



# Left Bank

*Kate Muir*

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**A devilishly sneaky, chic, and ironic peek at the glittering inhabitants of Paris's most exclusive neighborhood**

Olivier and Madison Malin have what most celebrity magazines would call the perfect life. Olivier is a telegenic version of Sartre: philosopher, gourmand, and media personality—the darling of Paris's most exclusive cafés, as well as the darling of more than one mistress. And Madison's celebrity has eclipsed even her husband's. An American film star turned Parisian It girl, Madison has buried her Texas upbringing—along with a few years from her true age—beneath the trappings of an exquisitely decorated salon, an impeccable French accent, and a collection of couture gowns. Together, Olivier and Madison are the toast of Paris's neighborhood of neighborhoods, the Left Bank, where the perfect couple and their friends indulge in fine wines, bon mots, and some exceptional cheeses.

Everything looks flawless, if a touch pretentious. But when their precocious trophy daughter Sabine goes missing at a European mega-amusement park, her self-centered parents are finally forced to focus on something other than their own reflections.

With the sting of a good Camembert, Kate Muir's fiction debut is a sophisticated, fun, and delightfully satirical look at family life along Paris's Left Bank that will have readers of all ages hungry for more.

## Left Bank Details

Date : Published July 20th 2006 by Viking Adult (first published January 1st 2006)

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Author : Kate Muir

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# From Reader Review Left Bank for online ebook

## Sean Wilson says

A book on a highly narcissistic, self-obsessed family in Paris. My wife and I have had the unfortunate pleasure, although a short stint, of working for a rich family who are exactly like the characters in this novel. Despite the nicely-described Parisian setting, this is an ultimately boring read about characters living a vacuous existence.

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## Rachel says

“Left Bank” has real promise, though it didn’t entirely deliver. There’s a great setting, of course, and fairly interesting characters. What separates a book like this from being literature, and leaves it in the chic lit category, is what Muir does (and doesn’t do) with these characters. I enjoyed the progress of the nanny and the American actress-turned-French celebrity, though I felt the philosopher/philanderer was left rather flat in comparison. This was an entirely enjoyable quick read, just not the most intelligent bit of fiction you’re likely to find.

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## Amy says

So. The cover is very pretty and I bought it for a few pence, so all is not lost. But - no. No, this was not for me. Maybe I should I have realised it wasn't going to be something I would love when the enticing quote on the front was from the Daily Mail. "I don't expect to find a more exquisitely written or enjoyable book this year!"

Well. How about Kafka on the Shore by Haruki Murakami, which also came out in 2006? Or The Brief History of the Dead by Kevin Brockmeier? Or Black Swan Green - one of my all-time favourite books - by David Mitchell? Or blimey, I don't know... the first Twilight book? Read that instead.

I think this is a little tongue-in-cheek, but I can't really tell. Two-dimensional caricatures of rich, beautiful, vain, boring, foolish and utterly ridiculous people are not really my thing. There is an affair. People are bored with each other. Money is spent. Children are ignored. You know the score.

If I've sold it to you - and I'm sure I have - you can have my copy.

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## Jessorella says

This book was lovely to read in the garden in the warm springtime weather. It has some beautiful descriptions of Paris, cuisine, architecture and countryside and I always love a book that paints beautiful pictures with its words. The characters, however, I’m afraid I couldn’t warm to quite as much - although I did like the turnaround in Madison’s character arc in the third act of the book. I didn’t find the book to be

hugely page-turnerish, but it was nice to read.

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### **Susan Leonard says**

I picked this up second hand at a charity sale, and thought it might be interesting as I have visited Paris twice.

The story started well, and introduced some complex, interesting characters, the writing reminding me of Jojo Moyes. Regrettably the rest of the book did not live up to this early promise. By midpoint I was getting bored, nothing was happening and the development of the characters began to border on caricature. The final stretch improved with some more action, and an ending which wrapped up the storyline.

Mentioned in the story were parts of Paris I have visited, but disappointingly - especially as the author has written a non-fiction guide to Paris - I got no sense of 'being in', or what it might be like to 'live in', Paris .

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### **Lisbeth says**

"Left Bank" by Kate Muir. It is an easy enough read about a fashionable couple, Madison and Olivier, living on the left bank in Paris. They are both successful people, she an actress and he a philosopher. Very busy with their own careers they have hardly time for their daughter Sabine. Into their lives enters nanny Anna.

