

Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company in the English-Language Book Trade of Interwar Paris

Matthew Chambers

Matthew Chambers, associate professor at the University of Warsaw, is a visiting research fellow at the University of Reading and honorary lecturer at University College London. He has written on literary networks and publishing history in *Modernism, Periodicals, and Cultural Poetics* (Palgrave, 2015) and *London and the Modernist Bookshop* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). His recent research explores the social, political, and literary roles that bookshops played in the early decades of the 20th century. He is a member of the Bookselling Research Network and editor of the peer-reviewed journal *The New Americanist*, which will soon be available from Edinburgh University Press.

m.chambers@reading.ac.uk
matthew.chambers@ucl.ac.uk



Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company is one of the most famous modernist institutions. Yet, too often the bookshop and its owner are framed as either in assistance to James Joyce, publishing his *Ulysses*, or as an incomparable hostess. In both framings, Beach is a supporting player and Shakespeare and Company an evocative space of chance encounters with literary greatness. Such

framings underserve Beach's abilities as a bookseller and obscure Shakespeare and Company's primary function – the lending and selling of books. This essay approaches Shakespeare and Company as an institution in the book trade, and explores how it navigated the English-language market in Paris. By examining Beach's competition among other sellers and her order records showing

DOI:10.1163/18784712-20240002

how she stocked the shop, Shakespeare and Company is approached as a commercial enterprise. This book trade perspective fleshes out the further dimensions of the bookshop beyond its better-known functions as a single-author publisher and lending library, in order to provide a fuller sense of how it operated as an essential modernist institution for the Paris community.

Keywords: Sylvia Beach, Shakespeare and Company, bookselling, literary modernism, publishing

This page (Figures 1–2) of the *International Herald* (12 December 1932) shows advertisements for three bookshops – Galignani's, W. H. Smith, and Brentano's – and a publisher who was also at times a bookseller as well – Edward W. Titus of At the Sign of the Black Manikin. Notably absent from this prominent interwar Paris-based newspaper is Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company, which, in contrast to the four English-language booksellers seen here, rarely advertised in such spaces. But, rather than read this in the negative, it is better to approach this page from a book trade perspective and not a literary historical one. Such a perspective first opens up questions about local market (English readers in Paris), competition, distribution, stock, and sales; second, it sets Sylvia Beach in the centre of these questions and, by extension, in relation to these other sellers; and, third, it shifts the emphasis on Shakespeare and Company's absence from these advertising pages as an absence from the mainstream book trade to a focus on what type of bookshop Beach ran.

Beach's importance has long been established as her being a person in service to others.¹ The memorable image of her standing on a Paris train platform eagerly awaiting the arrival of the first two copies of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which she had agreed to publish, may be one of the more iconic moments in the history of interwar literary Paris (Ellman, 1982, p. 524). Yet, this moment also represents a fault in approaches to the interwar print culture of Paris: it sets Beach as one lone genius publishing another, the outsider American publishing the peripatetic Irishman. Paris, the book trade, and publishing world dynamics are pushed to the background. In publishing *Ulysses*, Beach was not out of the ordinary as a bookseller-publisher, nor was her bookshop, Shakespeare and Company, alone in the English-language book trade in Paris. Recently, the Shakespeare and Company Project (Princeton



Figure 1 *International Herald Tribune* (12 December 1932)

University) – a publicly available and searchable database making use of Princeton's significant holdings of Sylvia Beach's papers – has offered more dimensions of both Beach and her bookshop. The project opens a wonderfully detailed world of what Beach's customers bought or borrowed. It provides an unparalleled bookshop archive in terms of detail, but in this detail it begs questions that are beyond its scope to answer. What if Beach did not have the book, magazine, or newspaper in stock? Yes, we can see she was able to order titles for customers, but if the customer had an urgent need, decided not to place an order, or desired something Beach did not usually stock or know how to acquire, then what other options did the customer have? In other words,

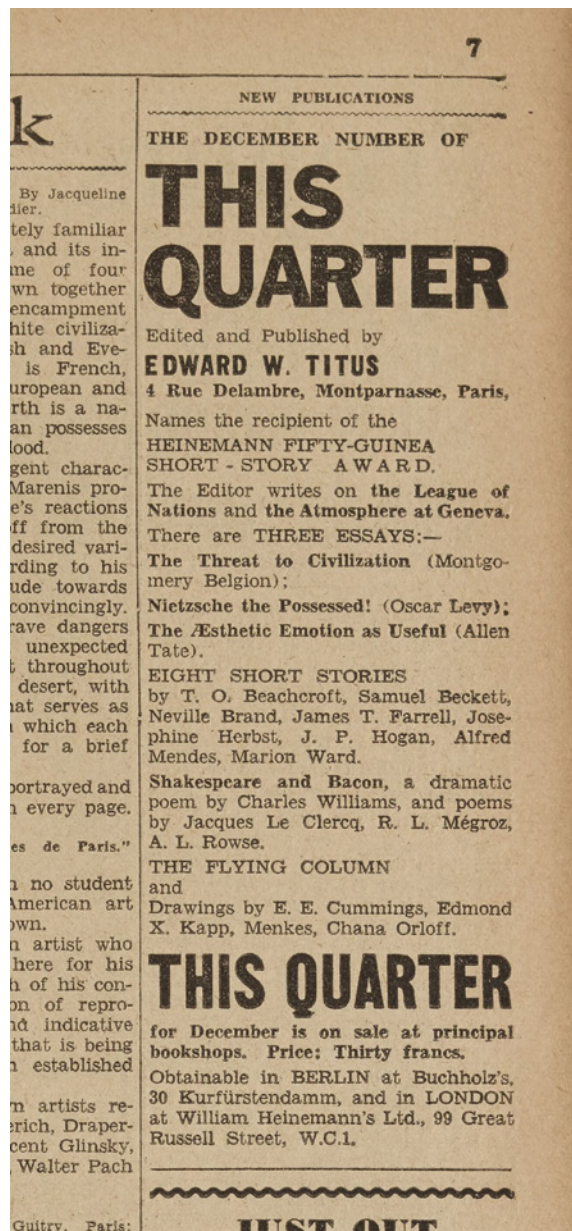


Figure 2 *International Herald Tribune*
(12 December 1932)

