



Shakespeare and Company

Sylvia Beach , James Laughlin (Introduction)

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Sylvia Beach was intimately acquainted with the expatriate and visiting writers of the Lost Generation, a label that she never accepted. Like moths of great promise, they were drawn to her well-lighted bookstore and warm hearth on the Left Bank. *Shakespeare and Company* evokes the zeitgeist of an era through its revealing glimpses of James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Sherwood Anderson, Andre Gide, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, D. H. Lawrence, and others already famous or soon to be. In his introduction to this new edition, James Laughlin recalls his friendship with Sylvia Beach. Like her bookstore, his publishing house, New Directions, is considered a cultural touchstone.

Shakespeare and Company Details

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Chiara says

Quanto coraggio ha avuto Sylvia Beach per aprire tutta sola, e dal nulla, una libreria americana nella Parigi del 1919!

“Per farla breve, mia madre, a Princeton, ricevette un conciso telegramma: - Apro libreria Parigi. Prego spedire soldi - e mi mandò tutti i suoi risparmi.”

E poi quanta intraprendenza a decidere di pubblicare l’Ulysses di Joyce nel 1922 quando nessuno voleva assumersene la responsabilità e senza mai guadagnarci nulla, rischiando la bancarotta.

“Fin dal primo giorno avevo capito che, nel lavorare con o per James Joyce, il piacere era mio, ed era un piacere infinito, e i profitti suoi.”

La storia di questa donna, narrata dalla sua stessa voce, lascia stupefatti.

Jason Robinson says

This was a highly enjoyable historical memoir and interesting material for anyone interested in "The Lost Generation" in Paris in the 1920's. Sylvia Beach, the proprietor, created a publishing house (she originally published the classic ULYSSES) and intellectual hub for expat. writers in Paris- think Joyce, Hemingway, Pound, Fitzgerald, etc... Great reading if you are interested in this generation of literature or just in 20th Century Paris in general.

Ivan says

Every once in a great while I stumble upon a book I've never heard of and feel as though I've discovered treasure. This is such a book. Though I had heard of Sylvia Beach and her famous book shop/lending library, her memoir "Shakespeare & Company" was unknown to me. In an easy, conversational style, Beach gives the history of her shop and observational portraits of the various artists who treated her establishment as a salon of sorts. These artists included Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot and Andre Gide, among others. She expounds upon her experiences as James Joyce's publisher and benefactress to a considerable depth, while never overtly acknowledging the intimate nature of her relationship with Adrienne Monnier. Beach's life in Paris and her interactions with 'the lost generation,' was published almost fifty years ago, but remains engaging, enjoyable and relevant today. Indeed a treat.

Michael Lawrence says

I'm a longtime admirer of Sylvia Beach, whose story this is. When I was twenty-one I went to Paris to try my hand at writing while starving. I turned out to be rather good at the second of these. While renting an icy garret at the top of the Hotel Novelty at Odéon, I made frequent visits to the Shakespeare and Company bookshop on the quai at St-Michel. Many visitors over the years have mistaken that shop for the one that

coined the name, but the original Shakespeare and Company – a lending library as well as a bookshop – was founded by Sylvia Beach, daughter of a Presbyterian minister from New Jersey, with the aid of her mother's life savings. Opening for business on the morning of November 19th, 1919, Sylvia specialised in books written in or translated into English, and in no time her shop became an essential meeting place for visiting English-speaking authors, some of whom used it as their Paris mailing address. The shop more usually associated with Sylvia was in the Rue de l'Odéon, but the first Shakespeare and Company was situated just round the corner, in the Rue Dupuytren. When I came across the address of the original shop some twenty five years after I stayed at the Novelty my mouth dropped open. The hotel was at 10 Rue Dupuytren. The original Shakespeare and Company was at number eight – right next door. It was like finding the bones of old Will himself in your sock drawer.

It was from 8 Rue Dupuytren that Gertrude Stein is said to have borrowed around seventy books in the two years before the shop moved to those larger premises round the corner. It was at number 8 that Sylvia, with no previous publishing experience, volunteered to produce the first edition of *Ulysses* in book form, and in the process became James Joyce's most vigorous champion. There ought to be a commemorative plaque on the wall of 8 Rue Dupuytren, but there isn't. There's no indication whatsoever that the original Shakespeare and Company was housed there.

