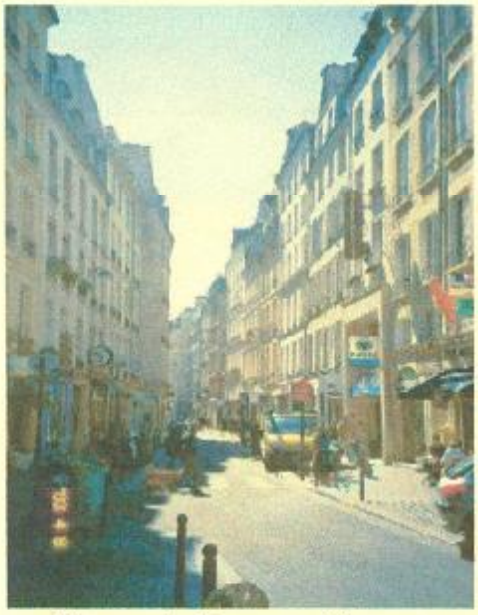
Route stop 9

From the Café Flore south about 300 meters to the rue de Vieux Colombier is a neighborhood of *Merlin* people. Cross the Boulevard Saint-Germain (the traffic island in the center is a tiny *place* named after Sartre and Beauvoir) and turn right a block to the entrance of the rue du Dragon.

The rue du Dragon in 1950
[Vian p264 credit Roger Viollet]



The rue du Dragon as it is now

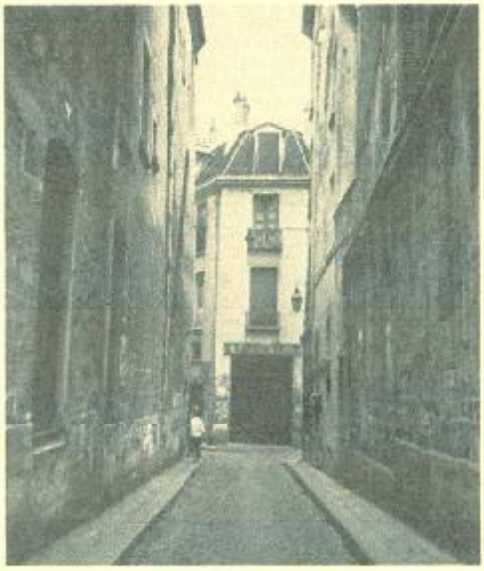
The rue du Dragon is a short, narrow street formerly known as the rue de Sépulchre because it was the residence of the Canons of Saint-Sépulchre. The northern end is marked by a doorway over which there is a sculpted dragon bearing up a balcony. Traditionally a street of shops and restaurants, now also fashionable boutiques.

About halfway along the rue du Dragon, turn left into the rue Bernard-Palissy. Keep to the right at the intersection. This will take you to the head of the rue du Sabot.

The rue du Sabot is a name originating in the 15th century. Sabots, or wooden shoes, were much worn during the Occupation when leather was unavailable. The knocking of sabots on cobblestones was a characteristic sound of that time and one reminiscent of deprivation.

There was a restaurant here in the early fifties, Chez Francis, characterized by Vian as *sympathique*, and there still is a little neighborhood place which contrasts with the more upscale eateries in the vicinity.

Down at the other end of the rue du Sabot, at number 8 on the right side as you approach the intersection with the rue de Rennes and the rue du Four was at the time a building (now a Japanese restaurant) in which Richard Seaver lived and where issues of *Merlin* were produced. Cronin says that Seaver's room was behind an antique shop, which would have occupied the rez-de-chaussée. Seaver in a later interview called this place a "warehouse." It's hard to tell now what that might mean, but around my apartment in Belleville, out by Père Lachaise, there were buildings of that sort, selling bulk rice and so forth out of an open street level with living floors above. Presumably Seaver meant a disused warehouse.



The rue Bernard-Palissy in 1950 [Vian p257 credit Roger Viollet.] Before 1864 this was called the rue Tarenne after a family which lived there in the 15th century. The house you see here standing at the head of the street was Palissy's (1510-1589).

The rue du Sabot in in 1950 [Vian p272 credit Rogert Viollet] Seaver's warehouse in the building on the left, where the two cars are parked.