what choice was there for the English-speaking denizens of interwar Paris in where they bought their literature? What competition did Beach face and what kind of market did she enter into? How did one acquire English-language books to sell?

To get at such questions, this article approaches Shakespeare and Company from two directions: first its place among other English-language booksellers in Paris,

and then its relationship with publishers who supplied the stock for the shop. In the process, I aim to retrieve Sylvia Beach as the secondary figure in other people's stories (James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, etc.) and foreground Shakespeare and Company as unique within, but very much within, the transatlantic book trade. By placing the emphasis on Beach as a bookseller and Shakespeare and Company as a bookshop, I argue that the bookshop was a vital modernist institution, beyond its usual associations with social networking, and as a necessary commercial space that made modernism happen.²

Competition and Market: The Galignani Library, W. H. Smith, and Brentano's

The market for English-language materials in Paris had been well established long before Shakespeare and Company opened its doors in November 1919. The Galignani Library opened in 1800 with an eye to reprinting English-language books. In 1814, following the abdication of Napoleon Bonaparte and the stationing of British troops in France, the *Galignani Messenger* was established – a daily newspaper that reprinted news from England and around Europe (in translation) (Galignani Library, 1923, 9–17). William Makepeace Thackeray briefly worked as a subeditor for the *Messenger*, and the paper features a handful of times across his work, including in *Vanity Fair*.³ By the turn of the century, the paper had folded and the business had faded from its former prominence. Galignani's is not greatly visible in the records of Shakespeare and Company, but, unlike Beach's business and like the other two main competitors (Brentano's and W. H. Smith), it regularly advertised in the big English-language newspapers published in Paris in the 1920s, such as the Paris editions of the *New York Herald* and the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as the *Paris Times*, and in tourist brochures in upscale accommodation like Hotel Terminus (Hotel Terminus Saint-Lazare, 1923). Yet, unlike the Brentano's and W. H. Smith in Paris, but like Shakespeare and Company, Galignani's regularly ordered all manner of Hogarth Press titles.⁴ This latter detail suggests that Beach would have felt some competition.

Economic competition in the best of circumstances is complicated to assess, and without available records of orders or sales from Beach's competitors we cannot make a quantitative assessment. However, it is possible

to identify her sense of competition. Firstly, she built an idea of brand loyalty: her emphasis that the shop was a 'lending library' sought to set it apart from other booksellers in Paris, if not the American Library, and as part of this approach she created customer files and charged subscriptions. One became a member of the shop, one of the 'company'. Secondly, she cultivated the artist and writer connections that gave the shop its literary identity. This was most prominently marked by the portraits of her famous customers which she collected and hung around the shop. Yet nowhere was this sense of these authors belonging to, and by extension, giving the bookshop its identity better illustrated than by an incident in 1938. Ernest Hemingway came into the shop while Beach was away, and the shop assistant had him settle his accounts. He later rang Beach and complained that the assistant had 'cleaned out my pockets', threatening

Ernest Hemingway came into the shop while Beach was away, and the shop assistant had him settle his accounts. He later rang Beach and complained that the assistant had 'cleaned out my pockets'

Beach that she should '[g]et rid of that female before you lose all of your pals'. Beach chastised her assistant, declaring that 'Brentano's would *pay* Hemingway if he would come to their shop!' (Riley Fitch, 1983, p. 399).⁵ This story has been repeated in a few places with the conclusion that Beach valued her 'company' over her profits and her business.⁶ Yet it more likely indicates Beach's awareness of Shakespeare & Company's appeal to the general paying public: Hemingway's celebrity and brand loyalty would attract sales, an attraction that businesses like Brentano's would have to pay for.

Brentano's was an American bookselling chain that started as a news-stand in New York City in 1853 and expanded its operations to become a bookshop in 1860. By the turn of the century, it had expanded into several American cities, as well as Paris and London, boasting that it was the 'Booksellers to the World'. The Paris branch had opened in 1895 and geared its stock to a

tourist crowd and carried magazines, posters, stationery, Brentano's press titles, and much else. Yet, by the 1930s, its parent company faced serious financial issues.

