled to Germany for the 1936 Olympic Games to report on the event and on the situation in Germany at that time.⁸⁶ While describing these various political events, Flanner attempted to remain neutral and convey both the positives and negatives she observed. In doing so, she received sharp criticism, even from friends, which intensified following her piece on Hitler,

⁸¹ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 149.

⁸² Wineapple, *Genêt*, 133, 135.

⁸³ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 121.

⁸⁴ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 120-121.

⁸⁵ Flanner, *Paris Was Yesterday*, 165, 168-169.

⁸⁶ Janet Flanner, and Irving Drutman. *Janet Flanner's World: Uncollected Writings, 1932-1975*. 1st ed. (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 6-31.

which she wrote in a detached manner, attempting to show Hitler “the man.” After this, some friends called her fascist, while others praised her piece.⁸⁷ Through her writing Flanner suggests the only two factions in politics that held any weight in the 1930s were Fascism and Communism. And Flanner implies the choice Europeans faced was whether to side with the one or the other. This was difficult for liberals in Europe like Flanner and Sylvia Beach.⁸⁸ Janet Flanner’s political leaning was toward the left, and while she was frustrated by the inequalities of capitalism, she nevertheless stated she was not a communist. Her political stance during the thirties was not overt. While she agreed with some communist ideas such as the redistribution of wealth, she did not support revolution. On the other hand, Brenda Wineapple notes that Flanner leaned more towards nationalism rather than internationalism, and that she was “attracted to the pageantry” of the Third Reich.⁸⁹

Benstock remarks that for Janet Flanner the 1930s were a period of “self-examination of her own professional commitments.”⁹⁰ The thirties further developed Flanner’s writing as well as her sense of self. She became more invested in her writing than before and was committed to providing what she saw as a service to the public by adopting a more political focus. In writing these political pieces, Flanner claimed she had finally found her purpose and felt she was contributing and doing her part in history. She said that she now felt proud of her work.⁹¹

The 1930s were a complicated period for Flanner: She was proud and fulfilled by the work she was doing, but she was also anxious. Flanner hoped that the Paris she knew and loved would continue to be a haven for intellectuals and expression, and that it would remain the

⁸⁷ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 143, 145-146.

⁸⁸ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 138.

⁸⁹ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 133-134.

⁹⁰ Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 123.

⁹¹ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 138-139.

cultural capital of Europe.⁹² Towards the end of the 1930s, Flanner was especially torn on whether to leave Paris. She wanted to stay because she saw Paris as her home, but she was also afraid.⁹³ Flanner was dedicated to her job and to Paris, therefore she chose to remain in Paris until 1939 despite her nervousness. Flanner and Solita Solano returned to the United States in 1939, however, leaving friends and lovers behind in Paris.⁹⁴ After the war ended, Flanner split her time between New York and France. She spent the rest of her life writing her column for *The New Yorker* and writing beautiful tributes and biographies of her friends who died. Janet Flanner continued to write into her eighties. She died in New York in 1978.⁹⁵

Beach and Flanner: Politics

Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner both observed and participated in the significant changes that occurred in Paris during the 1930s: the rise in radical politics brought riots and war scares, the depression brought unemployment and economic hardship. Paris in the thirties was very different from what it had been the decade before. The hedonism and prosperity of the 1920s had given way to hardship and struggle. Flanner and Beach regularly commented on how different Paris had become. Beach stated in letters that Paris had changed a lot, that the atmosphere was dull and depressing while America was lively.⁹⁶ Following the riot on February 6, 1934, Beach wrote to her sister that she would not recognize Paris.⁹⁷ Janet Flanner comments on how surprisingly empty Paris was, even during the busiest tourist season.⁹⁸ The shift in Flanner's

⁹² Wineapple, *Genêt*, 137, 148.

⁹³ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 149, 152.

⁹⁴ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 141, 160.

⁹⁵ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 297-298.

⁹⁶ Beach and Walsh, *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, 175-177.

⁹⁷ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 345.

⁹⁸ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 159-160.

focus alone suggests such changes. Flanner, who once had written on plays, fashion, and nightlife, began writing almost exclusively on politics in her bi-weekly column.

The new political climate in Paris and in Europe as a whole caused Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner to attempt to make sense of the situation and find their place in it. The 1930s helped Beach and Flanner find what was important to them. The decade of uncertainty caused the women to search for clarity. Beach began to take more interest in politics and political issues. She attended socialist rallies and meetings, and raised money for political causes she supported. Beach also determined that she wanted her life to be filled with friends, happiness and literature, and was not entirely consumed with the overwhelmingly depressing atmosphere of the 1930s.⁹⁹ Janet Flanner broke from her usual pieces on culture and social life in Paris, and focused on the evolving political situation in Europe. Flanner reignited her passion for journalism, and found her political writing to be important and fulfilling. Flanner remarked she felt she had finally found her purpose.¹⁰⁰ The 1930s in Paris, forced Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner to examine themselves, and from that they discovered their priorities.

⁹⁹ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 346

¹⁰⁰ Wineapple, *Genêt*, 138-139

Chapter 2

Searching for answers: Djuna Barnes and Margaret Anderson in 1930s Paris.

