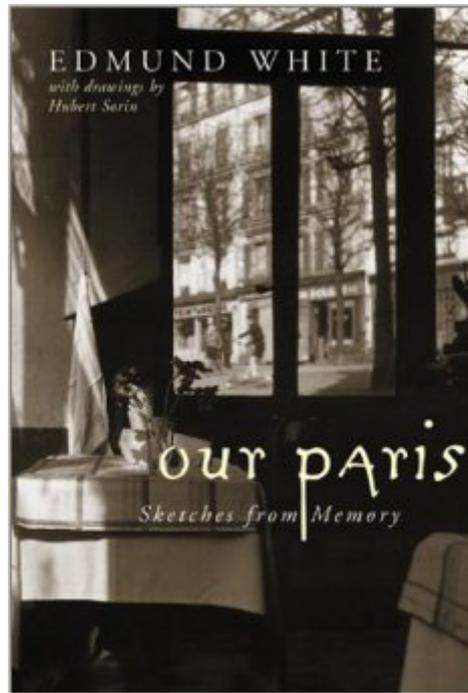


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# Our Paris: Sketches From Memory



## Synopsis

What happens when one of our most celebrated writers combines talents with a French artist and architect to capture life in their Parisian neighborhood? The result is a lighthearted, gently satiric portrait of the heart of Paris -- including the Marais, Les Halles, the two islands in the Seine, and the ChÃ©telet -- and the people who call it home. It is an enchantingly varied world, populated not only by dazzling literati and ultrachic couturiers and art dealers but also by poetic shopkeepers, grandmotherly prostitutes, and, ever underfoot, an irrepressible basset hound named Fred. The foibles and eccentricities of these sometimes outrageous, always memorable individuals are brought to life with unflinching wit and affection. Below the surface of the sparkling humor in *Our Paris*, there is a tragic undercurrent. While Hubert Sorin was completing this work, he was nearing the end of his struggle with AIDS. The book is a tribute to the loving spirit with which the authors banished somberness and celebrated the pleasures of their life together.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I love deceptive books. Example: *Our Paris*, by Edmund White and Hubert Sorin, is ostensibly a series of short essays, written and illustrated in a fairly direct style, pertaining to life in the city. But in a stunning, disarming preface, White alerts us to the real subtext: his partner's slow death from AIDS. It's this subtext that transforms the book from a pleasant travelogue to a devastating account of loss. Lurking beneath the book's shimmering surfaces, and within its numerous lacunae, is the emotional life of a couple threatened by the fast-approaching specter of death. An attentive reading of White's text and Hubert Sorin's illustrations reveals the *mauvaise foi*, the daily negotiations, the

implicit contract of domestic denial that enables an endangered couple to keep death at bay for just a little longer. *Our Paris* looks slight, as if it were merely a pleasant evening's worth of travel anecdotes and gossip. But if you take yourself into this book's confidence, it will reveal unexpected secrets.

I picked up this little book for a return flight from Paris to LA. It looked like perfect plane reading -- short, gossipy, topical. And although it lived up to each of those expectations, the devastation implicit in the book (and explicit at the end) hit hard. The book is not easily forgettable -- and probably no less memorable for the passengers and crew of American Airlines flight 45 who watched me become a sniffling, tear-stained disaster. It's very intimate, shockingly un-French. White and Sorin invite you into their lives. You feel as if you're at a dinner party listening to them recount (even bicker a little about) their recent mundane adventures. But this intimacy also means that you feel very close to the heartbreaking loss that is the real subject of the book. It's a beautiful, touching book. The illustrations complement the text (or the text complements the illustrations) perfectly. But if you want to avoid the mess entirely, try *The Flaneur*.

This is a sweet collection of short pieces, quirky and personal, about a tiny Parisian neighborhood, Paris itself, the French, lots of friends, and a great dog named Fred. Most of all: about Edmund White and his lover Hubert Sorin. Economical yet enjoyably gossipy, kind-hearted, opinionated, informative. Achingly sad, though, because Hubert is dying of AIDS, and in fact does die at the book's end. Definitely worth reading -- especially for fans of Edmund White. Engagingly illustrated by Sorin, who was trained in architecture and took up drawing when he became ill.

A wonderful vision of Paris, one that makes me desperately want to go back and look up all the places and people described in the book. As others have stated, the backdrop is one of sadness, but lighthearted descriptions of all the characters and landmarks that flitted in and out of their daily lives make this an easy, fast, and delightful read. The illustrations are equally fun and lighthearted, and I enjoyed playing "Where's Fred?" each time I reached a new picture.

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