

Introduction 1940

First Months: October to December

By the time Madeleine began writing her diary in October 1940, Paris had been under German occupation for four months. October 1st, was, she wrote, an appropriate time to start writing it because it marked the return to work after the long summer break. It was the *rentrée* for workers, for schoolchildren, students and their teachers and lecturers. October 1940 also signalled the *rentrée* and the return to daily routine for the hundreds of thousands of French people and Parisians who had joined the *exode* – the panicked flight to the south of the country in the face of the German onslaught the previous May. Madeleine had been among those who fled the capital. By July she had returned and by the autumn she was preparing – with some excitement – for what she hoped would be a resumption of scholarly routine and reinstatement of the scholarly purpose for which she had come to Paris in 1939. The occupying authorities wanted a rapid return to routine and normality so as to shore up support for the armistice and for the new system of government – unique in Europe – which saw the French state enter into formal and peaceable cooperation with the enemy occupier to govern the country. The French republic had been dissolved and replaced by an ostensibly independent sovereign state governing a free, unoccupied zone in the south of the country. Based in the spa town of Vichy, the political apparatus conceived in connivance and collaboration with the Nazis was led by First World War veteran and war hero Philippe Pétain. Newspapers and newsreels focussed on persuading the population of the sense, wisdom and desirability of the policy of collaboration. For the most part, civilians went with it. A resumption of normal life, of familiar routines and work patterns under a trusted leader, was welcomed by many after months on the road and seemed preferable to more death and destruction; in that regard especially, there was a readiness to listen to the cautioning of Great War hero Pétain. There was no Resistance movement to speak of in these early months of occupation. The first

Resistance bulletins had been produced sporadically in the autumn of 1940, but armed resistance was negligible and uncoordinated and would remain so until networks formed around greater numbers of recruits by the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943. Charles de Gaulle's defiant BBC broadcast from London made on 18 June 1940 had been heard by very few amid the chaos and upheaval of the *exode*. There was little, in the first months of occupation, to divert the focus away from getting on with life the best one could.⁵

The first weeks of the diary show the keenness and urgency of Madeleine and of her student entourage to reintegrate with their scholarly routines and the difficulties they faced in doing so. Madeleine's diary entries are dominated by anxiety about the lack of money and by tales of fellow students forced to abandon their studies and return home to support their families. Madeleine gives precious insight into the range of practical difficulties she had to overcome and, also, the nature of the support and saving recourse she was able to call upon. Accommodation was problematic in the early months. No longer in receipt of her grant and without access to funds in her blocked bank account, Madeleine could not afford to stay at the boarding house, *Les Marronniers*. She had taken lodgings at her aunt's in the suburbs, but she moved from there into an apartment belonging to a British expatriate, a 'Miss Longhurst', who had fled south to the free zone. When Ruth Camp, the Canadian friend with whom she shared the apartment, was arrested and interned in December 1940, she was forced to move from there too and decided to find herself a 'bohemian' flat of her own, which she could ill afford. Despite financial uncertainties, which had convinced her to register for an English degree in addition to the doctorate to guarantee employability as a secondary school teacher, she was intent on living a life as an independent woman scholar within the intellectual community of women she had been a part of since the Phoney War. One of the most influential figures in this milieu was the bookseller, publisher and literary muse Sylvia Beach, whose bookshop and lending library *Shakespeare & Co* was a meeting place and intellectual forum for young, mainly female, Paris students. Beach became an increasingly important figure in Madeleine's life later in the Occupation (see 1942 and 1943), but already, in the first months, she was helping Madeleine with food, money and lodgings. It had been through Beach that Madeleine had found her temporary address at 4 rue Rollin, and Beach paid the gas and electricity bills when Madeleine had to move out, helping her through the first months in her new apartment with loans of money.

The arrest of Ruth Camp in December 1940 had a significant bearing on how Madeleine engaged with the military occupation. Ruth's arrest so alarmed her

⁵ There are a number of useful general histories of the Occupation which provide insightful and engaging overviews of the public response to Occupation in the early months in both Paris and the provinces. See especially Diamond (1999), Jackson (2001), Laborie (1990 & 2001) and Vinen (2007).

that she wrote that she thought it prudent from then on to make no mention of what she described as ‘political matters.’ Until this point, she had seemed relatively comfortable in relating the defiance of the Sorbonne and had not shied away from describing in detail what she had seen and heard of the student-led protest against Vichy at Étoile on Armistice Day, which had resulted in violence, mass arrests of students and the temporary closure of the Sorbonne. However, so fearful was she that she might be vulnerable to arrest herself, she avoided overt references to the war until the summer of 1943, by which time there was a generalised confidence among the French public that the arrival of the allies and a long-awaited liberation was not far away. The first months of Madeleine’s diary are an intriguing glimpse of a life accommodating change fraught with challenges and difficulties. The entries tell us about how the shortages of food and fuel were already a problem in the autumn and winter of 1940 but not yet dominating everyday life. In the early months, Madeleine was more concerned about how the war and Occupation might disrupt her studies. She was positive and cheerful, chattily relating news of the first rationing measures and the first experience of winter cold without heating with an almost juvenile excitement. She wrote of the improvised dishes she concocted with make-do ingredients or ersatz replacements. She described with amusement the many layers of clothing she had to wear to keep warm in bed at night and about the changes in daily routine – going to bed early and rising late – enforced by the bitter cold. Four years later, there was no such jocularity. Four years of struggle to survive the daily misery of cold and malnutrition did not make for levity. It is nonetheless interesting that the first months of Occupation, before the impact of shortages began to be felt, were lived for the most part with no great evidence of distress or trauma. Madeleine, like those students around her at the Sorbonne, was primarily concerned with getting her life back on track.