The 1930s were a difficult and confusing time. The world was sent into an economic depression, radical politics were on the rise, and there were fears of another war. The atmosphere in Paris shifted, especially on the Left Bank where most of the prosperous Americans had departed. The economic strain and uncertainty of what would happen in Europe, caused many different reactions. People took different approaches in understanding and coming to terms with the turbulence and anxiety. Margaret Anderson and Djuna Barnes both turned their focus inward in the thirties as a way to look for answers during this uncertain time. Anderson dove into the spiritual doctrine of George Gurdjieff, who claimed he could help his disciples achieve personal enlightenment. Barnes threw herself into writing and reflection about her personal experiences and heartbreak, with the outcome being her dark novel *Nightwood* (1936). Both of these women looked within themselves for answers in order to make sense of the turbulent and distressing world of the 1930s.

Margaret Anderson

Margaret Anderson was born in 1886 in Indianapolis. She grew up in a comfortable home. Anderson had a deep love of piano, she went to college to become a pianist, however she was more fond of listening to music than playing it herself. Margaret Anderson was a strong, intelligent woman who was dedicated to art. She was very aware of herself, she was clear in her beliefs, opinions and personality traits. She even called herself vain. Anderson also deemed herself a dictator, as she was very confident and could always win an argument. One of her

favourite activities was arguing.¹ She went after what she wanted, and did what she loved. She was not one to shy away from risk, so she continually pursued her passions, from piano, to publishing. Anderson had made a name for herself in the literary world before going to Paris, unlike many other literary figures at the time.²

Starting in 1914, Anderson created and edited the influential modernist literary magazine the *Little Review*. The magazine published writing at Anderson's discretion, based upon works she thought were truly art. Some of the later famous writers of the American literary scene in Paris got their start from the *Little Review*, writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, and James Joyce.³ During the early days of the magazine, Anderson met Jane Heap, an intelligent, talented woman with an eye for good writing. They became partners in editing the *Little Review* and also became involved in a personal relationship for many years. Heap was Anderson's first great love.⁴

Anderson and Heap took the magazine to various cultural hotspots in the United States. While living in New York, Heap and Anderson met and became friends with Djuna Barnes. Shortly after this Heap and Barnes started an affair, which left Anderson jealous and upset. Anderson's relationship with Djuna Barnes was competitive, they were both strong women with large personalities. They often differed on their ideas and what they considered art.⁵ Anderson later remarked she was embarrassed to be friends with someone "who could not talk about her own psyche," and Anderson characterized Barnes as unenlightened.⁶ She also found Barnes to be

¹ Margaret C. Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains* (New York: Hermitage House, 1951), 64-65.

² Janet Flanner, "Life on a Cloud", *The New Yorker*, June 3, 1974.

³ Flanner, "Life on a Cloud."

⁴ Flanner, "Life on a Cloud."

⁵ Papers of Margaret Anderson, Letters (undated), Box 18, Folder 1, *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶ Herring, *Djuna*, 128.

a snob, who pushed limits and did not show gratitude to people who had helped her. For example, the last edition of the *Little Review*, published in 1929, consisted of responses from leading writers in Paris to a questionnaire on their accomplishments and goals in life. Barnes refused to answer any of the questions, saying they did not interest her. Anderson published her response.⁷ Despite their conflicts with each other, the women had a lot in common. They both valued art and beauty, and were very opinionated, which caused them to clash. Barnes and Anderson nevertheless respected each other's talents and remained in contact for the better part of their lives.⁸

Another important relationship formed in New York was between Margaret Anderson and Georgette Leblanc during the early 1920s. LeBlanc was a French singer nearly 20 years older than Anderson. Anderson fell in love with her almost instantly, saying LeBlanc had "that quality" about her. Leblanc and Anderson became inseparable. Leblanc had planned to go on tour, and asked Anderson to be her pianist. Unfortunately, LeBlanc's benefactor pulled out and they were not able to go on tour. From this, however, they both decided they would take a step back from their hectic work and focus on their life together. By this time, Anderson was bored of the *Little Review*, and handed over full control of the magazine to Jane Heap.⁹

Near the end of their time in New York, Anderson, Heap and Leblanc discovered the teachings of George Gurdjieff. In 1924, the women were officially introduced to Gurdjieff's doctrine through another writer and editor, A. R. Orage. The three women attended all the lectures and events hosted by Gurdjieff and his followers while he was in New York. All three

⁷ Herring, *Djuna*, 127.

⁸ Barnes, Djuna, 1951-1971, Letter (undated), Box 1, *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁹ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 16-18.

women claimed that Gurdjieff's teaching changed their life. Anderson stated that his cosmology provided answers to her long-asked questions about life and the universe.¹⁰

George Gurdjieff was a cult leader who claimed to have found "a higher knowledge."¹¹ He promised to teach his followers how to unlock their minds and reach their full potential through a method called the Fourth Way, which combined the wisdom of the East, and the energy of the West and would save the world from being destroyed.¹² The objective of his Fourth Way was to create a soul, to do this the individual had to change how they viewed and interacted with the world and themselves. The actual content of Gurdjieff's Fourth Way was vague, Jane Heap described it as "a method to keep your past from becoming your future."¹³

Shortly after they were introduced to Gurdjieff, he returned to France to an "institute" he founded to instruct his disciples in the Fourth Way. Margaret Anderson along with Jane Heap and Georgette LeBlanc decided to follow their new mentor and teacher to France.¹⁴ Gurdjieff's institute was called "The Harmonious Development of Man," and was located approximately 40 miles outside Paris at Prieuré Basses-Loges in Fontainebleau-en-Avon. Once Anderson, Heap and LeBlanc got to Paris, they were told by other writers not to trust Gurdjieff. Many people were skeptical of Gurdjieff and his ideas and advised the women against going to the Institute, in part because Katherine Mansfield had died there.¹⁵ The women ignored these warnings stating these people did not really know Gurdjieff, and nevertheless asked to study with him.¹⁶ About

¹⁰ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 110-113.