The crash in 1929 left Brentano's, like so many of the country's best bookstores, with a huge inventory of expensive books and a top-heavy overhead. In the spring of 1930 a group of publishers formed what I believe they called a protective committee and in three years of unique management threw the entire corporation into bankruptcy. In March 1933 Brentano's found itself in the tender hands of that well-known and experienced retail bookselling organization The Irving Trust Company ... Expenses were pared to the bone. The publishing department was disposed of to Coward-McCann. All but the main store in New York and the branches in Washington, Chicago, and Paris were discontinued. (Cerf, 1950, p. 4)

Banker Stanton Griffis was brought in to save the company. He 'believed that it could be expanded along the lines of many of the great chain-store businesses that spread throughout the country ... I opened branches in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Mateo, Beverly Hills, Honolulu, and Hartford' (Griffis, 1952, p. 65). Yet he complained about book clubs, loss leaders, and toxic relations between publishers and booksellers as the reasons for the limited resurrection of the brand (Griffis, 1952, pp. 66–67). Under such circumstances Brentano's could have hardly offered serious competition to Shakespeare and Company in the late 1930s (the period of the Hemingway incident), especially with the loss of its publishing arm and with its investment focus turned to expanding locations on the west coast of the United States.⁷

More generally, Beach's anxiety about chain operations and the competition they offered was certainly warranted. For example, the large chain booksellers W. H. Smith bought out the family-run Neal's Library in 1903, a few doors down from Galignani's at 248 Rue de Rivoli, opened a tearoom, and incorporated the stock from Neal's.⁸ Since 1848, W. H. Smith had successfully opened hundreds of railway station bookstalls, newsagents, and bookshops, and at 'the outbreak of the [First World War] Smith's boasted of "practically 2,000 branches and sub-branches" and a "wholesale connec-

tion" that put them "in touch with several thousands of newsagents throughout the country" (Colclough, 2014, pp. 278–279).⁹ W. H. Smith – which, like Brentano's, still operates from the same address, but as an independent bookseller called Smith & Son – used the incredible financial strength gained from its successful model of railway station stalls to open a bookselling operation more like any large bookshop-cafe business we are familiar with today. More than either Galignani's or Brentano's, W. H. Smith advertised widely, carried a diverse stock, and could undersell its competitors because of its internal distribution system, which would have cut restocking costs, and because of its profits from sales of other items like postcards, newspapers, and magazines as well as what was gained from the tearoom.

W. H. Smith's advantage in stock and distribution highlights two vital components of any bookselling success: first, developing beneficial relations with publishers to get trade terms and, second, keeping the costs of shipping and custom fees to a minimum so as to prevent the marking up of your stock too much to offset costs. W. H. Smith had its own internal distribution and could afford to operate at a loss, given its large operations in Britain. Brentano's, to a lesser extent, had these advantages too, but also relied on a diverse range of sales in addition to books (stationery, posters, newspapers, magazines, and theatre tickets). Galignani's had been in business for over 100 years in Paris, and at times, before the establishment of international copyright, printed their own editions of English-language titles and sold them for a fraction of their price in Britain (see Barber, 1961). Beach had none of these competitive advantages when she opened Shakespeare and Company. She built her publisher contacts from scratch and was able to maintain her business for 20 years, even through financial difficulties in the 1930s, shutting only because of the Nazi occupation. In other words, although she is rightly hailed for her social-networking acumen, her ability to successfully run a business in the face of such direct competition has not been properly appreciated. By analysing her incoming stock we can better understand important dimensions of her shop: the shape of customer demand, which publishers she relied on, and a general, yet detailed, picture of what was on her shelves.

Stock and trade

In all the photos of Sylvia Beach standing in front of or inside Shakespeare and Company, we glimpse her books but can rarely make out the titles.¹⁰ Too often, writing on Beach and Shakespeare and Company reflects this myopia. But Shakespeare and Company was nothing without its stock. Beach's surviving financial records are fulsome, if incomplete and occasionally difficult to parse. For the purposes of demonstration, I have selected two years of publisher orders (1928–1929) to help describe what people might encounter on the shelves when they entered her shop. By 1928, Shakespeare and Company had been open for nearly a decade and Beach had established her major publisher contacts. The shop was also thriving and not yet devastated by the Great Depression. This focus helps us see patterns: which titles Beach restocked and how often, which publishers she favoured, and what categories she stocked besides fiction and poetry. Shakespeare and Company's stock was a blend of old and new, journal and book, Joyce and everyone else. When Beach opened the shop, she stocked it with used titles bought in Paris, and, according to her memoir, with acquisitions from Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop and Elkin Mathews in London. She also acquired volumes from Boyveau & Chevillet (*librairie étrangère*), a kind of wholesaler who advertised broadly for all types of publications ('ALL FOREIGN BOOKS FOR University, school, administrative libraries, etc.'). Boyveau & Chevillet published foreign-language grammar books and sold 'foreign books' across all categories. The first two decades of the 20th century appear to have been their peak years of operation, based on the range of publication dates of catalogued titles.¹¹ Beach purchased 565 books as her initial stock on 2 October 1919 for 1585.50 francs, or about 5 per cent of the total money given to her by her mother to open her bookshop.¹² She also went to London and purchased 398 titles at Elkin Mathews.¹³ When Shakespeare and Company opened in November 1919, it would have over 1000 titles already in stock. What is striking about the acquisitions from Boyveau & Chevillet is how consistently canonical most of the works Beach purchased remain: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Butler, the Brontës, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, Oscar Wilde, and so on. Elkin Mathews sold their own publications, including several works by

