
H-France Review Vol. 21 (July 2021), No. 128

Antonin Durand, Paul Mayens, and Lucie Rondeau du Noyer, eds., *Les voyages forment la jeunesse: Les boursières scientifiques David-Weill à la découverte du monde (1910-1939)*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2020. 390 pp. Bibliography, index, and references. €29.00 (pb). ISBN 9-79-1034400782; €13.99 (eb). ISBN 9-79-1034403905.

Review by Whitney Walton, Purdue University.

According to the acknowledgements, this volume originated as part of a collective effort to recognize the contributions of philanthropists to universities in France. To that end, the authors and editors have transcribed nine reports by French female scientists who received the David-Weill travel scholarships to study and do research abroad from 1910 to 1939. They also frame these documents in relation to several different areas of historical scholarship, including mobility, travel writing, comparative higher education, international relations, science, philanthropy, and, especially, women and gender.

The introductory essay clearly locates the primary source documents, preserved in the National Archives in the AJ series of the Paris University rectorate, historically and historiographically. It opens with a quote from Marie-Louise Arnould, who traveled and studied mathematics in Italy in 1924-1925, regarding the disbelief she encountered as a young French woman pursuing educational travel alone. The editors interpret this as proof of “[le] caractère toujours subversif de cette présence féminine dans les universités, les laboratoires et même dans les lieux touristiques italiens” (p. 11). The introduction first charts the feminization of the sciences in France and in Europe from 1910 to 1939, and secondly examines David-Weill scholarships within the context of student, especially female students’, mobility.

Despite the fame of a few pioneering female scientists, notably Marie Curie (1867-1934), the number of women in the sciences in French universities was low at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of several vivid charts shows that, while the number of female students in French universities increased substantially from 1911 to 1939, the proportion of women in science departments remained around 15 percent in contrast to 25 to 30 percent of all women in all departments of universities. Additionally, a high proportion of female students enrolled in Paris universities were foreign: 71.3 percent in 1890 and 55 percent in 1910.

Private philanthropists, including David David-Weill (1871-1952), were crucial to French student mobility prior to World War I because, at the end of the nineteenth century, the French state and universities were more concerned about attracting foreign students to France than sending French students abroad. David-Weill’s goal in creating the travel scholarships in 1909

was for teachers and students in France to have the experience of studying and researching abroad, comparable to their peers in other countries. Other philanthropists also donated funds to the University of Paris for student travel, but the David-Weill scholarships were distinctive in accepting applications from all over France, and from women and men in different disciplines. While he was involved in the family banking operation, David-Weill became a noted collector and patron of the arts, a generous donor to various student-related causes, and he took an active role in the selection of candidates for the scholarships he created. Colorful bar graphs reveal the numbers of applicants and those awarded scholarships, female and male candidates, and the breakdown of recipients' academic disciplines (law, languages, literature, science). Of the 144 total awards granted from 1910 through 1939 (out of an applicant pool totaling 464), 103 went to men and 41 to women; thus, women represented 30 percent of the awards which matched the distribution of applicants (132 women and 294 men). The number of women awarded scholarships declined relative to men in the 1920s and 1930s, in part because the number of female applicants declined after World War I, and in part because awards favored the sciences with more male applicants, at the expense of letters with more female applicants. Map charts show that men more often applied to study in Germany, while women favored Italy, though men and women also studied in different parts of Europe and the Middle East. The editors indicate that this bias was both disciplinary and gendered. The editors found no explanation in the records for the university council's denial of almost all women's applications to study in Germany: "l'Allemagne n'est pas perçue comme une destination pour les femmes" (p. 40). Over time, travel destinations diversified within and beyond Europe.

The second section of the volume consists of nine reports from *boursières* selected from the 144 fellows' reports located in the National Archives. These reports offer remarkable insights into the value of foreign travel and study for individuals and educational institutions, notable features of higher education in comparative perspective, and details about the state of physics, chemistry, geology, mathematics, marine biology, political economy, and neurological science in the 1910s through the 1930s. Footnotes identify the different professors mentioned in the reports and include information about their accomplishments and contributions to particular disciplines. The reports generally adhered to a pattern of addressing the disciplinary content of the learning experience, the methods of teaching and learning in the host country compared to France, student housing and social life, comparative strengths and weaknesses of primary and secondary education in France and abroad, the merits of foreign travel and study, and the conditions of travel and study for women in particular. For example, three take-aways from Alice Lapotaire's year studying physics at Cambridge University in England in 1910-1911 included replacing some book learning with hands-on laboratory work in her teaching in France, wishing for a better balance between physical health and academic studies among French female students, and proposing as an ideal a combination of English empiricism with French abstract theorizing. Other reports drew similar or comparable conclusions. Yet each *boursière* has her own distinctive authorial voice. Marcelle Philibert's enthusiasm for geology is evident in her detailed descriptions of the Etna and Vesuvius volcanoes, as well as related chemical industries in Italy in 1925-1926. Simone Mouchet's report of her work in marine biology in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1931-1932 resonates with current debates about scientists from developed countries doing fieldwork in less developed locations, including access to collections and findings, and engagement with local practitioners. Madeleine Dorléac engagingly narrates the politics, creativity, humor, and passion of university student life, as well as close connections between schools and community in Glasgow, Scotland in 1922-1923. Studying mathematics in Italy in 1924-1925 and preparing for an administrative career in France, Marie-Louise Arnould focused

on her travels throughout the country and in Tunisia, revealing her profound appreciation for natural history and art. She was particularly concerned that French people, and especially French women, did not travel enough or care to extend their influence abroad, in contrast to Germans: “l’Allemagne a profondément impressionné l’Italie, elle n’est pas arrivée je crois à se faire aimer, mais elle s’est fait admirer, ce qui est déjà beaucoup” (p. 168). Arnould vowed that as an administrator she would help language teachers encourage their pupils to study abroad.

