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# Rue Ordener, Rue Labat (Stages)



## Synopsis

Rue Ordener, Rue Labat is a moving memoir by the distinguished French philosopher Sarah Kofman. It opens with the horrifying moment in July 1942 when the author's father, the rabbi of a small synagogue, was dragged by police from the family home on Rue Ordener in Paris, then transported to Auschwitz "the place," writes Kofman, "where no eternal rest would or could ever be granted." It ends in the mid-1950s, when Kofman enrolled at the Sorbonne. The book is as eloquent as it is forthright. Kofman recalls her father and family in the years before the war, then turns to the terrors and confusions of her own childhood in Paris during the German occupation. Not long after her father's disappearance, Kofman and her mother took refuge in the apartment of a Christian woman on Rue Labat, where they remained until the Liberation. This bold woman, whom Kofman called M<sup>lle</sup> M<sup>lle</sup>, undoubtedly saved the young girl and her mother from the death camps. But Kofman's close attachment to M<sup>lle</sup> M<sup>lle</sup> also resulted in a rupture between mother and child that was never to be fully healed. This slender volume is distinguished by the author's clear prose, the carefully recounted horrors of her childhood, and the uncommon poise that came to her only with the passage of many years.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kofman, a French philosopher and the author of *Freud and Fiction* and *Nietzsche and Metaphor*,

began this recollection of her childhood years during the occupation of Paris in January 1943. In October 1994, she killed herself. This is not a deeply emotional book, although the subject is and Kofman clearly found it difficult to deal with her memories of those years. Encountering a schoolmate who stood up for her against anti-Semitic bullies, she couldn't bring herself to mention the event or her gratitude until a second encounter decades later. After Kofman's father was rounded up in July 1942, never to return, her mother sent her six children to hiding places in the country. Kofman, however, was a clingy, sickly child who, when she wasn't trying to escape, refused to eat food that wasn't kosher, a stubborn tribute to her father that threatened those around her. Eventually she was brought back to Paris and her mother, but when they had to flee their home on the Rue Ordener, Kofman's mother turned to the "Lady on the Rue Labat," who had once been their neighbor. There Kofman was torn between her increasingly difficult Jewish mother and the slightly obsessive coddling of the Christian woman whom Kofman called Meme. Kofman's rather dispassionate record of the occupation isn't one of rationing and hiding, though both are involved. Instead it is the story of the dissolution of a family and the end of childhood, set against a background that neither the adults of the story and certainly not the child could begin to comprehend. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Kofman, a philosopher-theoretician of art, philosophy, literature, and psychoanalysis at the Sorbonne until she died by her own hand in 1994, describes the horrors that she and her family endured in Paris during the German occupation after her father, a rabbi, was dragged from their home on the Rue Ordener and deported to Auschwitz on July 16, 1942. (He was bludgeoned to death there with a pickax a year later by a Jewish butcher turned Kapo.) Throughout the occupation, Kofman and her mother lived on the Rue Labat, protected by a Christian woman whom Kofman calls Meme. Meme detached Kofman from her mother and from Judaism, but she saved them both from Nazi raids. The memoir ends with Kofman's enrollment at the Sorbonne in the mid-1950s. Published in France in 1994, this short, gripping memoir, adeptly translated, offers a vivid account of one person's struggle in Vichy France. Recommended for all libraries. Bob Ivey, Univ. of Memphis Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Short, graphic, not easy to put down.

Mildly inspiring

Perfect ..... I was taking a class at Rhodes College and was requested to get a copy of this book for one of our discussions. It worked great.....

i placed the order on a tuesday night and the book was here thursday, super fast delivery even though it was just standard AND excellent condition!!

This is a slim volume from a French philosopher writing of her childhood as a Jew in France during World War II. She writes from the perspective of an adult who clearly still is ill-at-ease with her history, specifically her choosing of a Christian woman who help hide her over her mother; her violation of Jewish law taught her by her rabbi father. This volume does not speak to common experience, not even French Jewish experience; rather it is the experience of Sarah Kofman as seen in retrospect. What is most evident is the lack of resolution regarding her past - the reader appreciates the difficulty with which she apparently tells her story.

The book would have been much better if it was longer and followed a theme longer than just a couple of pages. The different selections started out very interestingly but since the material never was in any depth it was hard to follow. I will explore other books the author has written and see what they are like.

I am aware of many authors who died voluntarily. The hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Nietzsche's birth on October 15, 1994, will have special significance for me as being the date of Sarah Kofman's death. Rue Ordener, Rue Labat, an autobiographical account of her childhood, was written shortly before Sarah Kofman was sixty years old. It is easy for me to be impressed by Sarah Kofman because she was a woman who seemed to be interested in the same kind of gag reflex humor that appeals to me. Certain social situations demand silence about certain things. When the Republicans were coming to Saint Paul (an attempt to put lipstick on a pig's eye) for their convention, I realized that the police in Saint Paul would not want them to hear me shouting my opinions about tax cuts, war, and a ten trillion dollar national debt which is rolling in money in the wrong direction. I split, left town, and tried to crack myself up from a distance. Now that I'm back, and Sarah Palin has become the ideal joke vehicle for the things that Republicans enjoy mocking (like WHY IS THIS MAN LAUGHING? Nixon running for Vice President with Ike in 1952), it is easier for me to be open about Sarah Kofman being the hot white chick philosophy expert in Freud and Nietzsche for France during my lifetime, because she had the kind of familiarity with ultimate issues

that World War II made an impression on Jews in Europe that will never quit. The gag reflex is the ultimate contrast to the kind of piffle that praise for an old goat with America first policies is standing for as the national debt jumps from ten trillion dollars to twelve trillion dollars in the immediate future. Sarah Kofman could be nasty by telling how Rabbi Bereck Kofman was beaten to death in Aushwitz because, instead of working, he wanted to spend the Sabbath praying for everyone on all sides. Religion is a hell of a context in that kind of world, and old goats don't make it much better.

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