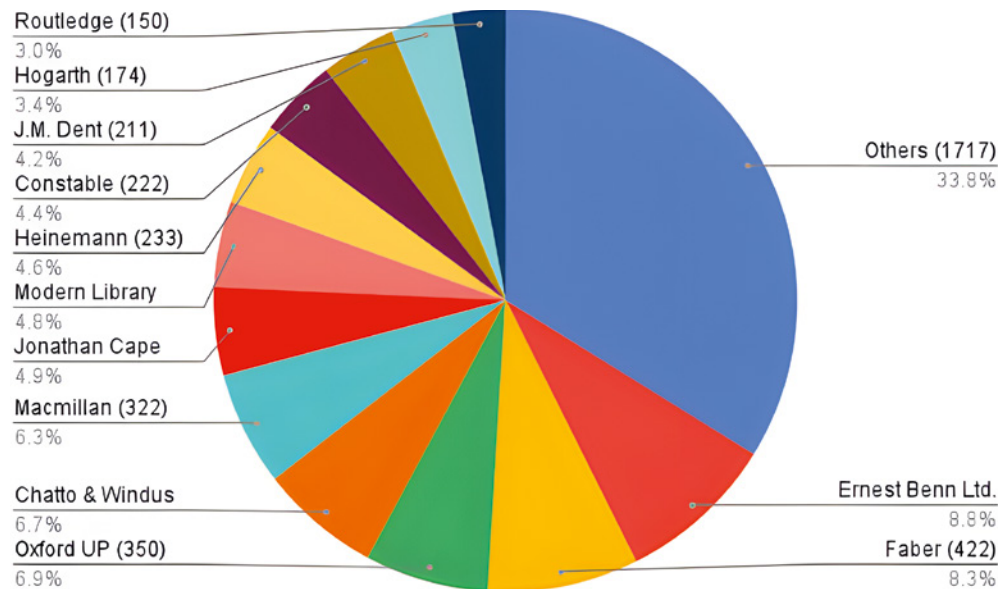


Figure 3 Major publisher orders (1928–1929)

Ezra Pound, Laurence Binyon's *London Visions* (1908), and *Nelson's Last Diary* (1917), among other curious titles such as *The Curse of the Raggedstone* (1888), *Sylvia's Rose and the May Moon* (1908), and *Rainbows and Witches* (1913).¹⁴ From these initial orders, Beach grew her stock and publisher contacts.

Beach assigned much of this stock to a lending library, which dominated her business. She was eager to present Shakespeare and Company as a lending library from the start; Ernest Hemingway, memorializing Shakespeare and Company in *A Moveable Feast*, marvelled that he was able to take books home for free.¹⁵ Beach, no doubt inspired by the *cabinets de lecture* or reading rooms, which had been popular in the previous century in Paris, where with a monthly subscription members could look at materials available on the premises or rent books for short periods of time. She would certainly also have been aware of the many circulating libraries in England, most famously Boots Book-Lovers' Library (Belllos, 1995).¹⁶ It is fair to call the lending library the dominant aspect of the shop, but it was by no means its only function. Alongside her publisher orders for single copies of books for the lending library, Beach often also ordered multiple copies to stock for sale. Repeat orders for multiple copies of the same title over several months also indicate an emphasis on sales in addition to lending. For example, Rosamond

Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* was first published by Chatto & Windus in 1927. One copy arrives on 8 February 1928 and is first lent out to France Emma Raphaël on 30 June 1928. It is borrowed five separate times in 1928 and 1929 without overlap, indicating one copy in the lending library. Meanwhile, from 3 July 1929 to the end of the year, Beach receives an additional eight copies in orders of one or two, selling four copies between 2 September and the end of the year.¹⁷ The shop stock as a whole, then, was a careful balance between what was lent and what was sold.

Beach recorded incoming titles by date of acquisition and provided the name of the publisher, the title, net price in pounds or dollars, the number of copies ordered, and occasionally a note if the title was damaged or returned.¹⁸ The records show that, after a decade, Beach had established contacts with at least 131 publishers. During 1928–1929, she ordered 5074 books, or seven new volumes a day on average, not including the various periodicals she stocked, *Ulysses*, or items acquired locally from wholesalers or in trade from customers. Of those 131 publishers, she primarily ordered from 18 (3887 books, or 76.6 per cent of the total), and most of the orders were placed with publishers in the UK (4425 books, or 87.2 per cent of the total) (Figure 3). Even if the process of getting the books through customs was time

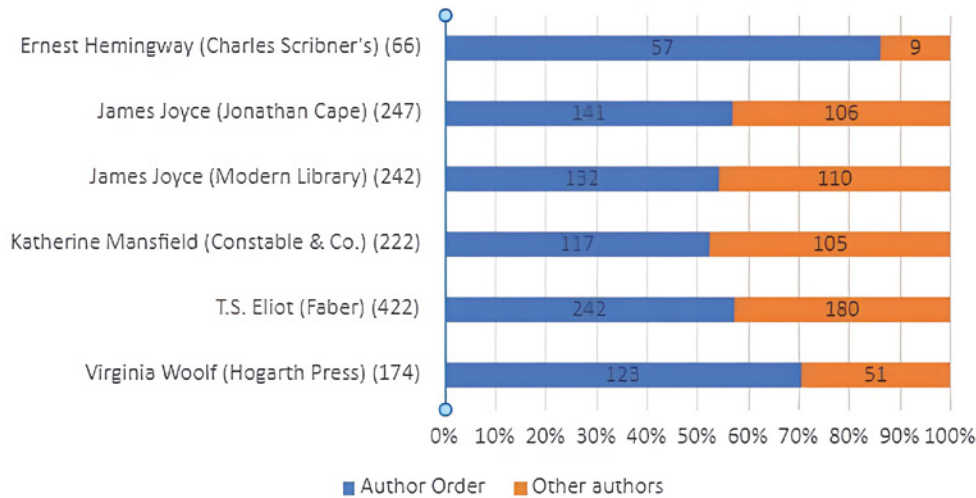


Figure 4 Authors and publishers (1928–1929)