In these first months, more than at any time in the diary, Madeleine gives an insight into how the Sorbonne encountered and adjusted to the new regime in its first academic year under occupation. Already, in letters written in the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940, Madeleine had painted a picture of recalcitrance and defiance among the Sorbonne’s lecturing staff, who were, for the most part, septuagenarian veterans of the Great War who were ‘holding the fort’ in the absence of younger colleagues conscripted to the front. The over-confident and bellicose attitude of these academics in May and June 1940 and their determination that students should stay to finish their year of study may have been partly responsible for Madeleine’s lack of urgency to leave the capital in June (Michallat, 2012: 135–153). There were signs that the same attitudes had carried through to the autumn of 1940 in Madeleine’s descriptions of defiant and moving speeches made by Joseph Vendryès, the Dean of the Arts Faculty. Indeed, the Vichy authorities assumed that students and staff had connived over the student protests at Etoile on 11 November 1940. The rector Roussy was sacked and Vendryès was suspended from his post on several occasions over the course of the war. There was nothing for Madeleine to

report in respect of organised student resistance in 1940, even though students were already secretly organising into a network and producing the newspaper *Defense de la France* in the basement of the Sorbonne. The student cohort for 1940/41 was significantly depleted. Men of university age were also of military age and had been conscripted, and many were now being held as prisoners in Germany. In his traditional address at the start of the academic year, Joseph Vendryès stated that of the 5000 students who had registered for courses at the Sorbonne in 1940, women were in the majority and would, he declared, be at the forefront of driving the Sorbonne forward with their 'courage, tenacity and intellectual verve'. Even though women went to the Sorbonne in numbers in 1939, Madeleine's diary talks of a number of them dropping out or being forced to return to the provinces or the colonies. In the absence of fathers and brothers, young women were under greater pressure to support the home and family through domestic and workplace labour. This pressure, compounded by the spiralling cost of living, which made independent living and full-time study impossibly expensive for many, persuaded many women to abandon their studies.⁶

The autumn and winter of 1940 are not especially difficult to live through for Madeleine. Although there are shortages of certain food items and disruption to the study routine at the Sorbonne, she lives relatively comfortably, unmolested by the authorities. Nonetheless, she is tense, anxious and frightened and the arrest of Ruth gives insight into the vulnerability and fear she feels as a British student in an enemy state.

⁶ See Michallat 2017 article on the student diary of Madeleine Blaess in *Essays in French Literature & Culture* for more on student life at the Sorbonne in the early months of the Occupation.

Madeline Blaess,

320, rue St Jacques,

Paris. V^e

JOURNAL.

1940

4, rue Rollin,
Paris 5^e
1 October 1940

My dear Daddy and Mummy,

I am writing this for you because I can no longer send you letters. What I am writing here is a replacement. The first of October, the date classes begin again, is a suitable date to start but I have been wanting to do this for a long time because it is a way to feel closer to you. Alas, you know what I am like; I put off everything until tomorrow – and when I was living with Aunt I couldn't write down what was in my head. I am sure that you wouldn't have minded me moving out of Aunt's – I can study better here and I am free. I worry that I hurt her by leaving; she is so good and kind, but she does not seem to understand that I need to get up early and study late without getting overtired; that it was too far away, that the métro was expensive; that I couldn't study and do the housework, washing, mending, shopping; nor study whilst knowing that everything would have to be tidied away into a drawer at a moment's notice. But especially – and this is the major reason – I didn't want to have her keeping me. She would have never wanted me to work, she is too generous in that respect and, if at 22 I have to depend on others for my food, social life and even my work, then life is just not worth living. I'd just be a parasite then. Here, I depend on no one other than myself. I am going to give lessons to groups of students at the Institut d'Anglais – I will tell you the full story later, and I hope to give private lessons. I have decided to start an English degree to have a French qualification in case the war lasts a long time. To think that Cohen advised me to do just that last year but I didn't want to know then. Mind you, I would have been doing a 'licence libre' which would not have allowed me to teach, while this one is for teaching. Talking of which, I need to apply to Mr the Minister of National Education (ooh!) for a certificate attesting that my qualifications equate to the

baccalaureate with proof that you have spent longer than five years at home and, as I haven't, I will have to declare as such 'on my honour'.⁷ Tut! Tut! Tomorrow (always tomorrow) I will buy the official document to do this.

At the moment, I am trying to study hard because I will have to 'undergo'⁸ an exam on the 18th of November. I have seven authors and the history of English literature to do. I'll have to hurry up with it but at the same time, I don't feel in much of a rush. Perhaps this is because classes haven't started yet – they start, I think (at least the English lessons start), on the 7th of October. In addition to those, I'll have French, Latin – and later German (because I chose German for *Études pratiques*). I am happy, so happy at the idea of starting my studies once again, but I will have to buy a lot of books which is a nuisance because there is not a lot of money around (I've got 400 and some francs left. I gave Aunt 1400 francs while I was living there (three months) and when I left her she gave me back 500 (which means that I gave her 900 francs for three months – and I did the shopping, the housework, stood in queues, did the washing, the ironing, the mending. I don't feel I owe her anything in that respect even though I could never repay all her kindness and her willingness to take me in). With all these outgoings – I am trying, without much success it has to be said, to put some money aside – and my registration fees at the Sorbonne, I'll only have left what I told you. And on top of that I will have to find 110 francs for the library56 by next week, all my French and Latin books and most of my English books. And I will have to eat and if possible buy some coal. Life isn't so great when one looks in one's purse. This fight for existence will do me good. I've had it easy thanks to you both going without, Daddy and Mummy; "let the weakest go to the wall",⁹ and if I take after you, I will survive. Anyway, don't worry too much (if I was writing you a real letter I would never tell you such things) a little hunger and cold will not do me too much harm – even with money one can get cold and hungry in winter, – God help those who are suffering – and I can ask Vendryès for some university support if things get really tough. I know that this wouldn't be much but it would be better than nothing, – and if I have nothing I will go to the soup kitchen with a milk can for a bit of coloured water and a stick of bread (probably 350 grams worth with a ration ticket). Anyway, we're not there yet! And unless the Germans invade the whole of France and Miss Longhurst comes back then I have lodgings – beautiful lodgings with three rooms, kitchen, porch, bathroom and toilet shared with Ruth Camp, a Canadian

⁷ This may refer to the Blaess family property in Nancy. Madeleine moved to Britain as an infant.

⁸ 'Subir un examen' can mean simply to take an exam but Madeleine puts 'subir' in quotes possibly to highlight the sense it also has of struggle or hardship.