It starts with a family visit to Disneyland, Paris and a dramatic event. The story leaves us there to take us back in time to introduce us to the characters, their lives and loves. It is a typically French story, and it takes us to wonderful places around Paris that you just long to visit yourself. It turns out that the happy, fashionable couple is not that happy after all. The title of this book could as well have been "keeping up appearances" because that is what their lives are about.

Both Madison and Olivier are now in their mid-forties and the popularity of their younger selves more difficult to keep up. Then something happens (this is where we catch up events from the Prologue) that makes, at least Madison realise, that there might be more important thing in life than keeping your body and face in perfect condition. In a way Olivier also realises, but it is more difficult for him to adjust, at least for a longer time. What is life without the exiting lunch meeting with your lover in a small hotel?

On the front cover it says that it is "Intoxicating, witty and delicious, like Paris itself..." and that is true. It is a charming story, very Parisian, but with dark undertones on how it is to grow older and having to realise what is important in life and the necessity to adjust your life style accordingly. Which does not necessarily leads to a lesser life. I liked the book and it is perfect as an easy summer read.

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### **Maryem Ben Mansour says**

I liked this book as it really portrayed how we all are self centered. The end is not a perfect one nor the core of the story. Thank you Muir.

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**george says**

Olivier and Madison Malin are France's golden couple--she a former Texan turned successful French actress, he the best philosopher of the day. The actuality of their lives, however, is not as glamorous as the magazines depict. They have grown apart and the only thing that connects them is their seven-year-old daughter, Sabine. Then one day, on a family outing to an amusement park, Sabine disappears and the couple are forced to come together.

This book is not good. In fact, I hated it. The characters are absolutely horrible and self-centered. The only one I liked was Sabine. I was counting down the pages almost from the get-go, hoping that it would improve. It didn't. The cover is the only thing I liked about it.

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**Stefani says**

Nope, not a fan at all. Will get rid of my copy.

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**Abbie says**

Certainly not a favourite, yet mindless enough to tear through on a lazy day off.

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**Maire Naughton says**

A modern comedy of manners - light hearted engaging read about an American actress and French philosopher and their less than perfect marriage

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**Brianna says**

4.5 stars.

I definitely wasn't expecting this book. I read it on a fluke, and was completely sucked in. It wasn't until the last few chapters that I liked any of the characters apart from the stuffy Malin couple's daughter, Sabine. This was the strange thing about the book. My lack of attachment allowed me to be a sort of outside viewer looking in, unaffected by the scandalous way the couple lived their life. Had I cared about Madison, I would have been revolted by Olivier's constant affairs. Instead, I enjoyed having a perspective into their lavish, pretentious, ridiculous life.

I was so happy with the character development by the end of the book, especially Madison's. She came out as my favourite character, when I had initially despised her. I was disappointed in Anna and unsurprised with Olivier, but I was very happy that Sabine could live a better life.

I really enjoyed the glam and ritz of the book. I found myself looking up a lot of the places mentioned; it was nice to learn about new places. As well, the little tidbits of upscale Paris life- the gilded frames, trips to ridiculously priced cheese shops, and the passions of Parisian food lovers was excellent.

All in all, a fun read.

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### **Fontella says**

As one who is a self-confessed Francophile, I'm always drawn to books that either have Paris or France or a suggestion of both in the title & it was the case for me picking up Kate Muir debut novel *The Left Bank*.

From the opening lines you immediately realise that this is a story of a crumbling marriage. It is however more than that. It is also an insight into the Parisian haute bourgeoisie.

Olivier and Madison Malin are the darlings of Parisian society, she an American actress trying her best to be French & he the good looking & charming philosopher whose appetite for food & women is overshadowed by his ego.

Throw in an English nanny, a Polish housekeeper, Chechen baristas, an all watching religiously devout concierge & the Malin's precocious seven year daughter Sabine into the mix & cultural fireworks ensue.

Muir's insider knowledge of Paris comes to the fore & while the characters aren't exactly heartwarming they are so Parisian in outlook that they are relatable.

*The Left Bank* is a delightful & refreshing commentary on French society & manners & I for one will never quite look at Christian Louboutin heels in the same way again.

If you can't afford that Parisian holiday this story will transport you there.

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### **Ilse says**

I liked how the story started and expected the missing of Sabine to be solved at the end. To my surprise it was already solved somewhere halfway. That was unexpected. I wondered where the story would go from there. It was a good read but not something I would read again. I thought the parents be very unlikable.

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### **Jill says**

This was more like 3.75 stars for me. I enjoyed the Paris setting very much.

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