consuming, shipping between London and Paris in the 1920s was regular, affordable, and fast. Import duties and shipping costs do not appear to have been prohibitively expensive at the time, especially for the regular parcel post service between London and Paris (parcels up to 3 lbs cost 4.15 francs). The surviving bookkeeping does not provide a full picture, but Beach told the *Publisher's Weekly* in 1924 that she paid 1.1 per cent tariff on her orders, while playing up the difficulty of the task of collecting books from customs: 'Sometimes it is necessary to wait in line several hours and then to take the books home by taxi for lack of other means of transit. Miss Beach's only assistant, a little Greek girl, spends easily half her time in these formalities' (Cody, 1924, p. 1263). The data we have give us indications rather than a full picture: for example, on 17 January 1936, Beach reports paying eight francs for 'duty on parcels', but she does not specify how many parcels or titles or where they arrived from, and, shortly thereafter, she notes down 30 francs paid for a *séance*. Although it may have been onerous to commute across the city regularly to collect packages, the cost incurred does not appear to have been a significant financial deterrent from regularly making orders from US and UK publishers. Another way of looking at this: across the two years, or 731 days (1928 being a leap year), reviewed here, books are logged as received on 429 of those days. This is an average of 17.86 days per month out of a maximum 26 operating days. This percentage rises if we factor in national holidays and time away for

summer vacation. Whatever the challenges of getting titles from across the Channel or elsewhere overseas, they were surmountable. Further, a same-day 'air service' delivery was advertised for letters and a next-day service for parcels, the latter priced similarly to surface shipping (Hotel Terminus Saint-Lazare, 1923). One indication of how quickly Beach would have been able to fill orders comes from the following set of entries. Shakespeare and Company returned a defective copy of Valery Larbaud's *A. O. Barnabooth* on 17 April 1928 to J. M. Dent & Sons and received a replacement copy three days later on 20 April. There are other indications, mostly from the evidence of restocking orders, that Beach could manage to have a title in her shop in under a week from London.

There are other indications, mostly from the evidence of restocking orders, that Beach could manage to have a title in her shop in under a week from London.

Some patterns emerge from these different publishers (Figure 4). For example, 242 of the 422 Faber orders were books by T. S. Eliot.¹⁹ Large orders for single authors hold true with other publishers: Joyce at Jonathan Cape (141 out of 247) and Modern Library (132 out of 242); Katherine Mansfield at Constable & Co. (117 out of 222);

and Virginia Woolf at Hogarth Press (123 out of 174). Although large orders for Joyce's publications are hardly surprising, it is worth noting that his Modern Library order alone represents almost 19 per cent of Beach's overseas orders.²⁰ Beach certainly stocked plenty of American authors, but she seems to have only ordered their books from US suppliers where necessary. For example, most of her Heinemann orders were from their UK offices except 27 copies of Ernest Hemingway titles. Joyce, Hemingway, and E. E. Cummings between them account for almost 40 per cent of Beach's 649 US ordered titles; the publisher Charles Scribner's Sons was essentially used just to supply more Hemingway (57 out of 66).

On the other hand, Beach's largest orders with publishers such as Ernest Benn Ltd. (446), Oxford University Press (350), and J. M. Dent & Sons (211) are more varied. With Benn and Dent, Beach mainly ordered series titles (Sixpenny Library, Augustan Poets, and Augustan Books of Modern Poetry [Benn] and Everyman [Dent]). At Oxford University Press, Beach placed large orders for World's Classics titles (129 out of 350), a series originated by Grant Richards and bought from them by Oxford University Press in 1905. Beach had established an account with Richards in 1919; but perhaps what drew her to the series were the introductions by Eliot, Woolf, and other popular writers.²¹ Lise Jaillant (2016) has argued, following Pierre Bourdieu, that introductions by well-known modernists like Eliot and Woolf 'consecrated' classic titles for the contemporary book-selling market. Given Beach's habit of stocking a mixture of older, well-regarded titles alongside new works, it is unsurprising she favoured this series so heavily (Jaillant, 2016, pp. 57–58). Oxford University Press also appears to have been the most diligent of all the publishers in sending catalogues, reminders, and offers.²² Nearly two-thirds of the Routledge orders were for titles in the Today and Tomorrow Series or the Muses' Library (47 and 48 out of 150, respectively).²³ Most of this information confirms what we know about Beach's interests and Shakespeare and Company's focus, but it only tells part of the story. In addition to the many modernist names, Beach was not averse to regularly ordering genre fiction (mainly crime fiction, but some romance and science fiction); reference materials such as translation

dictionaries; non-fiction such as travel guides and scientific works, classical and modern; and a fair amount of children's literature, a detail too often overlooked in the history of the shop. For example, in addition to ordering 18 'stocking booklets' – Christmas and poetry collections aimed at children – Beach stocked Robert Louis Stevenson (*Kidnapped!*, *Treasure Island*), Jack London (*White Fang*), and J. M. Barrie (*Peter Pan and Wendy*), as well as Hugh Lofting's *Dr Doolittle in the Moon*, Francis Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and several copies of A. A. Milne's *House at Pooh Corner*.