The present rue du Sabot, a viewpoint corresponding to that of the 1950 picture.

A better view of n8, the *Merlin* warehouse.

Some comments on living conditions in post-war Paris are on page 14-16. More about Merlin on page 9-13.

Cross the intersection into the rue de Rennes to the rue du Vieux Colombier. The rue de Rennes runs 1195 meters from the Place du Québec at the north end, where it meets the Boulevard Saint-Germain, to the Place du Dix-Huit Juin 1940 (formerly known as the Place de Rennes) at the head of the Gare de Montparnasse complex, where the trains for Rennes and Brittany once departed. Laid out in 1855, it is a major street 22 meters wide. In 1977 the section beyond the Boulevard Saint-Germain was assigned to a different street.

The only person I have so far found associated with the rue de Rennes was Paul Boubal, *patron* of the Café Flore from 1939, who owned an apartment on the corner with the rue Gozlin.

Cross the intersection into the rue de Rennes to the rue du Vieux Colombier. The second Rose Rouge, which we passed earlier at route stop 2, was a short distance ahead, beyond the intersection at n76, where there is now a cinema. The first Rose Rouge was at route stop 42. Backtrack along the rue du Vieux Colombier to the head of the rue Bonaparte at the northwest corner of the Place Saint-Sulpice.

Les Frères Jacques, performing at the Rose Rouge [Vian p213 credit Georges Dudognon]

The Rose Rouge

The original Rose Rouge was a partnership between Feral Benga and Nico, which lasted a year. Benga continued on at the rue de la Harpe site, while Nico (the husband of Anouk Aimée) established, in 1948, a new club, also named the Rose Rouge, in the rue de Rennes. The club's fame was built on shows by the team of Jean-Pierre Grenier and Olivier Hussenot and the the satirical review Les Frères Jacques (mentioned by Janet Flanner 11 May 1949 as performing Queneau's *Exercises du Style*). The mania for jazz aux caves collapsed after the spring of 1949 when the police cracked down and by 1951 the jazz scene had moved on to the kind of sit-down clubs and bars familiar to any New Yorker. In 1950 the Rose Rouge was said to be keeping its head down, and scored a coup rather with a spectacle based on *Fantômas*, a series of thrillers popular before World War I.

Note: the address of the Club Saint-Germain in 1948 was 44 rue de Rennes, but this is now the rue Bonaparte north of the Boulevard and should not be confused with the Rose Rouge.

Jean-Louis Barrault, the manager of the Odéon theater, and his wife, the actress Madeleine Renaud, dancing to *le jazz hot* in 1950 [Beevor] Boris Vian plays trumpet. Above: Barrault and Renaud now

Merlin

The magazine's politics were radical left. The fact that *Merlin* and *Points* had already occupied the niches of experimental and political writing was, if you believe Matthiessen, the reason why the *Paris Review* was positioned in the mainstream. Whereas it seems to me that the inclination to evaluate niches and markets in the first place has already positioned you. But perhaps I'm harsh. The *Merlin* people certainly wanted their magazine to succeed. Jane hawked it in the cafés and train stations with Fuki on her shoulder. Partly eccentric theater, living the life, but that was the magazine, too, wasn't it? Trocchi had emigrated from Glasgow because the provincial Glaswegians were not hip to existentialism, which I suppose makes Trocchi one of those zillions of Sartre groupies which *Samedi Soir* had satirized years earlier. Well, but it was a *French* philosophy after all, so it's hardly surprising the French were there first. (See workpoints.)

Besides, that's what you did at the time. You had something to say, you were an intellectual, you started a magazine. The *Paris Review*, like *Les Beaux Jours* in Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*, belonged to a different social as well as political and economic class. Beaux-jours people are not engagé. Beaux-jours people interview other writers about their methods, not their neuroses or their politics.

Points had been the first of the post-war English-language literary magazines in Paris, begin in early 1949 by Sindbad Vail, a native Frenchman but the son of Peggy Guggenheim and so natively bi-cultural. *Zero* followed close on in the spring of that year, its first issue edited from 29 rue Jacob but thereafter packed off to the Tangier scene with Bowles, where Ginsberg and Burroughs would visit a decade later.

