

[PDF] Love In A Dead Language

Lee Siegel - pdf download free book

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Author: Lee Siegel

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Description:

has done it. So have and . Now Lee Siegel joins the ranks of novelists who write novels that pretend not to be novels at all. *Love in a Dead Language*, for example, purports to be the work of one Professor Leopold Roth, and comprises both a translation of, and commentary on, the , as well as the professor's more personal annotations concerning his amorous yearnings for one of his students. Siegel himself appears in a foreword, protesting vigorously that "I would never permit my name to be associated with a book such as this." This squeamishness is understandable when it becomes clear the entire purpose for this translation is to aid Roth in seducing young Lalita Gupta while leading a study group in India. Seduction, betrayal, and eventually death all follow on one another's heels; when Roth rather abruptly dies midway through the "translation," Siegel refuses to finish it and the task is left to a graduate student, Anang Saighal. So now we have yet another author who is not Siegel adding another layer of commentary to both Roth's professional work *and* his private journals--contradicting, criticizing, footnoting, while at the same time revealing details about his own

unhappy life.

Though there's plenty of story in *Love in a Dead Language*--romance, transformation, and even a murder mystery--a magical delight in language in all its myriad forms is at its heart. From the academes of professional papers to the more intimate epistolary communications between friends, colleagues, husbands, and wives (letters between an earlier translator of the *Kama Sutra*, Richard Burton, and his wife--who later burned the translation--are included), Siegel--or is it Roth? or perhaps Saighal?--covers the gamut. Readers who love complicated plots, soaring language, etymological puzzles, and academic tomfoolery will have a ball with this playful instance of literary smoke and mirrors. --*Margaret Prior*

From Publishers Weekly "General observations, copulation, seduction, marriage, adultery, prostitutes, and erotic arcana," the seven subjects treated by the *Kamasutra*, are also the motifs of Siegel's whimsical farce. Presented as the unscholarly annotated version of the Indian erotic lexicon as translated by deceased professor of Asian studies Leopold Roth, the novel interpolates the commentary of Roth's skeptical literary executor and former student, Anang Saigha, with notes from ancient translators of the text. Roth's *Kamasutra* bears little resemblance to the original Sanskrit. It is, in fact, a hymn to entirely uninterested college senior Lalita Gupta, whom Roth construes as the vessel for all his romantic, Eastern fantasies. Ditsy, foul-mouthed Lalita cares nothing about her parents' native land, but to Roth she is a goddess, repository of the East's erotic and spiritual wisdom. Half-mad with love, Roth carries Lalita off to India for a "summer study course" (she's the only pupil) and seduces her in a hotel at Khajuraho where a famed erotic sculpture stands. Upon their return to L.A., Roth is suspended from teaching, Lalita's parents charge him with rape, and his wife, Sophia, a women's studies prof and chair of the sexual harassment committee, dumps him. While inserts and footnotes heighten the absurdity (the book is dense with cartoons, Hollywood memorabilia, news clips and 19th-century travelogues), Siegel's criticisms of orientalization and exoticism are serious. And Roth has more than just Lalita on his mind: his daughter Leila was murdered at the age of 12, leaving Roth, his wife and Leila's twin bereft. This multifaceted novel is also a whodunit, for Professor Roth died no natural death. His body was found in his office, hit from behind with a Sanskrit-English dictionary. While this ribald romp, satire on Westerners' spiritual hunger and sendup of academia may prove too rarefied and serpentine for some tastes, others will find it a sophisticated treat.

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