Sylvia ceased trading in 1941 after refusing to sell an officer of the occupying German forces her last copy of *Finnegans Wake* from her window display. Shortly afterwards she found herself in an internment camp, where she was held for six months. Almost exactly a decade after she shut up shop for the last time, an American bookseller called George Whitman adopted the name Shakespeare and Company for his own shop in the Rue de la Bûcherie – apparently with Sylvia's blessing. The by-then celebrated banner gave his establishment a ready-made pedigree which to this day draws literary pilgrims by the planeload, most believing that they're visiting the shop associated with all those famous writers of the past.

Authentic or not, Mr Whitman's shop, now run by his daughter – Sylvia Beach Whitman – filled both a gap and a need, not least for cold hard-up souls like me, eager for words they could understand and a spot of free warmth in which to pore over them.

(Some of the above is from my memoir, *MILKING THE NOVELTY*, but this isn't intended as a plug. ML)
Sylvia Beach

Kathleen says

This is a unique, behind-the-scenes look at creative people in an intensely creative time and place.

It was the period between the wars.

“The news of my bookshop, to my surprise, soon spread all over the United States, and it was the first thing the pilgrims looked up in Paris. They were all customers at the Shakespeare and Company, which many of them looked upon as their club.”

I didn't realize that, more than anything else, this book is about James Joyce. Beach not only published *Ulysses*, but she was Joyce's chief supporter and champion. This is a must read for Joyce fans—full of juicy details about his struggles and quirks, like: he liked to spend more money than he had, he was a big tipper, he always remembered birthdays, he gave big parties that ended with him playing the piano and singing a sweet

song, and (my personal favorite) he sighed a lot.

There was a bookshop cat named Lucky who ate people's hats and gloves. Sylvia also had a dog foisted on her, despite her remark that she "*couldn't keep a dog and a James Joyce and a bookshop.*"

Shakespeare and Company was a magnet for talented writers of the time. In addition to Joyce, there was F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Ford Maddox Ford, Mina Loy, Djuna Barnes, TS Eliot, Katherine Anne Porter, Henry Miller, Anais Nin and many, many others.

I found *A Moveable Feast* more readable, much more of a story (Hemingway, after all). But Sylvia Beach was equally amazing at what she did best—she created a haven of support for so many important writers of her time. Where would we be without her?

Gerry says

When Sylvia Beach's father, the Reverend Sylvester Woodbridge Beach, moved to Montparnasse, Paris, the 14-year-old Sylvia Beach was in her element. She met Carlotta Welles, who became a lifelong friend, and she was most disappointed when her father returned to Princeton. She had developed a veritable passion for France and was delighted that the family returned regularly for holidays.

When she was old enough Sylvia went to Spain, and spent a few months there before moving on to Paris where she 'wanted to pursue my studies at the source'. Before too long she discovered Adrienne Monnier's bookshop at 7 rue de l'Odeon and this discovery eventually changed her life. She loved Paris' left bank and there she not only met French authors who she quickly came to admire but she developed a passion for owning her own bookshop in the area.

She could not find premises immediately and went with the American Red Cross to spend nine months in Belgrade. On return to Paris she began the search for suitable premises, which she found in the rue Dupuytren, just round the corner from rue de l'Odeon. She took great delight in setting up her little shop and on 19 November 1919 Shakespeare and Company was launched.

She found selling books in Paris not too easy so she added a lending library to her business. Andre Gide was an early member of the library and Andre Maurois quickly followed suit. The news of her venture quickly spread across the United States and she very soon attracted a clientele from the States. These customers, she readily acknowledged, were drawn to Paris partly because of the presence in the city of such as Joyce, Pound and Picasso. And Sylvia soon got to know two of these, Joyce and Pound, very well.

Indeed she got to know Joyce so well that he becomes the most important figure in Sylvia's story. While publishers would not touch 'Ulysses' she took the brave step to publish it; the decision was to lead to a lifetime spent looking after Joyce's literary affairs, in particular the intricacies of publishing 'Ulysses'; she was, of course, instrumental in getting other of his works into print, either in published editions or in the Little Magazines that were so popular at that time. When property became available in rue de l'Odeon, Sylvia moved there and Shakespeare and Company had found its spiritual home.

