

[PDF] The Mysterious Flame Of Queen Loana

Umberto Eco, Geoffrey Brock - pdf download free book

Books Details:

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Description:

The premise of Umberto Eco's *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*, may strike some readers as laughably unpromising, and others as breathtakingly rich. A sixty-ish Milanese antiquarian bookseller nicknamed Yambo suffers a stroke and loses his memory of everything but the words he has read: poems, scenes from novels, miscellaneous quotations. His wife Paola fills in the bare essentials of his family history, but in order to trigger original memories, Yambo retreats alone to his ancestral home at Solara, a large country house with an improbably intact collection of family papers, books, gramophone records, and photographs. The house is a museum of Yambo's childhood, conveniently empty of people, except of course for one old family servant with a long memory--an apt metaphor for the mind. Yambo submerges himself in these artifacts, rereading almost everything he read as a school boy, blazing a meandering, sometimes misguided, often enchanting trail of words. Flares of recognition do come, like "mysterious flames," but these only signal that Yambo remembers something; they do not return that memory to him. It is like being handed a wrapped

package, the contents of which he can only guess.

Within the limitations of Yambo's handicap and quest, Eco creates wondrous variety, wringing surprise and delight from such shamelessly hackneyed plot twists as the discovery of a hidden room. Illustrated with the cartoons, sheet music covers, and book jackets that Yambo uncovers in his search, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* can be read as a love letter to literature, a layered excavation of an Italian boyhood of the 1940s, and a sly meditation on human consciousness. Both playful and reverent, it stands with and as among Eco's most successful novels. --*Regina Marler* --
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From Publishers Weekly When aging Italian book-dealer Yambo, hero of this engaging if somewhat bloodless novel of ideas, regains consciousness after a mysterious coma, he suffers a peculiar form of amnesia. His "public" memory of languages, everyday routines, history and literature remains intact, but his autobiographical memory of personal experiences—of his family, lovers, childhood, even his name—is gone. He can spout literary and cultural allusions on any topic, citing everything from *Moby-Dick* to *Star Trek*, but complains, "I don't have feelings, I only have memorable sayings." To recover his past, he repairs to his boyhood home to peruse a cache of memorabilia amassed in his youth during Mussolini's reign and WWII, consisting of comic books, schoolbooks, Fascist propaganda, popular music, romantic novels and his own poetry about an unattainable high school beauty. The setup allows semiotician and novelist Eco (*The Name of the Rose*, etc.) to indulge his passion for pulp materials by reproducing such objects as movie posters, song lyrics and a graphic novella rendering the Book of Revelation as a Flash Gordon melodrama, with intriguing asides on cognitive psychology and philosophy of mind thrown in. The result has a somewhat academic feel, but it's an absorbing exploration of how that most fundamental master-narrative, our memory, is pieced together from a bricolage of pop culture. Illus. *Author tour. (June)*
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