New-Story started up in March 1951, about the time *Points* was fading, at 29 Place Dauphine near the old club Tabou. This was published in New York by Gargoyle and edited in Paris by David Burnett, the son of Martha Foley. This one didn't move as far as Tangier before its second issue, only to 6 Boulevard Poissonnière on the lower border of Montmartre, behind the Bourse.

So on May 15th, 1952, when *Merlin* published its first 53 pages, there was already a tradition.

The first issue contained, in addition to work by Trocchi and Chistopher Logue, the editor/publishers, and Alfred Chester (then living in a Paris suburb), material from a Dallas poet in Paris on a Fullbright (William Burford), an English little magazine editor (Patrick Brangwyn), another Englishman (James Fidler), a Canadian living in London (H Charles Hatcher), and A.J. Ayer on existentialism. It was, as we see, not yet French.

The second issue (Autumn 1952, 115 pages) contained the article by Seaver on Beckett, and the third (Winter 1952, 68 pages) material from *Watt*. The connec-

tion with *Les Temps modernes* had been made by the fourth issue (Spring/Summer 1953, 71 pages), which contained writing by Paul Éluard and by Sartre on Jean Genet as well as a fragment of Henry Miller's *Plexus*. After this things started to go downhill. The fifth issue (Autumn 1953, 60 pages) contained some of Beckett's *Molloy*, but it had a business manager now, and was printed in Spain. Trocchi had begun to withdraw, leaving the editorial work to Seaver and others. The next (sixth) issue (Summer/Autumn 1954, 87 pages) did not appear for almost a year, and with a new business manager and new volume numbering (v2n3). This was the end of Lougee's association.

In the autumn of 1952, Alice Jane Lougee of Limerick, Maine, became the publisher of *Merlin*. But she'd been in it from the first: it was she who'd suggested the idea of a magazine the year before, and it may have been the first issue which she financed by the sale of her car in Maine. The $100 a month she was getting for living expenses from her father went to help support Trocchi's wife in England. Two years and five issues. The leftovers were collected and financed by Olympia Press in the summer of 1955, but by that time it was all over and everyone had gone. When the *Paris Review* started up in the spring of 1953 it was the end of the line, and soon enough that magazine was living in New York.

An issue of *Merlin* cost £430 to produce. This would be 413,000 francs or somewhere around $1000 in paradiso money, almost a year's living expenses – about $7600 in 1995 dollars. If Jane had contributed her whole stipend she would have made up about half what was needed for two issues a year. Without information on print run I can't say what sales might have contributed, but there seems to be a shortfall of $500 a year or so in the business plan (hence the car was sold), and then somehow Jane's rent in the bed-sit on the rue de Verneuil still had to be paid, so she worked as a charwoman beginning in 1953 for a thousand francs a week ($10 a month), and then as a tutor to military children. The guys did the writing and got the publicity, but this thing was Jane's idea and it was carried on Jane's shoulders.

I myself have been through the sofa cushions trying to make up fifty cents for gasoline for an outing.

Sylvia Beach doesn't say what it cost to produce the first edition of *Ulysses*, but the sales value was 185,000 francs. At the time, 5000 francs a year was enough for a bourgeois life, and the sales value of the book was about a million and a half in current buying power, enough for all the issues of *Merlin*.

In addition to being hawked around, the magazine was sold at Gaïte Frogé's English Bookshop in the rue de Seine, an atelier and gallery district in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés near the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (route stop 12) and at George Whitman's Librarie Mistral in the Latin Quarter (route stop 24).

All the four central *Merlin* people were noses, present in Paris by the summer of 1951, Trocchi for a year at that point and Richard Seaver for two. Seaver was

said (in the credits to the second issue) to be working for a French film company. Trocchi was an ideologue attracted by French thought and oppressed at home. Christopher Logue seems to have been the classic bohemian poet, not unsurprisingly found in Paris. Lougee is more of a puzzle. Subsidized by her father, living in middle-class Auteuil and working as a secretary, she must have had some prior experience of France and command of the language, most probably as a child before the war. But she also seems, as with Sylvia Beach seeking out avant-garde French authors in Adrienne Monnier's bookshop, to have had an agenda of her own, and as soon as she found an entry into the bohemian artistic life she was really after, she took it. It was a youthful fling – when the bloom was off the life she went home again, like so many others.