⁹ 'Let the weakest go to the wall' written in English in the manuscript.

8.30 in the evening

Sat under the lamp in the lounge, wrapped up warmly in my dressing gown, here I am taking up my conversation with you again. Ruth is sat on the other side of the lamp and she's reading 'The Man with the Horn'. It must be funny, because she 'chuckles' (what is the word for this in French?), now and again. I am writing. I wrote to Aunt and Godfather. I also meant to write to Voirin but given that I am writing on my lap I reckon that my writing might suffer so I will put it off until tomorrow (as usual). If I am honest, I really don't know what to write to Voirin.

The lounge is OK – a little scruffy but comfortable. The armchairs are lovely. At the moment, the loveliest thing is the scent of the roses that Godfather gave me at Villeparisis on Sunday. There is also a gladioli opening up. It's flame-orange. In my room and in Ruth's room there are Michaelmas daisies that I picked in Vert Galant woods. I have lots and lots to tell you – three months of news to give you but I will do that bit by bit because now I have to work. I have decided to work 8 hours a day but because this morning I did my washing and this afternoon I went to see about the courses at the Sorbonne and bought a book etc I only did two hours. Jacqueline dropped in too – Jacqueline is sweet – sweet and twenty¹⁰ – I met her at Dilys's. She was studying for a degree in Biology but because of the war she has had to stop in order to do temporary supply teaching (that's all she is allowed to do because she only has the baccalaureate). She is waiting to be called up for that. Her father is a prisoner – in Poland they think; he is cold. It is sad, so sad for these poor prisoners. Thankfully, all the men from our family came back safe and sound. My uncle at Château moved in to old M. Cassé's place. In the rubble in the cellar he found a few small things of value otherwise he would have been completely destitute. At his age, it's tough. Well, anyway, I wanted to stop but I am still writing. But this bit is the last; I am working. It has only taken me a quarter of an hour to write this. I am getting faster. Goodnight. You are so much in my thoughts. I hope that my thinking of you is of comfort to you so far away. I am sure that your thoughts are keeping my spirits up here. One thing is really worrying me. Have you received any news from me?

2 October Tuesday

It is raining. It's cold and I haven't been working. The time just runs away and I have to go out with Jacqueline in an hour. The cost of living is more than our grant. I am annoyed with myself and with everyone else.

I wrote to Voirin.

¹⁰ 'Sweet and twenty' written in English in the manuscript.

Jacqueline came to get me for the Quaker meeting. We had tea and biscuits. There were a lot of old English men and women and Madame Cazamian was there with them.¹¹ I spent time talking to an old man who wants to get back to the Free Zone and from there, get to England!!! After tea there was a music concert. It was freezing. I picked up a letter there from 'my' prisoner. I have one, you know. Not last Saturday but the Saturday before I got up at 6 am and with Ruth, Miss Prenter and Jacqueline, took the metro to the Croix de Berny and went from there on foot to Fresnes prison. It was raining. Ruth, Jacqueline and I had been given three names – Lambeth, Lucas and Yanni. Ruth took Yanni, Jacqueline Lucas. We each of us brought something along – me, a cake. We had to queue in the rain for two hours to get through the German security. Then we were interviewed before being allowed to see them. In a long corridor, there was a rope lengthways and a line of dazed looking men trying to see who was coming to see them. Then a little group on its own. Our men were there! But, woe! Instead of Englishmen, Yanni is Greek, Lucas Syrian and Lambeth from Bermuda. I am very disappointed. I don't like Lambeth that much and don't really know what to say to him. But he is completely on his own. He promised to write to me and I gave the Quaker Centre address. I have the letter here. It's written in flowery English. He's asking for slippers, underwear, chocolate, sugar, a bar of soap, cigarettes, etc, etc! Oh dear! I have no money, or nearly no money. He'd be better off with another godmother. I will see what I can do but not having any money means that all I can really give is me and my time. Let's hope that it sorts itself out.

We are cooking bran – Ruth's idea for making porridge. I'm doubtful about the nutritional value of it, but we can but try it. I am going to darn some stockings.

4 October, Thursday

A cold day but a beautiful evening. I'm writing a few words in a hurry just to describe the colour of the sky. I spent the whole day studying curled up on the couch and round about 7.30 I put on the bedside lamp because it was getting dark. Suddenly, I looked at the window, it was completely green, a green light,

¹¹ Madame Cazamian was President of the Association des Femmes Françaises Diplômées (AFFDU) (French Association of University Women Graduates). In her chapter in *When the War Was Over: War and Peace in Europe, 1940–1956* (edited by Claire Duchon and Irene Bandhauer-Schoffmann), Sylvie Chaperon mentions that the Quakers helped to fund the work of the AFDU who helped women academics across Europe to hide or flee from the Nazis. See also Rémy Cazals' excellent monograph about the work of the AFDU and Marie-Louise Puech during the Occupation: Rémy Cazals (2004) *Lettres de réfugiées. Le réseau de Borieblanque. Des étrangères dans la France de Vichy* (Paris: Tallandier).

like looking through coloured cellophane. It was almost supernatural. Jacqueline came as she does nearly every day. Yolande came, to see what I was up to probably. I think that Aunt is furious with me. She is still objecting about my getting wood from Villeparisis. It annoys me a bit. I think that I am old enough to know what I want to do.

The courses at the Sorbonne started on Tuesday. I didn't go. I start on Monday. Yesterday, I registered at the Institut d'anglais, but the students who were there said that the teachers were not around because of the examinations. I saw Jacqueline there; she has decided to do an English degree. Afterwards, we went to Dilys's as we do every Thursday; Ruth and Mock were there; Mock is from the States; he came to France to study, he joined the ambulance corps and spent three months in Finland. Back then, he had a beautiful beard and looked really rather fine. Now, he has shaved it off and does not look quite as fine. We spoke about getting hold of supplies, about babies, about courses about pretty much everything I think.