¹¹ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 111.

¹² William Patrick Patterson and Barbara C Allen, *Ladies of the Rope: Gurdjieff's Special Left Bank Women's Group* (Arete Communications, 1999), ix, 1.

¹³ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 55.

¹⁴ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 114.

¹⁵ Katherine Mansfield had tuberculosis, and that was her cause of death.

¹⁶ Margaret C. Anderson, *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (London: Arkana, 1991), 2-4.

sixty students lived at Gurdjieff's institute. The students were tasked with performing laborious duties on the grounds during the day, such as digging ditches, doing laundry, farm work and making meals. In the evenings, there would be either a lecture from Gurdjieff, a piano concert of Armenian music, or the practicing of sacred dances. On Saturdays they would have communal baths, separated by gender, and at dinner the important ritual of the "Toasts of the Idiots." Each week, they would toast the various "22 Idiots" in their hierarchy. Through all of these tasks and rituals the students were meant to be reflecting inward on their own insignificance. Only once they had accepted this, could they develop a consciousness of who they were and their place in the universe.¹⁷

Gurdjieff officially closed his institute in 1924, almost 2 years after he had opened it. He claimed people were not grasping his concepts as quickly as he had hoped. Gurdjieff however allowed most of the Americans, who he saw as his more dedicated students, to stay at the institute, including Anderson and Heap.¹⁸ With the institute closed and Gurdjieff travelling occasionally, Anderson and LeBlanc spent the 1920s living between Tancarville Chateau outside of Paris, owned by LeBlanc's family, and the institute. They were mostly always poor. Occasionally, they made money from Georgette's concerts or lectures, or were able to borrow some from their families. When they did have money, Anderson and LeBlanc would escape the Chateau and rent a room closer to Paris and live there for as long as they could afford it. But in the 1930s, their poverty reached new levels and the family Chateau was in cold and darkness most of the time to save money. This is when, in 1930, Anderson decided to write her memoirs on her early life and work with the *Little Review*. Once these memoirs were published, LeBlanc

¹⁷ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 51-53.

¹⁸ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 58-59.

and Anderson were then able to move out of the Chateau and live in Paris on the royalties for a while.¹⁹

Margaret Anderson and Georgette LeBlanc were friends with many of the other expatriates living in Paris. Anderson was quite close with Janet Flanner and even closer with her partner, Solita Solano. There are suspicions that Solano and Anderson were briefly lovers during the twenties, but this has not been confirmed. Whether or not they were romantically involved, Solano and Anderson were very close friends from the 1920s until they died, talking on the phone and corresponding frequently when they were unable to see each other in person. Solano -- who was a poet and an editor -- also proofread and edited all of Anderson's writing. Anderson introduced Solano to the Fourth Way and Gurdjieff when they met in 1927. Solano did not like Gurdjieff at first, but quickly became one of the most ardent followers of his doctrine. She and Anderson discussed their ideas and developments at length when they were together at cafes or in their correspondence.²⁰

In certain respects, Margaret Anderson spent her time like most other expatriates in the 1920s and 1930s, sitting in cafes discussing theories, writing and art. Anderson stated that she never felt like she was an expatriate, but that she was "born" in Paris and could never live anywhere else.²¹ She felt she could accomplish anything in Paris: it was a place of personal freedom, a place you could really live.²² Anderson and LeBlanc lived how they wanted to, doing what they wanted. While they were poor, they were always supported by family and friends.

¹⁹ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 37-38, 40-43.

²⁰ Papers of Margaret Anderson, Letter (undated), Box 18, Folder 1, *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²¹ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 37.

²² Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 9-10, 37.

Anderson said, "... my friends always invited me to share their money in exchange for sharing my world."²³ Anderson called the twenties and thirties the happiest times of her life.²⁴

During the late twenties and early thirties, Gurdjieff was teaching elsewhere therefore he authorized Jane Heap to take up the role of teacher of the Fourth Way in Paris.²⁵ Heap conducted meetings at her apartment in Montparnasse regularly. These were attended by Margaret Anderson, Georgette LeBlanc, Solita Solano, Janet Flanner, and sometimes Djuna Barnes and others.²⁶ Heap commented that Anderson was struggling to grasp all of Gurdjieff's teachings. She stated that Anderson was, "fighting for her life".²⁷ The women continued to meet at Heap's apartment to study Gurdjieff routinely until 1935, when Gurdjieff sent Heap to teach the Fourth Way in London, and Gurdjieff resumed teaching in Paris.

Margaret Anderson was not politically active during the thirties like many others in Paris and elsewhere during that time. She stated she was not interested in war and it did not affect her. She saw war as a madness that would pass, only to be succeeded by another, therefore she tried not to get caught up in the war atmosphere.²⁸ Anderson claimed that it was the men who were facing Hitler, not herself therefore she felt distant from it.²⁹ Although Anderson was not invested in politics in the thirties, she was pursuing enlightenment. During the thirties Anderson threw herself deeper into Gurdjieff's teaching. Her memoirs from this period demonstrate her struggle and progression through this doctrine. She went through various stages in wrestling to

²³ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 55.

²⁴ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 53.