In this enchanting book of her reminiscences of the literary and artistic scene of Paris Sylvia tells countless stories of the personalities that she meets as well as explaining all the nuances of working with Joyce. One of my favourites relating to the latter was when a limited edition of 'Ulysses' was to be printed and Sylvia sent

flyers to all and sundry to attract orders. She told Joyce that she was going to send one to George Bernard Shaw and on hearing this Joyce explained that there was no way that he would subscribe for a copy. And he was correct as Shaw wrote a compelling letter explaining his decision and, thankfully, he gave permission for Sylvia to publish in this volume. I've always liked Shaw but after reading this letter he has gone up inestimably in my estimation! And while on the subject of Shaw I have always thought that one of his best pieces of writing is his lengthy introduction to Frank Harris' 'Life of Oscar Wilde' and Sylvia plus many others mention it as one of his very best in this volume.

Gertrude Stein, not the greatest Joyce fan [good for her], Alice B Toklas, Ernest Hemingway, Paul Valery, George Antheil, Jules Romains, Sherwood Anderson, Scott Fitzgerald, Andre Gide, Ezra Pound and many more flit in and out of these pages with first-hand accounts of their doings and all of them are brought to life in this charming portrait of one on the important chapters in literary history. It is certainly compelling reading for the literary fanatic.

Batgrl (Book Data Kept Elsewhere) says

Ebook - read via Open Library [here](#).

Sylvia Beach and her bookstore Shakespeare and Company are legendary now - but were also quickly popular in her time, as the bookshop became a meeting place for visitors to stop in and perhaps use its address to forward their mail. It was as much a club and a writers' meeting place as it was a bookstore and lending library.

Since Beach was so immersed in the society of authors, poets, and other famous folk, and often doesn't give you much more than their names and where she bumped into them, so I did find myself stopping to look up many names (and as usual adding books to my reading list) - and enjoying that.

As usual I find it sad that there are so many notable people in French history that you end up having to go to websites in French to learn about them, and/or find there are few translations of certain French authors. I find this a problem repeatedly, and it's especially annoying to check French booksellers and find plenty of books, but no English translations - mainly I assume because there's no market for it. (Which again makes me sigh.) An example of such a historic person: one of the first to visit Shakespeare and Company was Thérèse Bertrand-Fontaine (p. 22), the first woman in France to become "Medecin des Hopitaux." And the link is to the French wikipedia because there's nothing about her in English. Sad. Many of the notable French authors Beach mentions are also hard to track down - in English that is, because there are plenty of French versions you can access. (I can actually read French, it's just that I'm still so dang slow at it. So I'm lazy and hunt for translations.)

Anyway, this "why don't we value/translate works from other countries" rant is a familiar one for me. Substitute many other countries for France and the lack of translations of famous authors and notable histories is probably the same. - And end of tangent!

Beach has a really fun style of writing, very much as if she were writing a letter to someone she knows. Since it's a bit hard to describe I'll just add quotes, as those are more fun to read than descriptions anyway. Am also adding many bits about Joyce that seem to be good descriptions about his personality and family, since Beach was very much a part of Joyce's life story. Also I've long been fascinated with John S. Sumner and his crusade against obscenity - may history books continue to mock him (and Comstock) for eons. There

are descriptions of many, many other writers as well, but of course I can't quote everything. (I go a bit quote-happy as it is.)

After reading so much about Beach's close friend and fellow bookshop owner Adrienne Monnier, I'm particularly sad that it seems difficult to find a book about her. She seems to be mentioned in quite a few books, but few dedicated completely to her - and those seem hard to track down outside of libraries. Which makes me suspect that I should check for books in French. (I am trying to get my hands on *The Very Rich Hours of Adrienne Monnier and Rue de l'Odeon*.) Meanwhile because Beach wrote *Shakespeare and Company* around 1956 what isn't mentioned is that Beach and Monnier were partners in every sense of the word, and were together for 36 years. So there's a love story in there that I wish Beach had been able to write (though of course you can read it in this book - between the lines - once you're aware of it).

