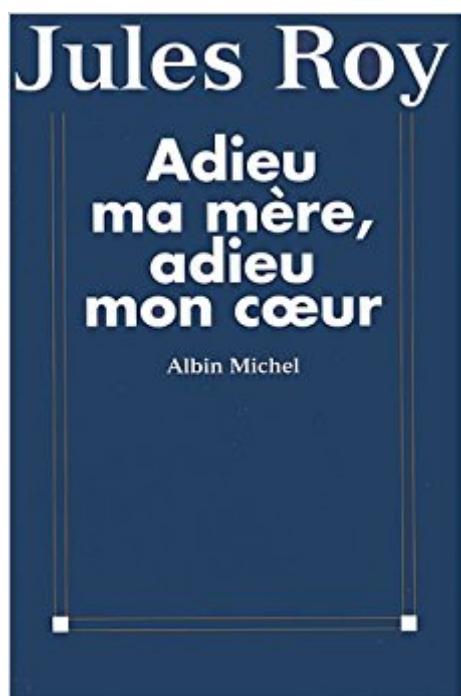


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Adieu Ma Mere, Adieu Mon Co Eur (Critiques, Analyses, Biographies Et Histoire Litteraire) (French Edition)



Synopsis

" Drôle d'idée à mon âge d'aller fleurir la tombe de ma mère à Sidi-Moussa, au sud d'Alger. Ma mère n'a plus peur des Arabes et je n'ai personne à ménager. Comme pas mal d'autres, j'ai lutté pour que cette terre qui ne nous appartenait pas soit rendue à ceux qui l'habitaient autrefois. Entre la France et l'Algérie existe un sentiment trouble et violent, vaguement coupable. Aux Algériens, nous avons apporté l'Occident et quelque chose de plus. Résultat : ils s'égorgent entre eux. Pas tous. À présent nous avons les mêmes ennemis. J'espérais retourner à Rovigo où j'ai été baptisé en 1907. C'est trop dangereux. À L'Arba aussi. Partout les ponts sont coupés, partout on peut vous tuer. La ferme où j'ai vécu enfant n'existe plus, le cimetière est le seul endroit de la plaine où l'on peut rencontrer des Français. Sur la tombe de ma mère, j'ai dit à mon compagnon, un pied-noir, ancien activiste, et aux Arabes qui nous protégeaient : "Allez, ouste, on s'en va." Si j'avais seulement pu verser une larme. Une seule."

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Customer Reviews

Text: French

It was Thomas Wolfe who made the subject statement an aphorism, if not a cliché in American thought. Wolfe was speaking of Asheville, NC, and mainly of the dislocations that occur over a span of time. Wolfe was always able to actually return to Asheville; he could stroll its streets in peace, and see the house in which he was raised. But imagine if you were born in a place whose name has

changed, and was in the grips of a savage civil war? Jules Roy was born in Rovigo, which is now called Bougara, on the Mitidja plain, 20 km south of Algiers, in the year 1907. In 1995, at the age of 88, he decided to go "home" and lay some roses on his mother's grave. This book is that story... as well as much else. Roy was born a "love child;" his mother, who was married to a policeman, had an affair with a school teacher in Rovigo. Like many French colonials, he was quite poor in his youth, a point that is often lost, and which Marguerite Duras makes so well in her excellent book, "The Lover." He attended boarding school with another pied-noir who would become a writer, Albert Camus. To escape his poverty, and perhaps his "illegitimate" past, he joined the military, and became a pilot. After the debacle of 1940 for the French military, he was in Algeria, a supporter of Marshall Petain, but eventually went over to DeGaulle. He joined the RAF, flew numerous raids over Germany, including the infamous fire-bombings of Dresden. After the war, he gained acclaim, but perhaps not the approbation of his comrades in the military, for his sardonically entitled book, "The Happy Valley," an account of those bombing raids. In part, he essential said that this raids would have constituted "war crimes" if the Allies had lost; yes, such is the relative application of justice. He did stay in the military, but finally resigned in 1953, over the issue of French use of torture in Indochina. His moral courage was rewarded, by those who "live on the other side of the river," when they approved a memorial he requested to the French dead at Dien Bien Phu. And the Algerians, it seems, did something equally astonishing for him. At the beginning of his trip, he says: "My dear mother. My mother to whom I preferred justice...who had given me life in the theme of rebellion. Who had taught me to say: "No." It is a much better formulation of Camus' statement, when he won the Nobel Prize, which Roy repeats, verbatim, much later in the book: "he preferred his mother to justice." Roy does not place that statement within the context it was made, but seems to have learned from it. This book is not really about the Camus - Roy relationship, but he does go on to indicate one apparent major difference: Roy supported independence for Algeria, Camus did not, for among other reasons, "since there never was an Algerian nation." Roy freely admits that his mother was a hard-core racist, as are so many poor whites in similar situations, and that after the events at Setif, in 1954, they argued about the future for the "natives." Roy's life, as well as this book, reflects the dynamics of Western - Islamic relations, so it is richly ironic that he spent his final days at VÃ©zelay, "la colline sacrÃ©e" as the sign on A-6 puts it, the sacred hill. It was there that he cut the rose from his garden to carry to his mother's grave, and it was also there that St. Bernard preached and aroused the masses to "liberate" the Holy Land from the Muslims in 1146, initiating the Second Crusade. And then consider the respect the "natives", the Algerians had for Roy's moral courage. In 1995, they are in the grips of a savage civil war, with whole villages, on one side and the other,

being annihilated, men, women, children. The FIS (the "beards", the fundamentalists) hold much of the countryside, including the Mitidja plain; the secular military holds not much more than Algiers, and their bases. But for this "old white guy", who has a whim, they provided two armored cars, and a platoon of well-armed elite soldiers (called "ninjas") so that he can say a final farewell, yes, adieu, to his mother, and the place that still contains his heart. The pied-noir graveyard was dilapidated, but not desecrated. An insight as to why they might be so accommodating is that he felt it quite important to visit the grave of Meftah, his childhood caregiver, and the family's servant, and could quote from the Koran while at the grave. For more on his life, I'd recommend "Memoires barbares," his autobiography. Both these, as well as several of his other books, such as the account of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, are solid 5-star reads.

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