This evening Ruth is happy. She has found some wheat and we're going to have porridge tomorrow. The bran was horrid we're not animals at the end of the day. Since yesterday, we've been having to hand in our bread tickets at the canteen. We're having to find substitutes for meat. I don't think that we will have enough to eat this winter. But, that's some way off (there is very little heating). I am tired, I am going to go to bed. This morning I wanted to get up at 7 to go to the class on Diderot but I was so warm in my bed that I stayed there in a delicious torpor until 8.30. I'm making the most of the last week.

Thursday 14 November

No, I haven't forgotten you, you are always in my thoughts, but I have been studying for my exam which officially is supposed to take place on the 18th of November but which will not take place on that date – unless there are unexpected developments. The weather is so beautiful. The sun is warm, I have the window wide open, – I should study – if you knew how hard I have been studying, – until two o'clock in the morning, getting myself up for seven, because I need to fit into six weeks what it has taken the others a year and sometimes two years to do. Anyway, as you know, this kind of game suits me.

Anyway, I am writing to you before my exam as I promised I would to tell you that the Sorbonne is shut. No courses, nothing, no library either – St Geneviève is closed and I don't know whether the BN¹² is open (even if it is, I don't think that they would let me in because I am a student). It is because of the 11 November. The Sorbonne and the Latin Quarter were as calm as could be,

¹² Bibliothèque nationale, more commonly known as the BN, is France's national library. During the Occupation, the buildings at 58 rue de Richelieu were the library's principal site.

but at 15.30, it seems that there was fighting at Etoile.¹³ What went on, I don't know but outlandish rumours are going round; I know one should not trust rumours. People died and were injured and some were locked up – there's no doubt about that. What is also certain is that yesterday, Wednesday, after normal classes on the Tuesday, the Sorbonne was shut. Ruth told me. She had gone there for her French teacher training course as normal at 8.30 am and came back around 10 all pale. I didn't want to believe what I was hearing when she told me the news. I was doing a translation in fact, which I finished and I was all ears. The riot police were everywhere waiting for demonstrations to break out, all soaked and looking sorry for themselves in their vans and under the café awnings while it hailed. What a blow for everyone. All the students have got to go home to their parents – wouldn't that be great! I'd love it! – students from the provinces have to go home immediately and everyone has to sign at police headquarters every day!!!! I went to register yesterday and was welcomed with open arms by the police who I know well, because I go there every day with Ruth just to have a walk. So, we are going to go there arm in arm every day. I was wondering what Yolande was going to do. You wouldn't know of course, but she has registered at the Sorbonne. She went on and on about it because I was there. It's for free German lessons supposedly, but between me and you, it's costing her a pretty penny. Anyway!!!

She was to have gone on holiday to Orgeval¹⁴ but because she has registered, she also has to go and sign every day . . . whose fault is that?? I went to see Aunt at the bank yesterday, causing quite a stir because I was the first student they had seen since the demonstration. She doesn't know what will happen. I do hope that Yolande will be able to go on holiday, because she is really tired, the poor thing – Coming back, I wanted to drop in at the Sorbonne. The police were closing it off, there were cordons across rue Victor Cousin and Place de la Sorbonne. They made me do a major detour to get home.

Vendryès read the declaration of the German authorities at 2 o'clock – he was reading it on the hour every hour – and begged us to be calm and sensible. We applauded and cheered him and he wept. All the campus security staff removed their hats in respect. I do so admire this man. He is so good and so fine. He ran into me in the corridor and straight away he said "Will you be alright, will you be alright." He is worried that I will have problems because you are at home;¹⁵ but I don't think so. He told me that he is going to do all he can to ensure that nothing happens to me. He is so nice to me. And one thing that I will never forget is that it was him who was the first to give me your news.

¹³ The 'trouble' at L'Etoile was a student-led demonstration – the first in occupied France – against the Vichy regime and the Germans. It took place on 11 November 1940 and was brutally suppressed.

¹⁴ Orgeval is a small town in the Yvelines region of France, north west of Paris.

¹⁵ At home in York, England.

One Saturday morning – I was washing my things – the concierge brought me “an urgent letter”, “good news from your mother” – I went nearly mad with joy – I cried with joy, with relief and then I went to her office to find out more. We wrote the reply together and I hope that you got it – it was sent by telegraph on the 18th of October. Since then I have received the cards you sent in September to which I will reply over the next fortnight – and I am going to send the first reply today. What a joy it is to have heard from you. It was the best day of my life, I think, the happiest and the saddest. I wanted to yell it from the top of the Panthéon;¹⁶ but I had to be careful not to appear too happy because poor Ruth hasn’t heard from her grandmother since February, I don’t think – it doesn’t seem to occur to her that something bad could happen one clear night . . .

(I really have to try to write legibly, because my dissertation was criticised for the handwriting, so, I’ll have to be careful, especially when it comes to the exam).

2 p.m. I have just been to sign in. What a lovely day it is; I am going to work at the open window all afternoon. Roussy,¹⁷ the Rector, has been removed from his post! We presented a petition in his defence. I signed my name legibly. The little Creole chap at the canteen was very worked up. He came out with one or two things The closure is bad for the life and future of so many students. I can always fall back on my thesis but how many are throwing away their time and money – Ruth, for example and the dentistry student from Alger where there is no Dentistry faculty.

The sky which was blue just a short time ago is now full of grey and black clouds. The wind is sending blue, white and russet smoke over the roofs. There is a light mist which is blocking out everything other than the closest houses – The church which the Cité universitaire students go to is just a grey silhouette against the moving grey sky. Before, I could see the gold and red of a tree in the courtyard opposite. Now I have to stare hard to see anything at all – the few yellow leaves that remain look as if they are hanging in the air. It is getting colder and colder. I shut the window and work.

Friday 15 November

It was fine yesterday from first thing nearly. Jacqueline Eichhorn and her friend Jacqueline arrived in a state about the closure of the Sorbonne. Yesterday

¹⁶ The Panthéon was originally a church and is now a mausoleum where the remains of some of France’s illustrious public, political and military figures are interred.

¹⁷ Gustave Roussy, a neurologist and cancer specialist was Rector of the Sorbonne at the outbreak of war in 1940. He was sacked by the Vichy authorities after the student protests at Etoile on Armistice Day 1940.