²⁵ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 79.

²⁶ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 14-15.

²⁷ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 61.

²⁸ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 185.

²⁹ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 167.

understand the teachings, from no longer recognizing herself to a period of silence.³⁰ Anderson was troubled with herself, she was trying to make meaning and find herself, to understand her place in the world.³¹ Her focused, even desperate, devotion to Gurdjieff's doctrine can be seen as her reaction to the increasing uncertainty in Europe during the thirties.

During the thirties whether it was in Heap's apartment or with Gurdjieff in the Café de la Paix, the central students of the Fourth Way were women. These women called themselves The Rope, as Gurdjieff said he metaphorically roped the women together in their journey through life.³² Gurdjieff stated that if the women really wanted to work with him, they must give up their outside life, and be at his beck and call.³³

Gurdjieff instilled his doctrine in very specific ways. Anderson had a tough time fully understanding the complexities of the Fourth Way, though this was perhaps because Gurdjieff would often begin a sentence to impart wisdom, but would stop before he really said anything and say, "That I not tell. Many more things like this I know, but can never tell."³⁴ Gurdjieff would lecture them for long periods or have them read his unintelligible manuscripts aloud for hours. Anderson did not understand most of what Gurdjieff said, as with most of his followers. Gurdjieff would constantly mock the women's intelligence for not understanding what he was saying, and would repeatedly make insulting and rude remarks to his students. He had a very short temper and would often lash out. Once he told Solita Solano that, compared to him, she was a "merde nonentity."³⁵

³⁰ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 139-145.

³¹ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 161-162.

³² Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 96.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 89.

³⁵ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 98.

William Patterson is a current follower of Gurdjieff's Fourth Way. Patterson wrote *Ladies of the Rope*, a book looking at Gurdjieff's group of women followers in the 1920s and 1930s. Patterson uses the memoirs and personal papers of the women to create a picture of their experience in learning the Fourth Way, with a clear bias towards Gurdjieff. Patterson remarked on how the insulting and humiliating things Gurdjieff regularly said to Anderson and the other women might seem confusing and off-putting, but they were part of his process. Patterson dismisses what psychologists would say about Gurdjieff and his doctrine -- that Gurdjieff was abusive and his "institute" was a cult -- and remarks that they are missing the point. Gurdjieff's methods of verbally and emotionally abusing his students were, for Patterson, part of his method: "that was part of the taxing, frustrating, maddening and ingenious conditions Gurdjieff created."

³⁶ Although Anderson described herself as an assertive and argumentative person, she did not argue or question Gurdjieff and his teachings. She instead said: "I had so much awe of all that I heard, I was so convinced that I would learn what it meant through some extension of the mind, that I could think only of studying it, discussing it with everyone..."³⁷ Margaret Anderson wrote a book on Gurdjieff and her experiences with him. In it she states that his teaching shaped her life, and she devotedly believed in Gurdjieff and his teachings.³⁸ This is evident through her persistence in continuing to attempt to comprehend the Fourth Way despite the tremendous effort and toll it took on her mental health in the 1930s.

Margaret Anderson claimed that she was in a hateful state during the 1930s, while wrestling to understand Gurdjieff's teachings.³⁹ She was also not able to attend some of

³⁶ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 248.

³⁷ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 125.

³⁸ Anderson, *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*, 2, 4.

³⁹ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 106.

Gurdjieff's lessons during the mid-thirties because Georgette LeBlanc was ill. Solita Solano kept detailed notes, however, and would send them to Anderson to update her on new insights.⁴⁰

Anderson remarked in her memoir how upset she was at not being present at some of the meetings, but she and LeBlanc continued to study the Fourth Way on their own.⁴¹ She recalled several stages she went through in her search for answers in the doctrine, one of which was what she called muteness, where she did not know how to be herself and had so many emotions that she could not communicate. That stage lasted for a year, in either 1934 or 1935.⁴² The next phase of her progression through Gurdjieff's doctrine left her in a deep depression from 1936-1938.

Anderson hit emotional rock bottom in 1938, she stated her "shell had cracked open," and finally she was able to achieve the calmness and security Gurdjieff promised.⁴³ In her memoir,

Anderson reflected on her feelings in 1938 and stated, "In the world there will be war, in my world there will be no peace--except that which surpasses understanding...."⁴⁴ Throughout the

1930s, Margaret Anderson fully committed to Gurdjieff's Fourth Way, a spiritual doctrine that claimed to provide the answers of the universe. Anderson went through a difficult personal journey of self-reflection in her search for answers, however. Despite the outbreak of the Second World War, Anderson remained in France with her companion Georgette LeBlanc who was very ill. Anderson stayed in France until LeBlanc's death in 1941, and then returned to New York.⁴⁵

Djuna Barnes

⁴⁰ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 100.

⁴¹ Anderson, *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*, 137, 142.

⁴² Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 144-145.

⁴³ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 153, 159, 162.

⁴⁴ Anderson, *The Fiery Fountains*, 162.

⁴⁵ Flanner, "Life on a Cloud".

Djuna Barnes had a different experience through the thirties. While Barnes occasionally attended some of the meetings on Gurdjieff's doctrine at Jane Heap's apartment, she was not very receptive to the cult. Instead, Barnes focused on her own personal journey without a spiritual leader. She reflected on her relationship with Thelma Wood and the changes in Paris society in the 1930s, and drew from this to write her dark, self-reflective novel, *Nightwood*.

