

Denis de Rougemont
Love in the Western World

Translated by Montgomery Belgion

This book was first published in France in 1939; an English translation appeared in 1940. It aroused immediate and widespread interest, and has since come to be recognized as a work of permanent importance. Because of war-time conditions, the first English edition was an abbreviation of the original French text. This second edition reproduces the whole of the French text as revised by the author, and includes much fresh material. In particular the section dealing with the Cathars, the troubadours and the Tristan legend has been largely rewritten, and the author regards this as the heart of the present version. There is also a new chapter based upon his observations during residence in the United States.

The problem with which the book deals is one that stands at the very center of our lives. The book has been described as "The History of the Rise, Decline and Fall of the Love Affair." Its theme is the historical paradox presented by the universal acceptance of marriage on the one hand, and on the other hand the enthralling attraction of romantic and passionate love that is outside marriage and socially and legally frowned upon. It begins by an examination of the legend of Tristan and Isolde, its origins in folklore, its development in medieval literature, its relation to the Doctrine of Love of the Provençal poets, its exploitation by Wagner. It compares the erotic language of Oriental poetry with that of Europe, and examines the parallels between human passion and mystical experience. It examines the significance of figures such as Don Juan and the Marquis de Sade, and discusses such matters as our contemporary attitude toward divorce, the Hollywood Ideal, eugenics, and the substitution of collective passion for individual passion as shown in the totalitarian urge toward war. In conclusion the author points to the final degradation of the myth and gives his verdict in favor of marriage.

Love In The Western World

Xiang Xie



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