

How the Dead Live

author: Will Self

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Synopsis

author	Will Self
readBy	Nancy Linari
inLanguage	english

Will Self possesses one of the greatest literary imaginations of any writer working today. *How the Dead Live* is his most extraordinary book, yet a novel that will challenge, entertain, and truly astonish.

Lily Bloom is an aging American transplanted to England who has lost her battle with cancer and lies wasting away at the Royal Ear Hospital. As her two daughters, lumpy Charlotte, who runs a hugely successful chain of stationery stores called Waste of Paper, and beautiful Natasha, a junkie buzz around her, and the nurses pump her full of morphine, Lily slides in and out of the present, taking us on a surreal, opinionated trip through the stages of a lifetime of lust and rage. A career girl in the 1940s, a sexed-up, tippling adulteress in the 1950s and '60s, a divorced PR flak in the 1970s and '80s, Lily presents us with a portrait of America and England over 60 years of riotous and unreal change.

And then it's over: Lily catches a cab with the aboriginal wizard Phar Lap Jones, her guide to the shockingly banal world of the dead. It's a world that is surreal but familiar, where she again works in PR and rediscovers how great smoking is, where her cohabitants include Rude Boy, the son who died at age nine and now swears a blue streak, and three eyeless, murmuring wraiths, the Fats composed of the pounds, literally the whole selves, she lost and gained over her lifetime. As Lily settles into her nonexistence, the most difficult challenge for this staunchly difficult woman is how to understand that she's dead, and how to leave the rest behind.

How the Dead Live is an unforgettable portrait of the human condition, the struggle with life and with death. It's a novel that will disturb and provoke, the work, in the words of one British reviewer, "of a novelist writing at the height of his powers".

Reader's comments

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