What kept this from being a four star - there was much that seemed to be left out, and left me with questions as to what happened to people who Beach mentioned and then who disappeared from the narrative. Much of the book is short anecdotes and character sketches, and much deals with people around Beach when you often wish to know more about Beach herself or her feelings. (Not that you can't often tell from context how Beach feels!) Still, it was both interesting and a great window into a period that I've read about before, but as history - Beach does give a very personal look at the time and the people. I'd give it 3 1/2 stars, and still am wavering about 4. But that may have more to do with the outside reading I did on Beach and Monnier, and the fact that I love that they were a couple who were bookshop owners (with shops right around the corner from each other).

Quotes:

p. 4, Loie Fuller, speaking to a group of American students:

"She came not to dance but to talk about her dancing. I remember her as stumpy, rather plain girl from Chicago, wearing glasses, the schoolmarm type, telling about the experiments she was making with radium in connection with her lighting system. She was dancing at the Moulin Rouge at the time, as I remember, and making a sensation. When you saw her there, the stoutish woman you knew as Loie Fuller was transformed. With two outstretched sticks, she manipulated five hundred meters of swirling stuff, flames enveloped her, and she was consumed. Finally, all that remained were a few ashes."

After looking at the posters and photos on the wikipedia page I'm dying to find a book about Loie Fuller. So far I've located Fifteen years of a dancer's life, with some account of her distinguished friends, written by Fuller herself.

p. 8:

"A friend in Princeton who shared this passion [for France] was Margaret Sloan, the daughter of Professor William Sloane, who had written a life of Napoleon. Margaret was delighted when, on a hot Sunday morning at the First Presbyterian Church, she saw my sister Cyprian seat herself in our front pew and open a large fan decorated with a black cat and the name of a famous cabaret in Paris, Au Chat Noir."

p 12:

"...drawing me into the shop, greeted me with much warmth. This was surprising in France, where people are as a rule reserved with strangers, but I learned that it was characteristic of Adrienne Monnier, particularly if the strangers were American. "I like America very much," she said. I replied that I liked France very much. And, as our future collaboration proved, we meant it."

p. 23:

"I was too far from my country to follow closely the struggles of the writers there to express themselves, and I didn't foresee, when I opened my bookshop in 1919, that it was going to profit by the suppressions across the sea. I think it was partly to these suppressions, and the atmosphere they created, that I owed many of my customers - all those pilgrims of the twenties who crossed the ocean and settled in Paris and colonized the Left Bank of the Seine.

The news of my bookshop, to my surprise, soon spread all over the United States, and it was the first thing the pilgrims looked up in Paris. They were all customers at Shakespeare and Company, which many of them looked upon as their club. Often, they would inform me that they had given Shakespeare and Company as their address, and they hoped I didn't mind. I didn't, especially since it was too late to do anything about it except to try to run an important mailing office as efficiently as possible."

p 41:

"Mr. Joyce" was also rather quaint when it came to the mention of certain things in the presence of ladies. He blushed scarlet over the stories that Leon-Paul Fargue used to tell to mixed audiences at Adrienne's bookshop. The ladies themselves, in a vountry where the men don't get off by themselves, were not at all disturbed. I'm sure Joyce regretted that his nice lady editress should be exposed to such things, but I fear I had become inured by many a Fargue session.

Yet Joyce had no objections to putting Ulysses into the hands of ladies, or to ladies publishing it."

p 42, ellipses in the original:

"Joyce enjoyed being called a good-for-nothing by Nora; it was a relief from the respectful attitude of others. he was delighted when she poked and pushed him.

Nora would have no truck with books, and that, too, amused her husband. She declared to me that she hadn't read a page of "that book," pointing to Ulysses; nothing would induce her to open it. I could see myself that it was quite unnecessary for Nora to read Ulysses; was she not the source of his inspiration?

Nora grumbled about "my husband"; he never stopped scribbling...reaching down when he was

only half awake in the morning for his paper and pencil on the floor beside him...never knowing what time of day it was! And how could she keep a servant if he left the house just at the moment when she was putting lunch on the table? "Look at him now! Leeching on the bed, and scribbling away!" The children too; they wouldn't lift a finger to help her, she said. "A good-for-nothing family!" Whereupon the whole good-for-nothing lot of them, including Joyce, would burst out laughing. Nobody seemed to take Nora's scoldings very seriously.