Alexander Trocchi went to Paris from Glasgow with his wife Betty in the summer of 1950. Seaver says he met him at the Deux Magots after having published a piece in *Points*; in another place it was his contacts with Patrick Bowles which led him to Trocchi, which suggests some time in 1951. Trocchi and Logue also met that summer, on the stairs of a "run-down hotel in the rue de la Huchette" after Trocchi had returned from the Pyrenees. Patrick Bowles was a young South African, probably also resident by this time. (Bowles was also the main contact with Samuel Beckett, through Jerome Lindon, the editor of Editions de Minuit.) Then in the fall of 1951 Trocchi's wife went home to Newcastle and Trocchi returned to Paris with all the elements in place for a new life. When he met Jane Lougee (she remembers autumn 1951, he said at an art exhibition in January 1952) she said she'd fund the magazine and they were off.

The last major player was Austryn Wainhouse, who appeared by the third issue (Winter 1952/1953). Wainhouse was an American poet, married (his wife Muffy appears in the Café de Tournon photograph), and working at the time on a translation of Sade. This is how the connection was made, because Maurice Girodias's father Jack Kahane had asked Samuel Beckett to translate Sade for Olympia Press in 1938. Through Wainhouse's introduction, Girodias put money into *Merlin* (eventually taking it over) and thus with it inadvertantly acquired Beckett's *Watt*. Wainhouse was sought out by Trocchi through the Librarie Mistral.

Then it was over. Lougee sailed for New York August 10th, 1954, and by December she was married to one Gordon Griscom. Seaver and Wainhouse left the following year, and Trocchi in April of 1956. Logue became a respectable English poet.

Among others sometimes associated with *Merlin*, Terry Southern had (not counting Beckett) been there before them all, since September of 1948. He met Trocchi, he says, in the Café Florian. The date is uncertain, but since this was after the *Paris Review* had started (Trocchi had gotten Southern's address at the time, in a hotel on the Place de la Concorde, from George Plimpton) this was probably not

until 1953. Southern left Paris that year.

Alfred Chester went to Paris in the summer of 1950 and stayed until 1963, but after the first issue his associations were elsewhere. Chester appears in the Café de Tournon photograph. Henry Charles Hatcher appeared in the first three issues but was he ever *in* Paris? Likewise Burford went home after his Fullbright year. Ernst Fuchs, reviewed by Lougee in #4 (Summer 1953) as a young Viennese painter living in Paris – he had been one of the community of artists Trocchi knew in 1950 and 1951 before starting the magazine, when Betty was with him – hints at another, entirely different circle of friends, perhaps the ones whose exhibition drew Trocchi and Lougee together.

Others, only names to me: John P Marquand Jr (writing as John Phillips), John Coleman (the business manager for #5, Autumn 1953), John Stevenson (the business manager for #6, Autumn 1954) and W Baird Bryant (who first appears as an associate editor in 1954).

Merlin people and others at a reception, December 1953 [Scott credit H Riemens] Back row left to right: George Plimpton, Corneille, Richard Seaver, Mary Smith (Gaïte Frogé's assistant in the English Bookshop), Patrick Bowles, Gaïte Frogé, Jane Lougee. Front row left to right: Christopher Logue, Austryn Wainhouse, Christopher Middleton.

The best thing which *Merlin* did was to print Beckett. Seaver had begun this almost before there was a magazine, in the winter of 1951 after reading *Molloy*. *En attendant Godot* was yet unproduced and getting hold of Beckett was the first hard job. But the word was on the street, and Seaver's article (just about the first in English) appeared in number two, and they wrote some letters, finally and in the late fall Beckett showed up in Seaver's room with the manuscript of *Watt*, which he had given up thought of selling to anyone. This was also where Wainhouse and Girodias came in, Girodias being the essential French partner required by the government for foreign publishing ventures, and Collection Merlin the new imprint needed to reassure Beckett, who had no wish to associate with a pornographer. *Watt* appeared in 1953 follwing on the success of *Godot*, which somewhat overshadowed it (and Ionesco's *The Chairs*, also). They sold two thousand copies.

The *Merlin* folk in their dealings with Beckett are portrayed as bouncy and exuberent kids surrounding him like a pack of pups. Beckett was a shy, kindly man. The image does them credit.