Perhaps the most curious detail from these data pertains to the second-most-ordered title during these two years, and the most-ordered work of non-fiction. Surprisingly, it was not written by one of the authors we tend to associate with Shakespeare and Company. On 4 June 1928, a single copy of *Parenthood: Design or accident? (A manual of birth control)* – with a preface by H. G. Wells – arrived at the shop. Six weeks later, another 36 copies arrived, making it one of the largest orders for any title during this period. By early April 1929, Beach had ordered 97 copies of the book from the Labour Publishing Company, a publisher she had no other business with. Authored by Michael Fielding, a pseudonym of Dr Maurice Newfield (Wells's personal physician for a short time and editor of both the *British Medical Journal* and the Eugenics Society's journal *Eugenics Review* [*British Medical Journal*, 1949]), the book advocates for birth control for reasons of personal health and the public good. The former is mainly presented in the book's longest chapter on types of birth control and how to use them, and the latter in more tortured prose attempting to differentiate his claims on population control from 'the easy fallacy of judging the biological qualities of a person by the depth of his purse, or of assuming the term "better" now applied to classes means anything other than "richer"' (Fielding, 1928, p. 36).²⁴ The book was advertised widely in the British press throughout 1928, received a favourable review from sexologist Norman Haire in May 1928 in the *Saturday Review* (which the publisher leapt on for subsequent advertising: 'Why is everyone reading birth control [?] ... Because Norman Haire says in *The Saturday Review* ...'), and benefited from Wells's name recognition. Yet, none of these promotional advantages quite explains why Beach had such

faith in its sales potential that she ordered 36 copies at once. By late August, a steady stream of customers were purchasing copies for 10.50 francs apiece. In the absence of a clear and direct explanation, we have the probable answer that the book had received good enough word-of-mouth praise to warrant the large order. Claire L. Jones has recently speculated that the advice in the book on types of contraceptives, including naming specific brands, resulted in favourable sales for its practical recommendations, an aspect of the book Haire had commended it for in his review.²⁵ It is outside the scope of this essay to unpack interwar medical discourse, and indeed there is precious little scholarship on *Parenthood*, but, suffice it to say, large orders for this title and for the *Today and Tomorrow* series clearly demonstrate that Beach's customers were conversant with trends beyond the literary. Indeed, *Today and Tomorrow* was a particularly interesting series motivated by a specific approach to popularizing current scientific knowledge and speculation.

The rationale for the *Today and Tomorrow* series was to combine the popularization of expert knowledge for the general reader with predictions about the future. The essential form of the books is to describe the current state of a particular art, science, discipline, or social phenomenon, and then – the distinctive twist – to project how those fields might develop over the next fifty years or more. (Saunders, 2019, p. 5)

With authors like Vera Brittain writing on the future history of women's reproductive rights and Robert Graves likewise on swearing, alongside considerations of the future history of genetics, chemical warfare, and androids, the series would have offered a provocative complement to the modernist literature that dominated the stock in the shop.

There are a few conclusions to draw from all these data. First, beginning with the most obvious: yes, James Joyce's *Ulysses* was popular, but so were all his publications. Books by and about Joyce (excluding *Ulysses*) represent the second-greatest number of books ordered for any author (274 by him; 28 about him).²⁶ Beach also kept many other modernists well stocked: T. S. Eliot (329), Virginia Woolf (135), Katherine Mansfield (122), Ernest

Hemingway (85), Aldous Huxley (63), D. H. Lawrence (59), Ezra Pound (50), E. E. Cummings (46), Thornton Wilder (39), Lytton Strachey (34), Archibald MacLeish (32), W. B. Yeats (30), and Gertrude Stein (21). Second, there are many single title orders, presumably for the subscription library, but there is strong evidence she sold plenty of titles as well: 1599 single title orders out of 5074, but many of those were restock and a multi-copy order could encompass both sale and the lending library. Even with those possibilities noted, more than two-thirds of her orders were clearly for sale. Third, Beach also ordered plenty of non-fiction and children's literature. It would be complicated to begin building categories for the titles found in these data, but there are numerous works that are not plays, novels, or poetry. Beach sold and lent across a wide spectrum of readerly interests. Fourth, this essay has emphasized larger presses, and, although only 18 publishers represented over 76 per cent of her orders, Beach ordered a not insignificant 187 copies from the other 95 publishers during this period (for example, Elkin Mathews, Grant Richards, Nonesuch Press, Wishart & Co.). And fifth, she avoided ordering from the US where possible. On this point, common sense and popular myth conflict. Logistically speaking, it is reasonable she would have ordered from the UK when she could, but as Americans flooded Paris and the American bookseller hosted American writers, and her one published novel was subject to famous legal actions in the US, there is a habit of thinking of Shakespeare and Company as a dealer in American books. However, in many cases where US publishers either had UK branches or headquarters for their business or had partnerships or publishing deals on specific titles or series, Beach would place her orders in London.

For the purpose of clarity, I have focused strictly on orders here. There is a complex story to tell about circulation, since it consists of both sales and lending records. Profitability is another complicated aspect to unpack. Beach noted the net cost of the titles she ordered in either US dollars or British pounds, but her sales records are recorded in French francs.²⁷ The post-1918 exchange rates between francs, pounds, and dollars could vary greatly depending on when one looks. Demand, however, is easier to track with the order records. I have also refrained from tracking periodicals, partially because

the record-keeping is less consistent, but I also feel the subject is rich enough to deserve its own study. What comes through most clearly from the records reviewed here are the contours of what we now consider a canonical Anglo-American literary modernism in demand at Beach's shop.²⁸

