

The Tender Hour of Twilight: Paris in the '50s, New York in the '60s: A Memoir of Publishing's Golden Age

Richard Seaver

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From Beckett to Burroughs, *The Story of O* to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, an iconic literary troublemaker tells the colorful stories behind the stories

Richard Seaver came to Paris in 1950 seeking Hemingway's moveable feast. Paris had become a different city, traumatized by World War II, yet the red wine still flowed, the cafés bustled, and the Parisian women found American men exotic and heroic. There was an Irishman in Paris writing plays and novels unlike anything anyone had ever read?but hardly anyone was reading them. There were others, too, doing equivalently groundbreaking work for equivalently small audiences. So when his friends launched a literary magazine, *Merlin*, Seaver knew this was his calling: to bring the work of the likes of Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, and Jean Genet to the world. The Korean War ended all that?the navy had paid for college and it was time to pay them back. After two years at sea, Seaver washed ashore in New York City with a beautiful French wife and a wider sense of the world than his compatriots. The only young literary man with the audacity to match Seaver's own was Barney Rosset of Grove Press. A remarkable partnership was born, one that would demolish U.S. censorship laws with inimitable joie de vivre as Seaver and Rosset introduced American readers to *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, Henry Miller, *Story of O*, William Burroughs, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and more. As publishing hurtles into its uncertain future, *The Tender Hour of Twilight* is a stirring reminder of the passion, the vitality, and even the glamour of a true life in literature.



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