In the third section of the book, historian Antonin Durand notes that research on women’s travel, including academic travel, is flourishing, and that gender analysis of the David-Weill narratives reveals both the emancipatory effects of, as well as implicit constraints on feminine mobility. Less studied than other types of travel narratives, including those by recipients of the Albert Kahn Around-the-World scholarships (1898-1930), the David-Weill reports are particularly valuable for their in-depth examination of different scientific disciplines, and the methods of teaching and learning them in different countries at the university level as well as in schools. They also represent a distinctive literary genre since the authors aspired to satisfy the requirements of the donor, as well as of the university and convey their personal insights. Durand asks the question: is there a distinctive feminine voice in such writing? It is difficult to generalize, but Durand indicates that women reported almost nothing about politics, with the notable exception of Marcelle Philibert who discretely mentioned the effects of fascist policies on food production and on university personnel in Italy in 1925. Durand suggests that gender is most evident in the subject matter, rather than in the form of the writing; the women reported extensively on education in schools and on the condition of women in university life, with the implication that men did not. They also conveyed the difficulties of living on the extremely small stipends allotted to women, often aggravated by fluctuating currency values in the 1920s and 1930s. Durand cites other archival sources to explain the financial and other challenges that *boursières* and applicants confronted in terms of accommodating *lycée* teaching schedules, promotions, and social security contributions, as well as covering travel and living expenses abroad. For these graduates of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Sèvres, study abroad presented a double challenge, in the words of Alice Lapotaire, as *boursières* had to adjust to university settings that included women and men, as well as to a different national higher education system.

Regarding the significance of the David-Weill travel scholarships, Durand concludes that none of the *boursières* broke the glass ceiling of women in science to become prominent in her field, in contrast to men recipients of the David-Weill scholarship. Some married and disappeared professionally. Others applied for additional funding support from outside the university to pursue scientific research, since research positions for women in France were rare. Nonetheless, he asserts that the scholarships started a process of integrating more women into a transnational scientific elite. This is a perfect starting point for a sequel to this volume, a work that would include more examples of French women in the sciences, and a follow-through similar to the book by Christine von Oertzen, included in the bibliography, on the efforts of British, North American, and German academic women to form transnational networks through the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) founded in 1919. [1]

The *boursières*’ reports and the scholarly analysis in *Les voyages forment la jeunesse* raise a few questions and invite further research. Why was “Germany not perceived as a destination for women,” and by whom? What is the relationship between women’s educational travel and international relations? Would the analysis be any different if men’s reports were included? How much significance can be extrapolated from only nine examples? Did foreign travel change

scientific disciplines and their teaching, and the presence of women in the sciences in France and elsewhere? And consider Marie-Louise Arnould's brief remarks on a vibrant veterinary institute in Tunis, perhaps generalizable to all the colonies: "Le travail de laboratoire dans ces régions semble avoir un tout autre caractère que le travail de nos Universités, ne serait-ce que par son application immédiate et pratique, le désir de résoudre un problème vital, d'avancer. Faire une these là-bas c'est de la vie" (p. 154). Her comments cry out for more research on educational and research exchanges between France and the colonies. These questions represent no criticism of the scholarship or of the value of the sources this volume makes available. Rather, they support continued work on gender, academic travel, philanthropy, and the sciences.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Antonin Durand, Paul Mayens, and Lucie Rondeau du Noyer, "David-Weill et ses boursières"

Texte. Rapports de séjours des boursières scientifiques

Alice Lapotaire, séjour en physique à l'université de Cambridge, 1910-1911

Anna Carrier, séjour en physique à l'université de Genève, 1911-1912

Suzanne Lauzanne, séjour en mathématiques à l'université de Rome, 1919-1920

Madeleine Dorléac, séjour en chimie à l'université de Glasgow, 1922-1923

Marie-Louise Arnould, séjour en mathématiques, Italie, 1924-1925

Marcelle Philibert, séjour en géologie à l'université de Rome, 1925-1926

Fernande Coupin, séjour en anatomie et zoologie aux universités de Francfort, Bâle et Zurich, 1929-1930

Simone Mouchet, séjour en biologie à l'université de Montevideo, 1931-1932

Magdeleine Apchié, séjour en économie politique à l'université de Columbia (New York), 1935-1936

Commentaire

Antonin Durand, "La mobilité étudiante au féminin"

NOTE

[1] Christine von Oertzen, *Science, Gender, and Internationalism: Women's Academic Networks, 1917-1955* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

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ISSN 1553-9172