Beach had a skill in hiding the mechanics of her business from public view quite artfully, to the extent that Shakespeare & Company is primarily still remembered for its more sociable aspects. Yet, the two things are not mutually exclusive: the social networking drove sales and borrowing and also generated publication opportunities. By approaching Beach as a member of the book trade – making decisions in light of the realities of publisher rates, distribution networks, legal and financial

realities, and the variations in customer demand, all contained within a business model that accentuated the lending library and loyalty to friends over making a profit – we gain a fuller sense not only of Beach as a bookseller but also how creative decision-making can trump common sense in the book trade. Her shop being an early and successful example of what we would now call an independent bookshop, Beach's business practices helped show the way for future members of the trade who would face the challenge of competing with well-funded competition. In taking a book trade perspective on a famous literary institution, we can better understand how the market helped shape and inform literary communities and present a fuller picture of the development of those communities. ■

Notes

- 1 Sylvia Beach was an American bookseller who owned Shakespeare and Company (1919–1939), a vibrant literary centre for anglophone authors in interwar Paris. She published James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Along with Harold Monro and his Poetry Bookshop in London, she may be the most famous bookseller of the early 20th century. Her legacy lives on in the name of a different Shakespeare and Company that remains open in Paris today. For more on Beach and the literary scene around her bookshop, see, for example, Beach (1991), Ford (1975), Riley Fitch (1983), Benstock (1986).
- 2 For a discussion of other English-language print institutions in interwar Paris, see Cannon (2021).
- 3 The well-travelled Jos Sedley, employed by the East India Company, is regularly featured dozing or reading the paper (Thackeray, 1930, pp. 627, 675, 687).
- 4 For Galignani's Hogarth orders, see the Hogarth Press order books (MS 2750/A/15-31) at University of Reading's Special Collections.
- 5 The story was related to Riley by Beach's assistant, Eleanor Oldenberger.
- 6 Mary McAuliffe (2018, p. 237) and Joshua Kotin (2019, p. 121) also cite Riley's story and draw similar conclusions.
- 7 There is another detail that may explain why Beach's assistant Eleanor Oldenberger remembered Brentano's as the business that would have paid Hemingway. In Hemingway's membership file, there is a note from November 1938 to replace five copies of *The Fifth Column* that Beach had given Hemingway by buying them at Brentano's. Oldenberger purportedly told Riley that 20 copies were ordered from the publisher, Hemingway having paid for three and left 17 behind (Riley, 1983, p. 390).
- 8 <https://www.smithandson.com/our-history/ssh-6927>.
- 9 For more on the origins and early trade impact of W. H. Smith, see also Colclough (2004).
- 10 A quick image search will pull up several such instances, but a few can be found in the digitized portion of her archive at Princeton University Library; for example: https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/C0108_c000002357 and https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/C0108_c000002394?onlineToggle=true.
- 11 <https://www.worldcat.org/search?q=kw%3Aboveyeau+and+chevillet&qt=advanced&dblist=638>. France was awash in pirated English-language titles and the great availability of English-language books at a wholesaler would not have been a surprise in a city that had more one bookshop per 7500 inhabitants by 1881 (Lyons, 2008, p. 54).
- 12 Invoice from Boyveau and Chevillet, 2 October 1919, Bills and Invoices, Box 72, Folder 5, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ. Beach was sent US\$3000 by her mother in September 1922 to help open and stock her bookshop. Letter from Eleanor O. Beach to Sylvia Beach (27 August 1919), Correspondence with Eleanor O. Beach, Box 5, Folder 1,

- Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 13 Invoice from Boyveau and Chevillet (2 October 1919), Bills and Invoices, Box 72, Folder 5, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ (translation by author); Invoice from Elkin Mathews, 28 October 1919, Elkin Mathews, Box 60, Folder 4, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 14 In her memoir, Beach conflates this order with a later order from Elkin Mathews, complaining that the initial order came with some unwanted titles; it was in fact an order she made two years later which caused the confusion (see Beach, 1991, p. 19; Letter from Elkin Mathews to Sylvia Beach, 8 June 1921, Elkin Mathews, Box 60, Folder 4, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ).
- 15 The Shakespeare and Company Project at Princeton University has documented the extent of the library's holdings and membership, and the frequency of its use (<https://shakespeareandco.princeton.edu/>). See also Beach, 1991, p. 21; Hemingway, 1994, pp. 20–22.
- 16 For a history of Boots, see Wilson (2014).
- 17 Logbooks, Box 66, Folders 2 and 4, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 18 Most of the data that follow derive from an order book maintained between 1926 and 1933. See Order Book, Box 65, Folder 4, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 19 And likely more, since not all the Ariel Poems series orders identify individual authors and *Journey of the Magi* was a popular title, with at least 78 copies ordered, compared with 45 copies of Eliot's collection *Poems*.
- 20 The Modern Library published several titles by contemporaries which Beach would have been eager to stock, including works by Sherwood Anderson, D. H. Lawrence, and Eugene O'Neill. For more on the Modern Library's goals, publications, and impact, see Jaillant (2014).
- 21 For Richards's letters to Beach complimenting her on her shop, promising to visit, and sending her a catalogue, see Letter from Grant Richards to Sylvia Beach (13 December 1919), Publisher's Correspondence, Box 60, Folder 5, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 22 The notes in the surviving catalogues suggest Beach was always on the hunt for new titles by or about Joyce. Like most booksellers, she would have relied on catalogues, as well as various book travellers who visited the shop, to keep up to date with publishers' offerings. Booksellers and Announcements and Catalogues, Box 79, Folders 3–5, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 23 The Muses' Library was a series of collections of canonical (mostly English) poetry. The series was published under the imprint 'Routledge, Kegan & Paul' whereas Today and Tomorrow was published under 'Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.' To avoid confusion in this essay, and since these were all Routledge & Sons imprints that Beach identified simply as 'Routledge', I have followed her lead.
- 24 Max Saunders (2019) provides a useful overview of eugenicist discourse within the context of early 20th-century scientific development, citing Mark Morrisson's (2017, p. 139) claim that eugenics was 'the emblematic expression of programmatic modernism'.
- 25 Logbooks (1928), Box 94, Folder 3, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ; Jones, 2020; Haire, 1928.
- 26 Herbert Gorman's *James Joyce: His First Forty Years* came out in early 1928 and was a regular seller at the shop for the period covered. It is important to note that sales for *Ulysses* far outreached any of the numbers I am reporting here. To give one example of the volume of business the book represented at this time, Beach notes she sold 105 copies in a three-week span in May 1929. 22 May 1929 note on royalties, Accounts and Royalties, Box 52, Folder 3, Sylvia Beach Papers, Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
- 27 The value of the French franc vacillated widely in the interwar period, so the fact that Beach 'figures out the price from the American or English price on the basis of the current rates of exchange' and then records those sales only in francs greatly complicates matters (Cody, 1924, p. 1263).
- 28 The only other authors who were ordered in numbers comparable to those identified above had some immediate relationship with or influence on those authors or those networks of writing: James Stephens (46), Thomas Hardy (44), Marcel Proust (36), William Blake (72), George Moore (37), Marcel Proust (36), Henry James (35), Anton Chekov (30), John Donne (30), Norman Douglas (29), John Galsworthy (28), Oscar Wilde (23), Lewis Carroll (22), Percy Bysshe Shelley (22), Edgar Allan Poe (21), Laurence Sterne (21), George Bernard Shaw (20). And, perhaps unsurprisingly, Beach ordered 74 titles by the namesake of the shop.