Jacqueline went to the Commissariat, and she says that they threatened to send her to a concentration camp for not having come on the first day. I think that she is exaggerating. Cyla¹⁸ went too – she has to sign even though she is Russian. I thought that only French citizens had to. In the evening Ruth went to Cyla's for a jab. Her thyroid gland is not functioning as it should. And, there was a beautiful full moon, we went to look at Notre Dame and approached it from the back. It was magnificent, this black and white symphony, and the plane trees, which were even blacker, framing it. It was cold. The Seine seemed hardly to be flowing. Then we went to stand under the main entrance but not excitedly – when it was Halloween, it felt like there were witches, magic around and even though I had promised myself I would work, I had to go out. Ruth was at the American Club. I was right under the entrance of Notre-Dame and watched the black mass that seemed set to crush me, the wind that swept the Valkyries through the sky, the clouds raced and the wind lashed me and the dead leaves hit me with sharp cracking sounds. A car went by and its headlight made all the saints jump from the night to bless me. It was dark but I had the impression that it was light. I had sung and shouted into the wind. Then I walked on the dark riverbanks to the Tuileries. I went round the carousel and I went home via the rue Bonaparte, St Sulpice, and the Panthéon. I was booming inside like a church filled with the reverberations of the organ. At Panthéon, I could hardly walk another step, I was so tired. Ruth wanted to relive it all with me, but yesterday wasn't right. Ok, it was fine weather but there's not the same mystery with a full moon. N.D. was pretty but it didn't amaze me, like it had on Halloween, or when I had seen it from the same place as yesterday evening in the springtime when the stone had seemed flesh-tinted and the soft blue sky, greens to make you wild with joy. And, well, I think that Ruth gets excited enough for two – and anyway, she doesn't admire the same things as I do. A plane tree, a black silhouette heavy with black bell flowers set against the moon was as beautiful as the cathedral itself but when I told her this, she pulled a face. Each to his own. One thing I want to know – the silhouette of a saint – or of the Virgin Mary? – against the moon.

On the way back we heard the German anti-aircraft barrage.

Monday 18 November

Today I should have taken an exam. Oh dear! When will I take it? The weather is cold and grey.

¹⁸ Cyla Babicka was a medical student at the beginning of the Occupation and later qualified as a doctor. She was a Russian Jew and had to go into hiding later in the war. According to a brief post-war memoir written by Ruth Camp, she was active in the armed Resistance. She survived the war and worked as a psychologist in France.

On Friday evening I went to see Aunt. Yolande doesn't have to sign at the Commissariat anymore because she is in the Civil Service. I am very happy for her. So, she has to be at Orgeval now, staying at Mme Fastier's. What a good woman that woman is. I admire her and I'd like to be like her despite her miserable life.

On Saturday I went to the Red Cross to send you a reply. I hope that you'll get it soon. Twenty five words doesn't allow a lot of space for news.

The BN is open, I am happy, I'll be able to do my thesis – in the morning I'll work on the English degree, do the housework and the darning, etc. Lunch at the canteen; BN; sort out notes, have dinner, knitting, reading or darning – that's what I hope I will be able to do – even though this morning hasn't been the best of starts. I gave a dictation to Ruth and I wasted a huge amount of time messing with my hair. Ruth has been going on at me to wear my hair up. I don't like this style for loads of reasons but I promised that I would do it for a week.

On Saturday evening, we decided to go to watch Carmen on the cheap. I was meant to be getting the tickets but they were only allowing one ticket per person. I had arranged to meet Ruth at quarter to six in the foyer and I waited for her outside so that I could nab her before going straight in to get the tickets. She arrived by the side door sometime after six. So, we missed one another and after a bit we left. We wondered whether we might go to the cinema but in the end we went home and ate sweets miserably.

On Sunday, we went to see "Les Noces de Jeannette" at the Théâtre National Populaire, Palais de Chaillot. There was a ballet too by Janine Solane,¹⁹ but I didn't think much to it and I was a little disappointed with "Les Noces de Jeannette". Jean was too much of a caricature but Jeannette was sweet. The person sat next to me struck up a conversation. A farmer, a super chap – he disapproves of students but he was nice all the same. I'm going to stir myself to join the Folklore group. I really can't be bothered doing much at all. My feet are too cold.

P.S. Yesterday I ate Bird's Nest soup. It was a delicious, a little like "Turtle soup".²⁰

Thursday 21 Nov

St Denis to see Abbé Moulin and take a package to him

¹⁹ Janine Solane (1912–2006) was a dancer and choreographer and teacher. She created the style *danse classique naturelle*. A biography about her life and work was published in 2011: Zaïna Folco (2011) *Parcours artistique d'une danseuse, chorégraphe, pédagogue*, 1912–2006. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan.

²⁰ "Turtle Soup" written in English.

Friday 22 Nov

Went to the BN.

Sunday 24 Nov

Went to Orgeval

Monday 25 Nov

Went to Ursulines²¹ to see “Le Puritain”

Tuesday 26 Nov

Opéra-Comique²² to see “Carmen”.

Thursday 28 Nov

Bought a present for Yolande (plate and a hand-painted cake knife). Went to Aunt's.

Friday 29 Nov

Went to St Denis to take a package.

Saturday 30 Nov

Yolande's birthday. Went to the Deux-Magots²³ with Miss Brigham. Spent the evening listening to records with Miss Beach²⁴ Cyla and Ruth were there. Went to Red Cross to send you some news.

²¹ This is likely to be the avant-garde cinema Studio des Ursulines set up in 1925 by actors Armand Tállier and Laurence Myrga.

²² The Opéra-Comique is an opera company founded in Paris in 1715. The theatre is located at 1 place Boieldieu in the city's second arrondissement.

²³ Les Deux Magots is a café in the St Germain-des-prés district of Paris famous for its association with literary figures of the inter-war period in particular.

²⁴ This is the first mention in the diary of American publisher and bookseller Sylvia Beach, owner of Shakespeare & Co, the English language bookshop and lending library on rue de l'Odéon, Paris. Madeleine had met Beach in February 1940, four months before the German invasion.

