

# Reviews of *He Who Shall Remain Shameless*

*He Who Shall Remain Shameless*  
a novel

by David Ewald

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Reviews:

“Written in the first person, *He Who Shall Remain Shameless* follows our hero through a collection of related short stories, tracking down (at the behest of the internet) ghosts of those who should be better remembered. Each encounter leads him into greater conflict with the shadowy Meritocrat, and relationships which may or may not be to his advantage.

One of the perils of reading any book is that the writing will be awful. The characters poorly-defined, the dialogue painful to read, the situations lacking credibility. There are plenty of books out there which are a chore and a challenge to read, and even more challenging to find something positive to write about.

On the other side, one of the greatest rewards one can find is a hidden jewel. Something which is delightful to read, which one can get lost in. No ill-judged moments which jar the reader out of the story. Dialogue which flows smoothly. Characters which the reader can identify and invest in. Everything just works, and the only thing which is frustrating or upsetting is to see that no one is aware of it.

*He Who Shall Remain Shameless* is, without question, the latter. It is a wonderful piece. From a technical point of view, the writing is smooth and easy, and reads delightfully. The characters are all well written, easily identifiable, etc. The dialogue flows. Everything is a charm.

On the surface, the story of the obsessed hero, driven to bring recognition to the ghosts of those he believes really should have it works well. Dipping a little beneath the surface, subtly done, the author works in obsessions and madness, delusion and tragedy. Looking at memory and value, and how we choose to be seen/how others see us. It is wonderfully well written, with a sense of whimsy throughout.

There are some lovely moments of sly humour (particularly with a key name). The history of characters is well-researched. Everything works, and works well.

Is it a ghost story? A mystery? Suspense, horror, comedy, tragedy? A little of everything, perhaps. I try not to draw comparisons to other works in these pages, but the one which sprang most readily to my mind was Haruki Murikami. And it's a favourable comparison.

As ever, I try to find something to balance the positive in each review, but in this event I'm genuinely stuck. The best I can come up with is that I'm not too keen on the cover. Petty, I know. Ewald has produced an absolute gem of a book, and I genuinely cannot wait for his next work."

— Paul Montgomery, TrueJDK writes

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"...I found *He Who Shall Remain Shameless* to be an entertaining read. Ewald is at his best when he plays the suspense card. His historical ghosts are well researched and have believable personalities. But the story's strongest element is its exploration of death and obscurity. As we ponder his assertion that the Internet can (and should) be used to remember *everyone*, celebrity and average person alike, he reminds us that we're mortal. And death is a lesson we should all remember as we conduct our lives."

— David Drazul, The New Podler Review of Books

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"I was very impressed with the way these stories were laid out. He placed some emphasis on Christine Chubbuck, who committed suicide in 1974 during a newscast. I am not one who reads ghost tales but this was more than that. Actual flesh and blood descriptions with voices that are human. I hope to read more from this author, he seems to know how to get his point across."

— James Herington

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"The premise for David Ewald's 'He Who Shall Remain Shameless' is fun and interesting."

— Saleel Nurbhai, OneTitle Reviews

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“This collection of linked short stories explores themes of death and whether, in the age of the Internet, anyone is ever truly forgotten. The protagonist meets several spirits of people who have not remained famous in death, while battling The Meritocrat, an otherworldly being who aims to obscure the lives of these same people.

The most sparkling moments of this book come when we see the protagonist’s human connection with the characters. The stories “Harriet” and “Alice” are highlights because the characters are touching and the protagonist shares a fleeting moment with them, making the reader realize what extraordinary and short lives they led. Harriet was an early female pilot who is not well-known; Alice is the first female flight attendant killed in a plane crash. In these stories, the reader catches a glimpse of what could have been, and the characters are bright and real, yet we realize their time has already passed.

The subplot involves a final showdown with the Meritocrat that is nothing less than Harry Potter vs. Voldemort-worthy. This book will appeal to those who are curious about less-than-historical figures, fans of paranormal and fantasy themes, and readers who enjoy a character-driven plot. These stories also make the reader question his/her own legacy and beg the question, ‘Will I be remembered, and why?’”

