
Charles Williams

All Hallows' Eve



Title: All Hallows' Eve

Author: Charles Williams

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Description

Williams had a genius for choosing strange themes for novels, making them believably suggestive of spiritual truths. *All Hallows' Eve* is the story of a man & woman whose love was so great it could bridge the gap of death; of evil so terrible as to be unmentionable, of a vision so beautiful it must be true.

For an account of Williams' views of the relations between dead & living we turn to his final novels, *Descent into Hell* ('37) & *All Hallows' Eve* ('45), which some claim to be the most sustained & exhaustive ghost stories in English literature. In them the dead are among the protagonists, active within their own world, coexistent with that of the living. His ghosts are nothing like the malign creatures who pounce upon their victims in the tales of M.R. James; they bear more resemblance to those portrayed by Margaret Olliphant or R.H. Benson, beings who exist in the world of the dead, who find themselves drawn back to expiate a sin or who make contact, extratemporally, with those among the living who can help them. But where he differs from writers such as these is in his portrayal of a world of supernatural moral law governing the interaction between two levels of being. For him the living & the dead exist within a single spiritual realm. He describes his supernatural world with extraordinary particularity. Instead of obtruding the ghostly element upon the life of everyday, he assumes that life into the supernatural dimension. It's impossible to banish his phantoms from our own world, because we find ourselves inhabiting theirs, subject to its laws. This is made clear in *All Hallows' Eve*, completed shortly before his death. In this strangest of all his novels he returns to his earlier concern with the validity & true nature of spiritual power.

Insightful reviews

Eli: Charles Williams more or less invented what we'd now call "urban fantasy", and was a huge influence on C.S. Lewis and Tolkien, but his dense, idiosyncratic writing and philosophical/theological obsessions make his books a little daunting. They're all worth the effort, but this one is probably the closest to a successful novel and it's a page-turner too-- sort of the "evil sorcerer, wandering ghosts and star-crossed lovers" story to end all such stories. There are some images that make your heart skip a beat, and others that sneak up and haunt you; he does like to wander off into pure lyric symbolism, and you have to accept that he will lose you from time to time.

About the theology-- like Lewis, Williams made Christianity central to all his work, but Christian fans of Lewis, be they conservative or liberal, might find Williams a little alarming; his sheer enthusiasm always hints at taking you down some unorthodox roads. (Frankly, I think that's true of Lewis too, but he just had a less wild-eyed persona and wasn't known for hanging out with occultists.) Just go with it; there's joy there.

Don Incognito: I was a literature major, trained to read novels the average reader wouldn't read, so I've probably never called a novel exhausting before; but that's what reading *All Hallows' Eve* was--exhausting. It's only about 275 pages, but it took me months to read, mostly because it demanded all my concentration and I often didn't have the energy.

The issue isn't the story, it's Charles Williams' questionable writing style. It very frequently segues into a dense, meandering pseudo-poetry that makes the narration unfocused and unnecessarily complex, and sometimes even obfuscates whatever is actually happening. It shows and tells simultaneously. If the novel hadn't been so written, it might be half the length. Like most or all of his friends in the Inklings, Williams was a poet as well as a novelist; and the entire book can serve as a cautionary tale of what a novel looks like when such a writer goes too far in mingling poetry with prose. It's a mess. *Descent Into Hell* (the first Williams work I read) is similarly written but shorter, and more focused and disciplined, and is the better novel for it.

I don't even have that much to say about the plot because I was too distracted by the writing style. But it involves a villain using Kabbalistic magic to gain illicit access to the world of the dead, which he hopes to gain some sort of secrets or power from--his goals are explained very vaguely.

Tara: More like a chess game of metaphysics cloaked in poetry than a novel. It's very beautiful, but I must admit more than a little bit was beyond me. Like everything Williams wrote, one must pay close attention, re-read things as many times as necessary, and sincerely be able to allow him to shatter conventional story-telling while still creating a story. Even with all that I can say Williams seems to have understood things I simply cannot. But his goodness radiates off the page, and is worth pursuing.

Suzannah: like any Williams's novels, *All Hallows' Eve* meshes a powerful plot with profound philosophical and theological meditation. Williams right away affirms the typical global and the non secular global at the back of it. just like the painter, Jonathan, who claims that he paints what he sees although "common statement and undeniable understanding", Williams may say that he easily writes approximately what's there. He may also have objected to his books being known as "fantasy"--yes, they're stories of normal humans becoming a member of a substantial conflict of non secular solid opposed to religious evil; but when you're a Christian you suspect in this, within the antithesis, already. Reads the remainder of my evaluate at my blog, within which I learn classic Novels

Micha: *All Hallows' Eve* is an awesome publication in that it explores either the query of 'what occurs should you die?' in addition to 'what is the connection among the lifeless and the living?'. the way in which that Williams interweaves relationships and spirituality is little short of genius. somebody who's even remotely drawn to mysticism will quite take pleasure in this book. A warning: it's very deep and extremely heavy and that i may think it being a bit obscure for those who weren't raised within the liturgical church. What I learned: The issues I discovered have been way more religious than rational. The e-book spoke to me as 'deep calls to deep'. i discovered myself for week afterwards wondering death, knowing and alluring it in a manner that I by no means sooner than experienced.

Stephen: you possibly can name it a ghost story. you possibly can name it a supernatural thriller. possible position it within the style of the "Left Behind" sequence or "The DaVinci Code" yet for its highbrow and literary qualities. Williams' language is a piece dense and his research of every character's reasons and innovations slows the unconventional down, however it is full

of such a lot of principles that it really is larger to delight in them than to gulp them and rush directly to the following little bit of action. Williams was once one among t... (show more)

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