She used to tell me that she was sorry she hadn't married a farmer or a banker, or maybe a ragpicker, instead of a writer - her lips curled as she mentioned this despicable kind of person. But what a good thing for Joyce, I thought, that she had chosen him. What would he have done without Nora? And what would his work have done without her? His marriage to Nora was one of the best pieces of luck that ever befell him. His was certainly the happiest marriage of any writer I knew."

p 43:

"Then there were his superstitions, which were shared by the family. ...Opening an umbrella in the house, a man's hat on the bed were ill omens. Black cats, on the contrary, were lucky. Arriving one day at the Joyce's hotel, I saw Nora trying to induce a black cat to go into the room where her husband was lying, while through the open door he anxiously observed her efforts. Cats were not only lucky, Joyce liked having them about, and once, when a kitten of his daughter's fell out of the kitchen window, he was more upset about it as she was."

p 46:

"Miss Weaver explained to me why English printers are so finicky. Their prudence is indeed quite excusable. If a book is found objectionable by the authorities, the printer as well as the publisher is held responsible and must pay the penalty. No wonder he scrutinizes every little word that might get him into trouble. Joyce once showed me the proofs of Mr. Jonathan Cape's new printing of *A Portrait of the Artist*, and I remember my amazement at the printer's queries in the margins."

p 46-7:

"A big fight was going on between the *Little Review* and the American authorities. Joyce brought me disturbing news from the battlefield.

Three seizures of the magazine by officials of the United States Post Office, on the grounds of obscenity, failed to break the spirit of the editors, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap; but a fourth one, which was instigated by John S. Sumner of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, put an end to the magazine. Eventually Miss Anderson and Miss Heap were tried for the publication of obscenity. Thanks to the brilliant defense of John Quinn, they got off with a fine of one hundred dollars, but by that time they were ruined financially. Sad was the disappearance of the liveliest little magazine of the period!"

p 94:

"Aleicester (pronounced Alester) Crowley was as peculiar as he sounded in the tales told of him, and, of course, in his own *Diary of a Drugfiend*. His clay-colored head was bald except for a single strand of black hair stretching from his forehead over the top of his head and down to the nape of his neck. The strand seemed glued to the skin so that it was not likely to blow up in the wind. A self-mummified-looking man, he was rather repulsive. My acquaintance with him was brief. I wondered, looking at him, whether what some of my English friends hinted was true - that he was in the Intelligence Service. I thought someone less conspicuous might have been chosen.

...It was quite alarming to see the blonde lady open a portfolio and produce a prospectus announcing the "*Forthcoming Memoirs of Aleicester Crowley*" under my imprint and the draft of a contract with Shakespeare and Company requiring only a signature. Everything had been taken care of in advance, even to the provision that Shakespeare and Company turn over 50 per cent of the book's earnings to Mr. Crowley, and give him our mailing list as well!"

Needless to say, Beach said no.

p 158:

"...I have a vague recollection of a story [Andre] Gide told me about himself and one of his friends when they were schoolboys, and a trick they played on his concierge. He gave me leave to tell it in my memoirs.

It seems that his concierge had a medium-sized turtle in her loge. The boys got a larger one, and when the woman's back was turned removed her turtle and put the new one in its place. She didn't notice the difference. They went on getting larger and larger turtles. They heard the concierge exclaiming over the remarkable growth of her pet and wondering at the ways of turtles. The thing got enormous. It took up a great deal of room. Then it stopped growing, as the boys, though they searched all over Paris, couldn't find a larger one. Now they decided it was time for the turtle to shrink - which, to the poor concierge's dismay, it did, visibly. Finally, her turtle was a mere button.

The concierge disappeared shortly afterward, and upon their anxious inquiries, the boys were told that she had gone away for a rest."

Problems with pirating Joyce's work in the US:

p 179-180 "I first heard of pirates boarding Joyce's craft was when an unauthorized edition of *Chamber Music* was brought out in Boston in 1918. Much more serious was the rape of *Ulysses* in 1926. It took years, and publication by Random House, to restore the book to its author.

Ulysses was not protected by copyright in the United States. To secure the copyright, a book had to be set up and printed in our country, an impossibility for a banned work. Of course, no reputable American publisher dreamed of taking advantage of the situation of Joyce and of innumerable other European writers. But footpads were lurking.

In 1926, full page advertisements appeared in English and American weeklies announcing the publication of *Ulysses* in a magazine called *Two Worlds* and of a "new un-named work by James Joyce" in a magazine called *Two Worlds Quarterly*, both under the editorship of Samuel Roth...