Sunday 1 December

Villeparisis.²⁵

It has been a while since I wrote to you but I am at the BN every day. I have just come back from Villeparisis, I've had a bath and I am in bed. I meant to write to you but my writing is so bad so I am going to do some knitting instead. But I will write tomorrow without fail.

Tuesday 3 December

"Manon". Opéra-comique with Yolande.

Thursday 5 Dec

Ruth is taken away.

Friday 6 Dec

Went back to the flat.

Saturday 7 Dec

Queued all day. What a day! I am on the floor because the air raid warning has just sounded, but it was cancelled, if one can say that, a few minutes later; now and again there are a few sirens blaring out. I don't know now whether it's an alert or not. I prefer to be on the floor with cushions around me rather than risk getting into trouble for not observing the blackout.

Since Thursday, it's all been happening!!! On Thursday at 8.30, two policemen told us that we had to leave – two hours to get out. They took Ruth God knows where – because she is a British citizen.²⁶ I came back here. I am only using the bedroom – I hope that they are going to let me stay here. The Germans can seal up the other two rooms if they want so long as they are kind enough to leave me this room, the kitchen and the toilet, – and the bathroom, even though they can seal that up as well if they like. (More sirens in the distance. I'd like to know whether there is still an alert – I don't think that there is.)

Today, I queued from 9.30 to midday and from 2.30 in the afternoon through to 7 for horse meat for Aunt. That really is the last time in my life that I'll be

²⁵ Villeparisis is a small town in the north-eastern suburbs of Paris.

²⁶ British and Commonwealth citizens were rounded up and interned on December 5th 1940. Madeleine had French papers because she had been born in France even though she had been brought up and educated in York, England. She was not, therefore, arrested.

queuing for her, – she sent me a jolly letter yesterday evening – it is clear that her feet aren't freezing off, pains in the legs and back from having had to wait without moving in the cold. At midday I was practically crying because I hadn't managed to get anything. The events of the last few days have shaken me up a little. Sylvia B wants me to leave the apartment and go to the hostel²⁷ but it is too expensive – 530 francs a month. I would like to stay here on my own or find a little room just for me.

Sirens again. We had them at 10.05, 10.10, 10.20, 10.25, 10.35 and now 10.40. Yesterday there was a pretty white, green and red fireworks display. They say that Orly was targeted.

Dad is going to be pleased. I bought him some stamps. I can't write anymore. My back hurts too much.

Sunday 8 December

Aunt. 'Bach en Correctionnelle'²⁸ and 'Janosik le rebelle'²⁹

Monday 9 Dec

Oooooohooooo !!!!!!!!! I am so, so, so happy ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ At last, I am going to have a room of my own. I am singing all that in Opera style . . . I am going to leave here and go to a room of MY OWN!!! Oh Heck,³⁰ I am so happy. It will be great fun – with my suitcase for a chair probably. Tomorrow I am going to look for rooms with Cyla. At last, a little place just for me. It will cost me loads at the start but I don't care. I will have to furnish the whole thing, but it will look lovely. I will probably die of cold at the beginning but I don't care. Sylvia wants me to go to the Hostel but 530 francs a month is too expensive and there is no heating and I won't get food thrown in for that price. I am so thrilled at the thought of having something of my own that I can't write nor work, nor go to bed. I take after you for wanting the things I want and for having my own home – and it will be a little bolt-hole for later – Gosh, this is life, this is really what it is all about – I will have beautiful curtains – red geraniums on the window sill, a bird, – or fish even? Maybe I could have the one Mille Brigham had, if I asked for it nicely at the boarding house where she must have left it – I am going to have a fruit bowl, a piece by Hauchecorne³¹, – I'll be able to have a silk painting, beautiful books – all bit by bit, when I have the money. I have never

²⁷ The Foyer international des étudiantes, 93 Boulevard St Michel. Many international students from the Sorbonne lived at the Foyer which was run by Sarah Watson (1885–1959) American expatriate and close friend of Sylvia Beach.

²⁸ 1940 French film directed by Henry Wulschleger.

²⁹ 1936 Czech film directed by Martin Frič.

³⁰ 'Oh Heck' written in English.

³¹ Gaston Hauchecorne (1880–1945). French artist and sculptor.

felt as much joy since hearing from you – and before that, since when I was getting ready to return home to you. I'm squeaking with delight! I feel like I am going to burst from the inside, my head is full of music and singing – I will be able to have a violin – I am going to ask Jeanne for the TSF³² again, I am going, I am going, I am going – oh Lord, what am I not going to do?

This morning, I had lunch with Miss Clisbe. She is very nice. Cyla came to eat this evening. We ate anchovies, salted cucumbers, soup and drank tea with rum and vodka. Since Thursday, the studies have gone to pot. Soon, I'll be able to give it a good go . . . study hard to make up the time. It's not a problem, I'll just not take any holiday at Christmas, that's all. But Christmas, I hope to be able to spend at home.³³

Tuesday 10 Dec

'La Vie de Bohème'. 2 first acts, didn't understand a word. Last 2 were fabulous.

Wednesday 11 Dec

Looked for an apartment.

Thursday 12 Dec

Looked for a room

I have it at last!! It's all signed. It is mine. Not a room, mind, but a real apartment – bedroom, kitchen, WC with a wash basin!! And a rubbish chute, my dear!! Just next door to Chez Dilys, 320 rue St Jacques. I am on the 8th floor with a fabulous view over the Val-de-Grâce and the whole south east of Paris. I'll have the sun all morning and I'll have heating in January and February (how about that?) Oh, I am so happy.

Yesterday Cyla and I went round most of the 'quartier' and saw two rooms without being that impressed. This morning I trailed around the area and ended up right outside a room. It had loads of things wrong with it but my God I really liked it.

First of all, the bad points :

1. Ground floor
2. Facing onto the courtyard.

³² TSF (Transmission sans fil) was a radio receiver. TSF literally means 'wireless' but this refers to the nature of the transmission of the sound that came out of it. It was a valve radio run off mains electricity.