Djuna Barnes was born in 1892 in West Point, New York. Her early life was one of trauma and hardships that left her angry, bitter, adamant about privacy, and searching for love for the rest of her life.⁴⁶ Barnes began her career as a journalist in 1913 at the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and published her first work in *Harper's Weekly* in the same year. For years, Barnes worked and wrote for various magazines and newspapers in New York, submitting weekly columns, short-stories, poetry and illustrations.⁴⁷ She quickly became well-known in New York, and was a member of the close-knit group of writers in Greenwich Village, which included figures such as Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap.

In 1921, Barnes went to Paris on assignment for *McCall's*. Once in Paris, she quickly became associated with the famous expatriate writers and artists who gathered there. She did many interviews and wrote many profiles on the expatriates, which enabled her to get to know them better and gave her some more prestige in the community.⁴⁸ Barnes fit right into the Paris scene, she is a figure known for always being in the Paris cafes during the day and the clubs and salons at night throughout the 1920s.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Herring, *Djuna*, xix.

⁴⁷ Herring, *Djuna*, 75-77.

⁴⁸ Herring, *Djuna*, xxiv, 99.

⁴⁹ Herring, *Djuna*, 154-155.

Djuna Barnes made steady money working for magazines and newspapers in the early days. Through the twenties, she lived in Paris very comfortably and even extravagantly. When she was making money, she spent lavishly. Her artistic talent was admired by many, some enough to sponsor her: Natalie Barney and Peggy Guggenheim both supported her financially for years.⁵⁰

Djuna Barnes was always a private person. In the contents of the archives she left to the Library of Congress and the University of Maryland she had cut out certain sections from letters.

⁵¹ Barnes was likewise often alone: she could be seen at cafes sitting alone for hours. When Barnes was with people, it was usually her closest friends. Because Barnes did not bother to learn French, or become friends with any French people, her friends were all Americans, most notably Natalie Barney, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, Solita Solano, and Sylvia Beach.⁵²

Djuna Barnes met Jane Heap during their time working in New York. Barnes was part of the *Little Review* circle in New York, and was friends with Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap. Heap and Barnes had a short-lived romantic relationship during this time, but remained friends for years to come. During their relationship, Anderson became jealous of Barnes, however, for stealing Heap's affection. Barnes and Anderson were both competitive women, so this heightened tensions between them leading to public disputes. Even when Heap and Barnes' relationship ended -- Barnes called Heap "wicked" because she was not into monogamous relationships, and Heap and Anderson saw Barnes as a snob -- the three women remained part of each other's lives.⁵³ Heap and Anderson joined Gurdjieff's "Institute" during the 1920s. They

⁵⁰ Herring, *Djuna*, 151.

⁵¹ Barnes, Djuna, 1951-1971, Letter (undated) Box 1, Folder 17, *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵² Herring, *Djuna*, 133, 145.

⁵³ Herring, *Djuna*, 114, 127.

invited Barnes to attend “Fourth Way” meetings in the 1930s held in Heap's apartment. Barnes did attend the meetings occasionally but Anderson said she had a difficult time “looking within her psyche.”⁵⁴

Djuna Barnes was also good friends with Janet Flanner, and her partner Solita Solano who attended Heap’s “Fourth Way” lessons during the thirties as well. The women met in their New York days, and all spent time at Natalie Barney’s salon. Barnes’ novel, *Ladies Almanack*, described the people and atmosphere at the salon. Barnes included Flanner and Solano as the characters Nip and Tuck.⁵⁵

Djuna Barnes was a smart, witty woman, but from an early age depression was a large part of her life. She suffered trauma and heartbreak in her childhood, as well as heartbreak many other times throughout her life.⁵⁶ She had a series of lovers and her relationships were with both men and women. She was not focused on gender, she said, she loved people for the person they were: “I might be anything, if a horse loved me, I might be that.”⁵⁷ Barnes believed in sexual freedom, as did many of the people in her circle (she thought that was essential to being an artist) but she also valued fidelity, and thought it was very important in relationships.⁵⁸ Her biographer Philip Herring claimed the lack of love in her childhood had her searching for love all her life, finding it briefly in a few relationships that eventually ended in heartbreak,⁵⁹ most notably with Thelma Wood.

⁵⁴ Herring, *Djuna*, 128.

⁵⁵ Herring, *Djuna*, 172, 241.

⁵⁶ Herring, *Djuna*, 94.

⁵⁷ Herring, *Djuna*, 59.

⁵⁸ Herring, *Djuna*, 107, 154.

⁵⁹ Barnes had been in love with Ernst Hanfstaengl in her early life before the First World War. She has stated that had it not been for the First World War, they probably would’ve been married. After the war he said he must have a German wife in order to bring back the German population, which broke Barnes’s heart. Herring, 66-72.