...And now someone was printing *Ulysses* in book form. The spurious edition, though it bore the imprint of Shakespeare and Company and the printer's name, was easily recognizable if you were familiar with the authentic one - the text was altered, the paper and type were not the same. Thus, for the next few years, some pirate succeeded in putting into his pocket the earnings of a writer who had not only spent a long time on his work and was losing his eyesight, but whose financial problems were becoming more and more serious."

p. 182 "...Someone was always grabbing something. Joyce was continually the prey of pirates. Invariably, they declared themselves to be "great admirers"; and proved it by their acts. He had his "admirers" as far away as Japan; I was sent four fat volumes of the Tokyo *Ulysses* with greetings from the publishers! And when I protested against these thefts, I was usually accused of being grasping."

Vacationing with Adrienne Monnier at Les Deserts, Savoy, France, staying with local folk:

"...a couple of the inhabitants, who partitioned off a little bedroom for us in their hayloft. You went up to it by a ladder outside. We were right over the stables, so that we never missed any important events taking place there: a cow having a calf at three in the morning by lantern light, with everybody present... At daybreak the stable doors were opened and out poured the cattle like a crowd leaving the theatre. To prevent our being wakened, Adrienne's cousin Fine stuffed paper in the cowbells, but the barking of the dog as he hustled his herd along to the fields - how could she muffle that?"

Margaret says

This is Beach's memoir of her long time in Paris as bookseller, publisher, and literary den mother; she was friends with writers from Andre Gide to Ernest Hemingway and published *Ulysses* when no other publisher would touch it. I liked it a lot, but I can see the flaws in it. Beach's focus is always on others, especially Joyce, and I wanted more of her personal history and of her more candid opinions. Fortunately, I had to hand Noel Riley Fitch's excellent *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*(highly recommended) to fill in the gaps.

emma says

reading a book in one day, and then writing a report on it the same day, and then turning that paper in the next day? it's called THRIVING

anyway maybe it's that i was reading this with an ~Analytical Eye~ so i can write a bunch and tear it to

shreds, but i thought this was so poorly structured. also, unbelievably boring considering how objectively fascinating the subject matter is.

if Joyce and Hemingway and Fitzgerald in a Parisian bookstore in the 1920s (not to mention the Nazi shutdown of said bookstore during WWII) can't keep my attention, something is wrong.

bottom line: meh!!! (i have a paper to write.)

Mark Victor Young says

This was half of a great book, so I'll give the first half four stars and the latter half two stars. I loved the story of Sylvia and her unlikely bookshop and how she came to publish James Joyce's Ulysses. That was great, as were the stories of the other writers and musicians who frequented Shakespeare and Company in the early twenties. The stories of Joyce and his family were beautiful and helped me understand the man much better.

At a certain point the memoir devolved into a series of short portraits of famous people she knew and why she liked them and then some random episodes from her life. The very end descriptions of life in occupied Paris in WWII were also great, including the brilliant and inspiring liberation of the rue de l'Odeon by Ernest Hemingway, which I'm sure added to his legendary status when the book was originally published. Lots to like here overall.

Kris says

3.5 stars. Often reads as a series of anecdotes, but it's interesting to read about Beach's relationship with Joyce from her own perspective.

Susan Bell says

I'm giving this 5 stars, not because it is great literature, but because it is a great story. (Actually, a great collection of stories.) Ms. Beach is your cool great aunt who went to Paris in her youth and came back with all kinds of interesting stories. Highly recommended for anyone who wants to learn more about "An American in Paris."

Kim says

The third book read in my project to learn more about literary expatriates in 1920s and 1930s Paris, Sylvia Beach's memoir was in many ways the most enjoyable reading experience to date. Beach was an American woman who operated an English language lending library and bookstore called Shakespeare & Company on Paris' Left Bank from 1919 to 1941*. During that period, her store was a hub for expatriate writers including Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, F Scott Fitzgerald and, most significantly, James Joyce. While not at all literary - Beach had no pretensions to be a writer and in the memoir describes herself as a "plain reader" - the

work comes across as honest and heartfelt. Unlike Ernest Hemingway in *A Moveable Feast*, Beach was not mean spirited, nor was she self-obsessed as Gertrude Stein demonstrated herself to be in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Instead, the image of Beach which emerges from the work is of a modest, warm, devoted, patient, principled, persistent and humourous woman, who was loyal to her friends and committed to promoting contemporary literature.