Although nothing is said, I have the impression that the attitude of the *Paris Review* people was not especially warm. Peter Matthiessen, before he roped Plimpton into the project from Cambridge, had applied to be the London distributor of *Merlin* and been turned down. Given Matthiessen's CIA money and State Department connections (Plimpton lived at first in the tool shed of a house loaned to some other people by the diplomatic corps) a pairing with Trocchi seems not very workable, anyway. But as the magazines were by that time the only two players, they rubbed along. There is a group portrait taken outside the Café de Tournon (see route stop 45), which was a *Paris Review* hangout near where a number of them lived – Roditi, Garrigue, Kunitz and Broughton in the Hôtel Helvetia, Styron and Matthiessen to the south in Montparnasse. (Plimpton lived more upscale in the Hôtel Pont Royal.)

Merlin and Paris Review people outside the Café Tournon, 1954. Front row left to right: Wilma Howard, Jane Lougee and Fuki, Muffy Wainhouse, Jean Garrigue. Second row: Christopher Logue, Richard Seaver (looking over Logue's shoulder), Evan S Connell (with the moustache), Niccolo Tucci, unidentified woman, Peter Huyn, Alftred Chester, Austryn Wainhouse. Third row: Eugene Walter, George Plimpton, William Pène du Bois, James Broughton, William Gardner Smith, Harold Witt.

Inspecting the credits supplied by Plimpton one finds *Merlin* characterized as short-lived (and hence clearly less important) and it's publisher's name misspelled as "Jane Logue" while Seaver's subsequent standing requires him to be here merely "associated" with the magazine. Trocchi isn't present. Fuki isn't noticed.

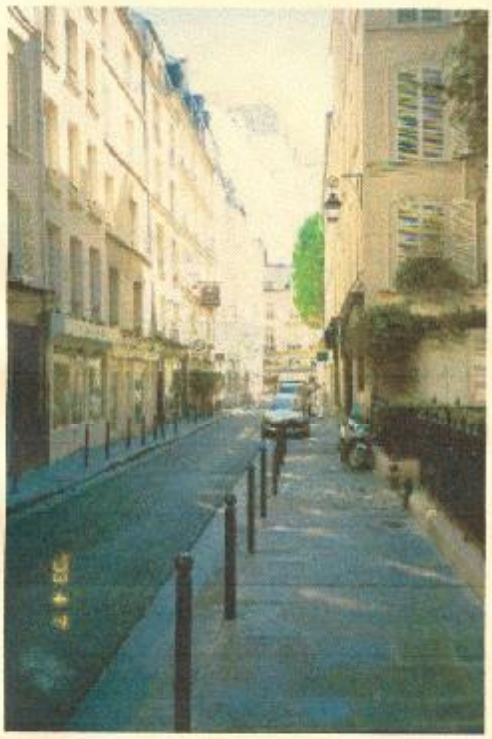
The Café Tournon now.

Living conditions

Living conditions are one of the hardest things to imagine about other times. One tours some grand palace in Vienna or rural England or somewhere and has it pointed out the corner where, among the frescos and faience, the befrocked men went to piss on the floor. I never know what to make of such stories. So Ferlinghetti decides in 1948 to move out of his *chambre en famille* for something a little cheaper. A few years later Mason Hoffenberg and his wife Elie Fauré, a translator working for the U.N., are living with their child it would seem *en bourgeois* a little to the south in the rue Henri Barbusse. Ferlinghetti's place is unheated and they have to keep a stewpot going all winter for warmth – what? on a campfire on the floor? – my first apartment was like that – whereas Hoffenberg's concièrge presumably didn't lock him out if he came home after ten o'clock as Ferlinghett's did. You can't tell for looking from the street. When Jane Lougee showed up in late 1950 with $100 a month from her father she moved into the rue Leconte de Lisle in Auteuil [left] and started work as a secretary. Pretty quiet, pretty nice. Pretty soon she'd moved to Saint Germain to a "one-star bedsit" Southern called it, the Hôtel Verneuil. Sounds like a dump, but one star means only no toilet. Trocchi says he met Christopher Logue in the stairwell of a run-down hotel in the rue de la Huchette. Cadaverous man in a dirty duffle coat. All hôtels seem to be run-down. Paris was run-down. People were