Djuna Barnes met Thelma Wood in her early days in Paris. They fell for each other quickly, and Wood moved into Barnes' flat. They were together for eight years, in that time they were almost inseparable (they were seen in Paris wearing matching capes and hats) except for when Wood was having affairs, which was often. Barnes supported Wood financially throughout their relationship and this, along with the infidelity, caused Barnes to break up with Wood in the late 1920's.⁶⁰ When Barnes split with Wood, she fell into a deep depression but their relationship became the main subject of her dark novel, *Nightwood*, published in 1936.⁶¹

Like most Americans, Barnes felt strain on her income after the stock market crash in 1929. The magazines and newspapers were paying less now, and she had an apartment in Paris that was taking a lot of her money.⁶² Before the crash, Barnes barely made enough and had to rely on friends. She stated to Solita Solano later in life that she often thinks she made a mistake "in that matter of all for art and nothing for money."⁶³ Throughout the 1930s things worsened, Barnes became very worried about her financial situation and ultimately took it out on her relationship with Peggy Guggenheim, her friend and sponsor. Barnes became greedy about money during this period, according to Guggenheim, and was ungrateful, ruining their relationship.⁶⁴ The thirties was a difficult time for Barnes personally. Not only did she fear for her income, she was also concerned about where her career was going, and was trying to find herself both in the aftermath of her breakup and in the anxious atmosphere of Paris. She was

⁶⁰ After her relationship with Wood, Barnes stated that she had given up on fidelity. She had on-and-off relationships and affairs for a while, but eventually she realized she would never have another love like Wood again and she secluded herself. Herring, *Djuna*, 174.

⁶¹ Herring, *Djuna*, 174.

⁶² Herring, *Djuna*, 146-147.

⁶³ Barnes, Djuna, 1951-1971, Letter (undated), Box 1, Folder 17, *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁴ Herring, *Djuna*, 202.

feeling unhappy about her career in Paris, and regretted moving so far away from New York where she felt she had been the most successful.⁶⁵ She loved Paris, in some respects, but in light of her split with Wood, and the change in atmosphere in the 1930s, Barnes was torn about remaining. Barnes wrote to Wambly Bald in 1931, that the world they knew was all over, the paradise they enjoyed in Paris during the 1920s was finished.⁶⁶ Barnes decided to spend time jumping between New York, London and Paris. She left Paris for months at a time, chasing the atmosphere that the city once had, yet she continued to return to Paris nevertheless.⁶⁷

Barnes was not focused on the politics of the 1930s, unlike most of the other expatriate writers. While most were writing on politics, Barnes was still struggling to come to terms with her personal life.⁶⁸ Barnes claimed “she had no use for political theories, she was an egoist, only interested in beauty, art and religion.”⁶⁹ She did however wish to interview Hitler, and she almost got the chance. Her former lover and longtime friend Ernst Hanfstaengl, who was part of Hitler’s inner circle, was able to arrange the interview for her. Hitler wanted too much money for the interview, however.⁷⁰ Other than her attempt at political journalism, Barnes spent the thirties with most of her attention turned inward, contemplating her life and trying to move on with it.

Barnes had begun to write *Nightwood* nearing the end of 1920s, after her breakup with Thelma Wood, but had struggled to convey what she wanted to. Barnes continued to develop her

⁶⁵ Herring, *Djuna*, 147.

⁶⁶ Mary Lynn Broe, *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 92

⁶⁷ Herring, *Djuna*, 146-147.

⁶⁸ Herring, *Djuna*, 242.

⁶⁹ Herring, *Djuna*, 221.

⁷⁰ Herring, *Djuna*, 177.

thoughts and *Nightwood* was mainly completed by 1933. Barnes had a difficult time finding a publisher, however, and it was not published until 1936.⁷¹

Barnes modelled *Nightwood* after her own experiences and the way she viewed the world. The novel explores relationships, life in Paris, gender and sexuality.⁷² Barnes depicts the central characters as outsiders, just as she saw herself.⁷³ *Nightwood* was a tool for Barnes to reflect and work through her emotions and thoughts, through the novel she works through her struggle with her sexuality and her emotional baggage.⁷⁴ Philip Herring, in his biography of Barnes, stated that while the main goal of the novel was for Barnes to accept her departure from Wood, it also about understanding herself and the complexities of human nature.⁷⁵ Barnes uses the character Dr. O'Connor, based on her friend Dan Mahoney, to confront her own inability to see the destructive nature of her relationship with Wood, and her romantic possessiveness.⁷⁶

Nightwood is not only a personal reflection of Barnes' struggles and relationships, but also a commentary on Paris and society itself in the 1930s. While Barnes claimed she was not politically inclined during the thirties, she clearly did notice the shifts in society around her. "It's all over" she wrote to Wambly Bald, referencing the bohemian lifestyle of the twenties.⁷⁷ The dark nature of *Nightwood* can be seen as a reflection of her emotional state but also the dark atmosphere consuming the thirties,⁷⁸ with the world turned upside down and social order gone.⁷⁹

⁷¹ Herring, *Djuna*, 218-220.

⁷² Carolyn Allen, "Writing toward *Nightwood*: Djuna Barnes' Seduction Stories," in Broe, Mary Lynn, *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 54.

⁷³ Jane Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic," in Broe, Mary Lynn, *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 229.

⁷⁴ Herring, *Djuna*, 208-209.

⁷⁵ Herring, *Djuna*, 217.

⁷⁶ Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus," 234.

⁷⁷ Broe, *Silence and Power*, 92.

⁷⁸ Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus," 228.

⁷⁹ Mary Lynn Broe, "Introduction," in Broe, Mary Lynn, *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 19.