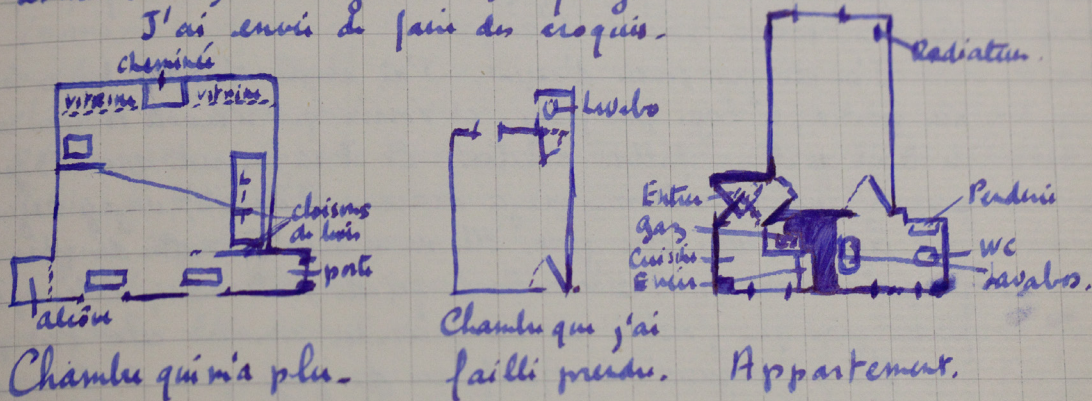
³³ Home was 49 Rosedale Avenue, Acomb, near York, England.

3. No sun.
4. No running water.
5. W.C. on the 1st floor.

But it was big and had an “atmosphere” that one could have cut with a knife. It had two bedrooms, a fireplace, two windows and cupboards on each side of the fireplace and it was bohemian, it really was. Because I liked it despite the things wrong, I dropped Cyla a note asking her whether she would come with me to rue de l’Ancienne-Comédie to see it, then I dropped in at Dilys. On the way past, I saw the advert and I went in – saw it, liked it lots. Mrs Evans³⁴ really wanted me to take it because she’s worried. Went to Sylvia’s who said “why don’t you go to the hostel?” But she came to see it – I wanted a bedroom. She was very enthusiastic about it. ‘But you really have got to take the apartment!!’ So, that’s that. I saw the agent and everything is signed. 2500 francs a month. I can manage that but it will be tough at the beginning; 300 francs deposit and 200 francs to pay before the 15th of January, then 825 francs as soon as possible after that. And there is no furniture. I’ll ask Voirin to send me another 1000 francs, and I’ll give English lessons. I am so, so happy. I want to do some sketches.

³⁴ Dilys’s mother ‘Bessie’ Evans. Bessie lived with Dilys, Dilys’s husband, George, and baby Gaël, in the building next door to Madeleine, 322 rue St Jacques.

Je suis si fatiguée, j'ai écrit 2000 francs par mois. Je pensais y arriver, mais la dé
et t'en dur : 300 francs de dépôt, 200 francs pour jusqu'au 15 janvier,
tout de suite 825 francs aussi rapidement que possible. Et aucun me
Je vais demander à Voirin de m'envoyer 1000 francs en plus, et je vais
donner des leçons d'anglais. Mais que je suis contente !!
J'ai envie de faire des croquis.



Je suis morte de fatigue, je me couche — depuis 9 heures 30 que je n
et hier j'ai fait trempé comme un oiseau.
Et Villyparisis. Couche Tante. Beaucoup de neige.

[Plans of rooms and flat]

Room I liked

Room I nearly rented

Apartment

I am dead on my feet, I'm going to bed – since 9.30 I've been walking around and I am like a drowned rat.

Sunday 15 Dec

Went to Villeparisis. Stayed over at Aunt's. Loads of snow.

Monday 16 Dec

Went to town in the afternoon with Yolande. Went to see the apartment. Ate at Aunt's. Slept over at Aunt's.

Tuesday 17 Dec

Electricity. Ste Yolande. Roger (Blot) 41 ans

Wednesday 18 Dec

Gas

Thurs 19 Dec

Went to the shops. American embassy. Gaël Perrine le Colleter born 9.45–10.00 pm.

Friday 20 Dec

The Sorbonne has reopened. I don't have to sign at the Commissariat anymore!!!! Went to see Cyla. I understand why people drink: when it's cold, when there's not much to eat and a lot of work to do, alcohol is warming. I'll only turn to it as a last resort, when I am frozen stiff. I have no heating, thank goodness it is not too cold. Worked until 4 am on Saturday.

Saturday 21 Dec

It's cold. Queued for Aunt. Confession.

Sunday 22 Dec

Mrs Evans is ill. Mass at St Jacques du haut (or is that de Bas?) [Note copied from 4 avril, = St Jacques du Haut-Pas³⁵]. Aunt. "Feu de Paille". Note from Jacqueline.

Monday 23 Dec

Xmas shopping and "home shopping".³⁶ Frozen stiff.

It seems as if I am neglecting you – I'm not at all. I am thinking about you constantly, especially because of Christmas. On Christmas day I am going to go to Orgeval to escape all the terribly sad memories. I want to laugh loud that day, to be in a noisy hurly-burly so as not to have to think about Mummy all alone in front of the fire with Mamour curled up on her cushions. And then there's Daddy, bringing mince pies home in his pocket. Oh Hell. I'd give my life, 10 years of my life to be with you. What are you going to do for Christmas? My Canadian prisoner has just been ordained. He has promised to say a prayer for my exam. Oh God, let the prayer be for my parents. Sometimes I can think about you without getting upset, but most of the time, my throat goes all tight with emotion and my eyes go misty all of a sudden.

It is cold, so cold. I still have nothing to make a fire and as a result have to get myself into bed around 10 and in the morning I can't, just can't get myself up before 8.30. Jack Frost draws beautiful pictures on the kitchen windows but not on the bedroom ones, it isn't warm enough there. At home, – my real home, rue St Jacques, the whole window was covered with ice ferns. When will I be able to go there? There is no gas, no electricity either. As soon as it is installed I will go, despite the discomfort.