The rue Henri Barbusse

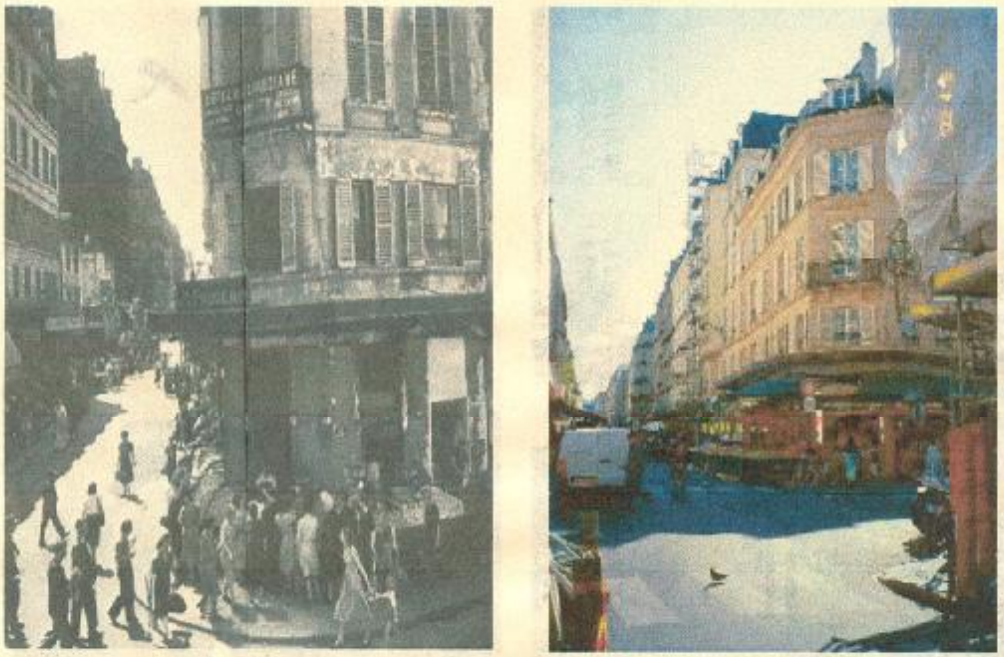
The rue Vaugirard. n89, once inhabited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, is halfway along on the right side.



Left: the rue de Verneiul. The hôtel is located at the sign. Above: Jane Lougee and Fuki in her room at the hôtel.

trying to get by. Rationing ended four years ago. Everything sputters. Cazalis and Gréco live in the Hôtel Louisiane in 1948 where Simone de Beauvoir lived five years ago. In French novels of the time you hear complaints about the grayness of life but also casual remarks about sitting on a street bench on a warm evening while the good sound of jazz floats up from below. What squalor? Apart from a necessary component of starving artists' lives, that is. And then there is the inscrutable business of actually living there, not stopping by for a few months before moving on to the Midi. It's the people who live there who are annoyed when an all-night pharmacy is replaced by a Versace store. It's the

Juliette Gréco in bed in the Hôtel Louisianne about 1950. [Vian p204 credit Georges Dudognon.



The Hôtel Louisianne then and now. [Left 1950 Vian p34 credit Doisneai-Rapho]

people who have to make ends meet who take the places with no elevator and a stopped-up toilet.

Workpoints

On the relations between the French scenes and the foreigners: Vian's jazz youth scene and the radical/hip Trocchi for example. Appear to be none. Why? Timing? Money?

On the fading of scenes.

On Richard Seaver's subsequent career as a Grove Press editor (the influential *Evergreen Review*) and translator.

On subsequent careers generally.

On the Old Navy bar.

On the mysterious Grap d'Or and "pinball."

Regarding Les Frères Jacques and Le Compagne Grenier-Hussenot, are there eye-witness accounts of these shows? We need to know more about satirical reviews, music halls, and "shows," and about the tourist consumption of shows. This kind of entertainment was seemingly not something the Merlin people did: was it tourist fare only? Was it too expensive? Merlin people seem not to have gone to the clubs, either. And why did the police crack down on the jazz clubs?