Scholars debate whether or not *Nightwood* is a political novel. Literary theorist Kenneth Burke does not see *Nightwood* as a politically conscious book.⁸⁰ Philip Herring, in his biography, says nothing explicitly about the political nature of the novel. Jane Marcus, on the other hand, is a feminist literary scholar who argues that *Nightwood* is politically conscious. She argues that *Nightwood* is an antifascist text, and that it is “a kind of feminist-anarchist call for freedom from fascism.”⁸¹ Marcus even goes so far as to state that *Nightwood* was “a prophecy of the Holocaust.”⁸² These differing opinions on the meaning of and influences in *Nightwood*, notwithstanding, it seems that Barnes wrote *Nightwood* both as an attempt to make sense of her own life and of the confusing times in which she lived. By the end of the decade Barnes’s health began to deteriorate. She drank way too much, smoked too much, and was depressed. In 1939, she was so depressed she attempted to commit suicide, but failed. She left Paris for the final time in fall of 1939, never to live in Europe again.⁸³

Anderson and Barnes: Isolationism

Almost everyone was searching for answers to make sense of what was happening in the world in the 1930s. The world had turned upside down: an economic depression, the rise of extreme politics and fears of another war had people frantic. Many dove into political activism to help restore world order. Margaret Anderson and Djuna Barnes took a different approach than most others in Paris during the 1930s. The majority of the literary figures became involved in politics, and used political parties and theories to find stability in the uncertain time. Anderson and Barnes however focused on personal exploration to find the answers they were looking for.

⁸⁰ Marcus, “Laughing at Leviticus,” 230.

⁸¹ Marcus, “Laughing at Leviticus,” 221.

⁸² Marcus, “Laughing at Leviticus,” 249.

⁸³ Herring, *Djuna*, 233, 246-247.

The women in their search of meaning continued to remain tied to their community groups in Paris and it can be argued they relied on these even more in the thirties. Margaret Anderson, having been familiar with and part of the Gurdjieff following since the 1920s, only began to dive deeper and more passionately into the doctrine in the 1930s. The thirties caused a stronger desire in her to focus on expanding her knowledge and fixing herself. Through her personal journey she also relied on the community of women followers of Gurdjieff, who dubbed themselves The Rope, and Gurdjieff himself. Djuna Barnes spent this time reflecting on her past and her relationships and the changes in Paris and the world. While writing her personal exploratory novel *Nightwood*, Barnes continued to frequent Natalie Barney's salon, cafes day or night, and occasionally Jane Heap's Gurdjieff meetings.

Although Margaret Anderson and Djuna Barnes spent the 1930s in introspection, the historical background was inescapable. Politics was all around them. The isolationist stance they held did not suppress the feelings anxiety, depression and uncertainty during the decade.

Conclusion

Paris had changed significantly from the bohemian literary haven of the 1920s to the dark and uncertain 1930s. The twenties were a time of celebration. The literary community gathered in the various cafes and salons of the Left Bank to drink, write and discuss literature. “The party” that was the Paris of the 1920s ended in 1929 with the Wall Street crash and onset of the Great Depression.¹ The 1930s saw a new atmosphere in Paris, with the rise of radical politics and fears of another world war.

Despite this, an American literary community continued to exist in Paris during the 1930s. The continuance of this community is evident through the lives of four of its prominent members: Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach and Janet Flanner. Certain scholars, such as Shari Benstock, note that American literary women remained in Paris during the 1930s, but Benstock argues that there was no clear sense of community among these women.² My study proves the contrary: the connections and relationships between these women -- a true community -- is clear. Anderson, Barnes, Beach and Flanner were regularly in contact with each other, the ties between them were complex and entwined, indeed they were at the heart of a large network of people in the 1930s connecting political, cultural and spiritual contexts. More than simply members of the community, these women were leaders, crucial points of contact.

Janet Flanner and Sylvia Beach were both important “nodes” in the artistic and literary networks in Paris. Flanner had many connections and relationships with cultural figures in Paris (expatriate and French), she was a friend to all, which was rare in a world of feuds and rivalries. Flanner moved easily in the cultural world, and helped others make connections within and

¹ Mary Sperling McAuliffe, *When Paris Sizzled: the 1920s Paris of Hemingway, Chanel, Cocteau, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, and Their Friends* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 271-272.

² Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, 34.

between her networks. Similarly, Sylvia Beach was also an integral figure. Her popular bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, enabled Beach to form connections with the English language writers who came to her store looking for books, friends or advice. Beach cultivated a haven that welcomed all. This also extended to the French writers who became close friends, as well as French and international (and especially African) students.

Flanner and Beach's role in the community remained as cultural and interpersonal connections, but they also became liaisons in the political context of the community. In the 1930s, Beach became more politically engaged and reevaluated the needs of her store. She began including popular political magazines that were written by her friends, such as André Gide and Paul Valéry. She attended the rallies of communist and socialist groups in Paris, and facilitated meetings of French writers and political activists. At the same time, readings performed by famous literary figures, such as Ernest Hemingway and D. H. Lawrence, were held at her bookshop to keep it financially afloat. These readings brought together the French and expatriate groups in the 1930s.³ Indeed, it was Beach's French friends who had the idea to form the Friends of Shakespeare and Company group that saved Beach from having to close her bookshop. André Gide, Paul Valéry, and André Maurois likewise performed readings of their works to fundraise money for Beach.⁴ Flanner, meanwhile, documented the events and evolving political situation in Paris and Europe to her New York readers. She kept current on all of the newspapers to ensure she had the latest reports, traveled to London and Berlin, and continued to document the events

³ Sylvia Beach Papers, Notebook, Box 56, Folder 5, Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library

⁴ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 354-355, 358-359.

that took place there.⁵ Beach and Flanner were themselves, therefore, key figures in the Parisian cultural world of the 1930s.