I've got big money worries. I borrowed 1,000 francs off Miss SB.³⁷ It has all gone, the rent hasn't been paid and Voirin still hasn't sent me anything! All these Christmas presents to buy!! And I only have 153 francs 30 to survive until when? On top of that, presents, electricity, the trip to Orgeval, – things look gloomy.

Cyla is a great kid. She is going to put up some shelves. Oh dear, pity I'm not as handy as her. Tomorrow she is operating – I mustn't forget to ask her how it all went.

Today, I got paid the 90 francs for three lectures. I wasn't pleased about getting the money. I was much more pleased to get my bursary, money that

³⁵ Small church at 252 rue St Jacques. At the Liberation, Madeleine writes of enemy snipers holed up in the bell tower.

³⁶ 'Xmas shopping' and 'home shopping' written in English in the manuscript.

³⁷ Sylvia Beach.

I really have earned through the sweat of my brow. It's strange how little I care about money – except when I have debts as I do at the moment. I have amazing plans for my place. As soon as I am solvent, I will save terribly hard to furnish it.

First of all, I'll need a settee – 900 francs. then a “cabinet” to put in the kitchen – 250 francs. Mirror and glass splash-backs for the bathroom – 100 francs. Pillowcases 66 francs (for two). Pretty curtains ?? francs, wardrobe, table, chair, electric heater, TSE, etc etc, etc. I'll need money for it all. I'm going to scrimp and save and also put some aside for the thesis. My feet are so cold. I am going to write a Happy Christmas greeting to Godfather, Granny, and send it with some cheese ration tokens – 200 grams for their Christmas. New Year's Day will be better – maybe I will have a little money.

There is no butter, no meat, no onions, no fish, no soap, no milk. We have to queue up for carrots, for everything except lettuce and dates. No chocolate at all. Fortunately, we are well fed at the canteen.³⁸ I don't have to worry about lunch as a result. In the evening I eat sautéed potatoes because I have some rancid butter. When I have more of them, I will eat them boiled. I have never liked confectionary much and I used to hate cream especially on cakes. Now, I dream about nothing but. When I look at cakes on Friday, Saturday, Sunday (the only days they are allowed) my mouth starts to water. Tastes change?? I really must write to Godfather and Granny this evening. Och! Second thoughts, I might as well go to bed, I no longer have any feeling in my feet. Tomorrow I will write by writing Christmas cards, whilst waiting for Cyla, or in the morning. This evening I will knit a little in bed – perhaps and then bye-byes. I've been wanting to have a proper wash and when it comes to it, I can't face it because it is just so cold – and my dressing gown is at rue St Jacques. I was stupid to take it there first.

I told you that the exam was the 13th of January. I am so cold that I don't care. Is that a good or a bad thing? I just don't know.

For Christmas – I would like – a doll. It's daft, but I want one. When I have the money I will buy myself one. I haven't seen one I like. They are all made out of celluloid or last year's shop-soiled stock. I'd like a little baby made out of rubber. Aunt is going to give me a Hauchecorne. Normally, I'd be thrilled. But just now, I would have preferred a coffee grinder. Bah ! I bet I will be pleased to have the little Chinese terracotta lady – I haven't yet dared say to Aunt that I am moving. Good God. She'll go mad. It might be better not to upset her before Christmas and New Year. Then I will tell her and I will disappear until after the exams. It'll take her until Easter to recover. She makes me lie to her; I hate that but it is her fault. She has her own ideas and she won't listen to anything else. –

³⁸ This is possibly the Foyer international des étudiantes on the Boulevard St Michel.

I know that you wouldn't be too happy that I took this room, you would have preferred me to lodge with a family – but it is too dear – and anyway, we can use it as a little bolt-hole in Paris. If the war lasts a long time, which I hope it doesn't, I am going to be very pleased to have somewhere I regard as my home – perched up on the eighth floor. Ooh, this cold! I am going to go to bed, my nose is threatening to freeze, the chilblains on my feet are burning. I am not going to knit. I am going to bury myself in the bed wiggling my toes and shivering, shivering until sleep overcomes me – probably two minutes after turning the light off. I don't suffer from insomnia fortunately, – not like poor Mrs Evans. She does suffer . . .

ps: Mustn't forget to go to see Jacqueline tomorrow. What a busy day!!!

Tuesday 24 Dec

The moon is a silver crescent. It was russet earlier. A little snow fell and it'll snow again. I couldn't get myself up for 7 am. It was too cold. Now I am going to hurry myself along to get to work. Bought some shelving with Cyla at the market at the Hôtel de Ville. Moved. Saw Miss Beach. Stayed talking with her and Cyla. Cyla came to mine. Took presents.

Wednesday 25 Dec

Christmas. Orgeval. Mass. Danced. Slept over at Aunt's.

Thursday 26 Dec

Moved. Couldn't get into the rue Rollin apartment. The key didn't turn. Cyla helped. Went to sort out electricity.

Friday 27 Dec

Moved. Water leak from above at rue Rollin. Gas. Went to Jacqueline's. I am dead tired and I have a very bad cold. I want to move in properly today but can't. I don't have electricity yet. I am too tired to write. I should write to Voirin but I keep putting it off until the next day. I've borrowed another 300 frs. I am crippled with debt!!! If only Voirin could send me some money. If I get nothing tomorrow I'll write. Let's hope that there is something.

Saturday 28 Dec

Slept at 320 rue St Jacques

Sunday 29 Dec

Went to Aunt's. "Ils étaient neuf célibataires".³⁹ Wrote to Voirin.

Monday 30 Dec

Sorted and tidied. "Samson et Dalila".⁴⁰ Miss Beach got a letter from Ruth.⁴¹

Tuesday 31 Dec

Queued for potatoes. Marcel came.

³⁹ A 1939 film comedy directed by Sacha Guitry, starring Guitry, Max Dearly and Elvire Popesco.

⁴⁰ In all probability the Opera by Camille Saint-Saëns.

⁴¹ Ruth Camp wrote to Sylvia Beach from Vittel internment camp on several occasions. The letters can be consulted in the Sylvia Beach archive at the University of Princeton.



320 rue St Jacques from the street (present day). Copyright Jack Charnley, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

