



“One is not born, but rather becomes, a bar”

Our apologies to Simone de Beauvoir for this paraphrase, but it is nonetheless true that a few ice cubes, an aged malt and a bit of fine wood do not a literary bar make.

First, it needs a setting.

Built as a home in 1750, this house greeted many writers such as Chateaubriand.

It was converted into a hotel in 1815.

Since then, a mysterious agreement has tied a link beyond time between literature and those who write it, Publish it and comment it.

As one would observe the rites and habits of large animals by going to their watering holes, each generation with a passion for arts, literature and those who write it has run to approach the impassioned and inevitably passionate world of literature.

Between the world wars, the Pont Royal bar became one of the very first cocktail bar in Paris. Mixing alcohol? What a strange idea, or rather, what a funny idea. The killjoys were offended while Francis Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda made themselves at home, attracting all the “Americans in Paris” who introduced these original drinks to delighted Parisians.

Curnonsky, “prince of the gastronomes”, and Apollinaire discussed gastronomy while Degas, almost blind by that time, stopped by to be dazzled by champagne bubbles.

Malraux, in between trips, in between conquests, made it his Paris home port.

Picasso, already well known, and Dali, a beginning artist, ran into each other, but acted as if they did not recognize one another.

Tourists from New York savoured alcohol that was not only rare but also forbidden in the United States because of the Prohibition.

After World War II, artists wanted to live “bigger, stronger and higher,” transforming Saint-Germain-des-Prés et its cellars into the noisy and wordy volcano of the World.

Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were its flags; Boris Vian, its standard. Jazz, whiskey, “zazou” clothing provoked the middle-class; a passion for living and loving defined, then and forever, the area.

Tired of being viewed as freak's fair, the intellectuals decided to move away from the commotion and curiosity of journalists and onlookers and settled in the Pont-Royal bar, then located in the basement of the hotel.

Thanks to elective affinities, the "large animals" found, at the bar, the future kings of the jungle of the publishing world.

It would be futile to try to name them all: from Alphonse Boudard to Jacques Prévert, from Montherlant, who lived next door, to Garcia Marquez . . . from Queneau to Mauriac . . . The walls still remember debates on the Nouveau Roman, storms after literary prizes were awarded, defeats, victories.

*Here, Francis, the legendary barman, heard bedroom secrets or alliances. These sleepless nights awake with stirring papers, these restless inks, watched our word heroes shout at each other between tables
Romance bloomed, hatred too.*

The hotel above cheerfully greeted Arthur Miller, Elliot, Capote, Sartre, Camus, Chandler, Gary and others whom discretion forbids us to name.

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