There was also a spiritual dimension to the community of expatriate literary women in the 1930s. Margaret Anderson, Georgette LeBlanc and Jane Heap were the first to join George Gurdjieff's institute for the study of his doctrine, The Fourth Way. Anderson and Heap invited Djuna Barnes, Janet Flanner and Solita Solano to meetings and lessons with Gurdjieff and Heap during the 1930s. Barnes and Flanner occasionally attended the meetings, but Anderson and Solano became heavily invested in the group. Gurdjieff groomed a small group of women, who dubbed themselves The Rope: Anderson, Solano and LeBlanc were three of those women.⁶

The community of American expatriate literary women was not confined to a neighbourhood, but rather encompassed the city of Paris itself. Deborah Parsons points out that Benstock's study confines these women, and the networks between them, to salons. While these salons are very important meeting spaces for the women and their ideas, the geography of their networks extend far beyond those spaces. Parsons asserts that these women interacted with the city of Paris as a whole and although Parsons limits her analysis to Janet Flanner, Djuna Barnes and Anais Nin,⁷ her point is clearly seen in the experiences of all four women in this study in the 1930s. Paris was more than a beautiful backdrop - they engaged and interacted with the city. This is shown through the reaction and experiences of the women through the 1930s. They all document and reflect on the events that took place in Paris, in particular the February 6, 1934 riots.⁸ As Parsons asserts, while "Benstock evokes a sense of an insular female community" by

⁵ Flanner, *Janet Flanner's World*, 6-31.

⁶ Patterson, *Ladies of the Rope*, 96.

⁷ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 149-150.

⁸ Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 345.

focusing on salons, this static representation denies the women their important role in the city and the important role the city plays in their experiences and writing.⁹

It's important to note that this community was not formed solely in Paris, however, but had its roots in New York, where most of these women began their careers. Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap met Djuna Barnes and George Gurdjieff in New York. Janet Flanner met Solita Solano in New York as well. Bonds that were forged in New York continued in Paris throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, but New York remained important to the women's careers. Djuna Barnes traveled to New York during the mid-thirties, to write and get her novel published. Flanner wrote for the *New Yorker*, relating her Paris experiences for a New York audience. With the outbreak of the Second World War, New York became their refuge: Janet Flanner, Solita Solano and Djuna Barnes returned to New York in 1939, Margaret Anderson followed in 1941.¹⁰

A picture emerges of an American expatriate literary community that was larger, more complex, and more transnational -- with roots in Paris as well as New York -- than narratives of the Lost Generation suggest. This study shows a larger community, with women as the central figures, that not only predates the Lost Generation but also survives it. During the 1930s, the American literary community took on different dynamics in the new political climate in Paris. The varying responses and needs demonstrated by the women profiled here, in their search for answers to cope with the uncertainty of the 1930s, are reflected in their cultural, spiritual and political networks. Their experiences were shaped and reinforced by their community, and vice versa.

⁹ Parsons, "The Cosmopolitan and the Rag-Picker in Expatriate Paris," 150.

¹⁰ Flanner, "Life on a Cloud"; Herring, *Djuna*, 172, 241, 247; Wineapple, *Genêt*, 160.

Flanner and Beach had similar experiences during the 1930s. The two women both remained in Paris because they had stable jobs and lives. Flanner had worked in Paris, writing for the *New Yorker* since 1925. Beach had owned and run a bookstore in Paris since 1919. Flanner and Beach both saw themselves as Parisians. With the growing political unrest in Paris during the thirties, because of their left-wing sympathies, and because they saw themselves as Parisians, Flanner and Beach became focused on politics. For both women, the 1934 riots awoke them to the rise in radical politics, and the potential threat to peace and democracy. Their focus on politics can be seen in their work, Flanner's writing and the political material in Beach's bookshop. It is also reflected in their greater engagement with the French writers who were leading political events in the 1930s.

Anderson and Barnes likewise had similar experiences and priorities in the 1930s. Both women took the political stance of isolationism. The women took a more personal route in dealing with the effects and uncertainty of the thirties, they focused on and searched within themselves rather than looking in the outside world. Barnes reflected on her life and relationships in writing her novel *Nightwood*. Anderson dove deeper into the teachings of George Gurdjieff to find peace and reassurance. The historical context however was inescapable and affected them, nevertheless. Both suffered anxiety and depression. All four of the women studied here were searching for answers in the 1930s, but found them in different places.

The thirties were a defining decade for these women who had been previously overlooked or whose influence has been minimized. They all went through an intense period of self-reflection and discovery, they found themselves and their priorities even more than they had in the exuberant 1920s. Flanner found her true voice and calling in her journalism, she finally felt

she was doing something important. Beach reignited her passion for politics and linked it to her passion for literature. Barnes worked through her personal turmoil, writing an influential novel, although she was not satisfied with what she found within. Anderson threw herself into a spiritual doctrine that she relied on for the rest of her life. The 1930s was the decade when she truly committed to Gurdjieff's doctrine, and she claimed it changed her life forever, and gave her peace.

The biographies of these women in the American literary community in Paris in the 1930s are significant because they detail experiences which have been largely overlooked in history. The nature and continued existence of this community has been disregarded and dismissed as no longer relevant following the departure of the main male figures. This study demonstrates not only that the community continued to exist, but explores the attitudes, dynamics and experiences of four key literary women in Paris during the 1930s, and their navigation of a period of difficulty, anxiety and crisis.

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