References

- Barber, G., 1961. 'Galignani's and the Publication of English Books in France from 1800 to 1852', *The Library*, 26 (4), pp. 267–286.
- Beach, S., 1991. *Shakespeare and Company* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press).
- Bellos, D., 1995. 'Cabinets de lecture', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. P. France, p. 127 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Benstock, S., 1986. *Women of the Left Bank, Paris 1900–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press).
- British Medical Journal*, 1949. 'Maurice Newfield, M.R.C.S., L.M.S.S.A.', 3 September, p. 550.
- Cannon, N. R., 2021. "Essentially an American Institution Planted on Foreign Soil": The American Library in Paris, the *Paris Herald*, the *Paris Tribune* and *Ex Libris*', *Cultural History*, 10 (2), pp. 207–225.
- Cerf, B., 1950. 'Trade Winds: The story of Brentano's (I)', *Saturday Review*, 4 March, pp. 4–6.
- Cody, E. M., 1924. 'Shakespeare and Company – Paris', *Publisher's Weekly*, 12 April 1924, pp. 1261–1263.
- Colclough, S., 2004. "Purifying the Sources of Amusement and Information"? The railway bookstalls of W. H. Smith & Son, 1855–1860', *Publishing History*, 56, pp. 27–51.
- Colclough, S., 2014. 'Distribution', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Volume 6, ed. D. McKitterick, pp. 238–280 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Ellmann, R., 1982. *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Fielding, M., 1928. *Parenthood: Design or Accident? A manual of birth control* (London: Noel Douglas).
- Ford, H., 1975. *Published in Paris: American and British writers, printers, and publishers in Paris, 1920–1939* (New York: Macmillan).
- Galignani Library, 1923. *A Famous Bookstore* (Paris).
- Griffis, S., 1952. *Lying in State* (New York: Doubleday).
- Haire, N., 1928. 'Birth Control', *Saturday Review*, 5 May, pp. 563–564.
- Hemingway, E., 1994. *A Moveable Feast* (London: Arrow Books).
- Hotel Terminus Saint-Lazare, 1923. *The Charm of Paris* (Paris).
- Jaillant, L., 2014. *Modernism, Middlebrow, and the Literary Canon: The Modern Library Series, 1917–1955* (London: Routledge).
- Jaillant, L., 2016. "Introductions by Eminent Writers": T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf in the Oxford World's Classics series', in *The Book World: Selling and distributing British literature, 1900–1940*, ed. N. Wilson, pp. 52–80 (Leiden: Brill).
- Jones, C. L., 2020. *The Business of Birth Control: Contraception and commerce in Britain before the sexual revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
- Kotin, J., 2019. 'Shakespeare and Company: Publisher', in *Publishing Modernist Fiction and Poetry*, ed. L. Jaillant, pp. 109–134 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
- Lyons, M., 2008. *Reading Culture and Writing Practices in Nineteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).
- McAuliffe, M., 2018. *Paris on the Brink: The 1930's Paris of Jean Renoir, Salvador Dali, Simone de Beauvoir, Andre Gide, Sylvia Beach, Leon Blum, and their friends* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).
- Morrisson, M., 2017. *Modernism, Science, and Technology* (London: Bloomsbury).
- Riley Fitch, N., 1983. *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation* (New York: W. W. Norton).
- Saunders, M., 2019. *Imagined Futures: Writing, science, and modernity in the Today and Tomorrow series, 1923–1931* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Thackeray, W. M., 1930. *Vanity Fair* (London: J. M. Dent).
- Wilson, N., 2014. 'Boots Book-Lovers' Library and the Novel: The impact of a circulating library market on twentieth-century fiction', *Information & Culture*, 49 (4), pp. 427–449.