In addition to running her bookstore, Sylvia Beach published the first edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in book form. This was in 1922, at a time when Joyce could not secure a publisher because the book had been banned in the US and the UK following its publication in periodical form. Beach, who was devoted to Joyce and recognised his literary genius, not only published the book, but acted as Joyce's agent, secretary, banker and adviser. This was ultimately to her financial disadvantage. Joyce must have been extraordinarily frustrating to deal with, but nothing more than a hint of exasperation emerges from Beach's account of their friendship.

Beach has a clear and accessible conversational style. The middle section of the book is somewhat bogged down in an account of less well-known writers and somewhat obscure literary reviews with which Beach was associated. However, it picks up again when Beach recounts how the bookstore was saved from closure during the 1930s by the efforts of French and expatriate literary figures. The final section is particularly moving. In this section Beach describes her experiences in occupied Paris, when she closed down the bookstore after refusing to sell her last copy of *Finnegans Wake* to a German officer. The narrative ends with the "liberation" of the store by Ernest Hemingway, who arrives in the Rue d'Odéon accompanied by American soldiers, who then go on to "liberate" the cellars of the Ritz Hotel. It left me with a positive image of Hemingway, which was welcome after the negative impression I gained from reading *A Moveable Feast*.

Overall, this was a most enjoyable read, notwithstanding the less than compelling middle section. However, as interesting as the anecdotes Beach included in her memoir are the things she left out. For example, Beach was in a long-term relationship with bookseller Adrienne Monnier. Beach does not directly refer to the nature of her relationship with Monnier in her memoir. Nor does she expand on the difficulties she must have endured because of Joyce's thoughtless exploitation of her devotion to his interests. These are the sorts of things I hope to read about in *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties*. With luck, I will also discover whether my impression of Beach's character is accurate.

Clips of interviews with Sylvia Beach (the first in English with German subtitles and the second - which is specifically about James Joyce - in French) can be seen [here](#) and [here](#).

*The Shakespeare & Company which currently exists in Paris is unconnected with Beach's bookstore otherwise than in name. It was named in Beach's honour by its founder, George Whitman.

Barnaby Thieme says

This touching memoir of Beach's years as proprietress of the infamous Shakespeare & Company bookshop in Paris deserves a place of honor on the bookshelf next to Hemingway's "*A Moveable Feast*." Any fan of early 20th Century literature and art will be delighted by her intimate reminiscences of Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Valéry, Fitzgerald, and especially James Joyce. Her long years' friendship with the latter author and her indefatigable labors on his behalf makes up about a half of this short book, and it is a vital source of insight on his life and character.

It is filled with unforgettable anecdotes, such as her work with Hemingway to find and fund a compatriot to operate out of Canada and smuggle first-edition copies of *Ulysses* across the border into the US, literally in his pants, so they could be shipped to subscribers without being confiscated and burned.

The brief account of her harrowing years living under the Nazi occupation and the end it brought to her wonderful bookstore may well bring a tear to your eye. Beach emerges as a tireless, heroic, kind, perceptive, and altogether wonderful woman who had the great good fortune to be at the center of one of the high watermarks of European art and literature, and fully knew and savored it.

Debbie says

If I could transport to any period of history, Paris in the 1920s would probably be my first choice. Hanging out in cafes, sipping wine late into the night and discussing the latest works of Joyce, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Gide--who are also your neighbors, and, if you're very lucky, your acquaintances or friends--would be amazing. Sylvia Beach lived that dream life. Sylvia was an American who moved to Paris and opened a bookshop that specialized in American works. Her store was frequented by all the major players of the day, who included her in their professional and personal lives. It wasn't always an easy life (money was in short supply), but it was glamorous and fascinating. Beach's style is anecdotal, but the reader gets a sense of her daily life (with partner Adrienne Monnier, who also ran a bookshop, but of French writings) along with the often-funny stories of her talented friends. Beach's account of how she published Joyce's "*Ulysses*" and smuggled it into America by way of Canada was particularly interesting to me. I also came away with a different view of Hemingway than I'd had before. I would recommend this brief memoir to any fan of the period and its writers.