— bookloverincalifornia

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“Within the first few pages of this book, you clearly get the sense that this author loves words and putting them together. His sentences and word choice are carefully constructed so as to give this entire book the feeling of movement, which keeps the events that occur within it clipping along at a brisk pace.

His style and subject matter would probably most closely compare to Chuck Palahniuk, exchanging brutality for humor. The absurd realism remains, paired with some really great moments of laugh out loud material. It’s a dark comedy through and through.

I recommend keeping a web browser handy as you read through this book. There’s a neat intersection of reality and fiction throughout the story, and getting to know some of these characters outside the perspective of the protagonist adds a poignancy and weight to events that you might miss out on otherwise.

The ending is an absolute masterpiece....

...If you like Chuck Palahniuk, Neal Stephenson's earlier works, or David Foster Wallace, I think you'll definitely enjoy *He Who Shall Remain Shameless*. It's funny, quick, dark and thoughtful."

— Jeff Bard

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*“He Who Shall Remain Shameless* is an adventure that is absurd, yet fascinating. Ewald's narrator is obsessed with finding the almost-famous and expanding their online presence. The twist? Most, if not all of these people are dead. Watch and learn as the narrator interviews the ghost of Harriet Quimby, the first female airplane pilot, and Linda Gary a voice-over actress for the cartoon *She-Ra*, and others, as he attempts to steer them towards what he believes is their salvation online. With the help of his trusty laptop and the talking/self-aware smartphone “Ishy”, Ewald's narrator travels the world, drawn by the ghosts of the could-have-been-famous, as his nemesis, the strange and mysterious Meritocrat, attempts to stop him around every corner.

As bizarre as this world was, I found myself enjoying the collection of stories more and more as I read deeper and deeper. Once you understand what the heck is going on, it becomes absorbing. The best part is, all of the ghosts in Ewald's world are real characters that you can look up and read about. Who knows, maybe their online presence is thanks to the narrator and Ishy [...]

I would recommend this to fans of absurdest literature as well as up-market fiction readers. It was quite fun!"

— Mary C. Moore

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How could this tale fail to fascinate? The protagonist is David Ewald - not the author, but a fictional character with the same name as the author - and he's on a mission to protect some of history's noteworthy, yet relatively obscure, from being erased from memory forever. Ewald is, in a very literal sense, accompanied by the Internet as a companion. This is fresh, unexpected writing, with a little bit of everything: an action-adventure tale, a paranormal mystery, occasional flashes of romance, and ultimately a message that makes the reader question the very meaning of existence. It's a dark, heavy novel that never feels too heavy. Lovers of cerebral metafiction will delight in it.

— Erin O'Riordan

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“This has to be, hands down, one of the best concepts we’ve ever seen. Part ghost story, part philosophical fable, part obscure history lesson, part action flick, it combines the best of all worlds.

Other stories and authors have explored the idea of an inter-relationship between ghosts and memory. The idea is, “as long as a person is remembered, so does his ghost last on Earth,” with the correlating idea that “when a person is forgotten, his ghost also vanishes.” It’s an obscure theme but it does appear in various places and various times, from modern fiction all the way back to mythologies the world over. It’s an interesting concept, and one that this book subtly plays with. This book functions on the idea of preserving the human life beyond death—a “ghost” or “echo,” if you will—through the force of the internet. It’s an “old meets new” story. The protagonist’s goal throughout the story is therefore to preserve as many people’s memories as possible. He does this by uploading information about them on the internet. He particularly targets saving people who are “almost famous,” people who would be in the history books if it were not for the streamlining of information (for example, his first target was the first woman aviatrix, Harriet Quimby, who despite her accomplishment is not present in any history book we’ve ever read). Once online, many people can see and access the information, which in turn leads to preserving the person’s memory in humanity’s collective consciousness. There’s also implications that the ghosts themselves can somehow interact online, as if even a dead person can run a blog or have a social networking page, and thus through interacting continue existing. In opposition to Our Hero, the Meritocrat approves of the streamlining of history: there’s only so many hours in the day and so much space to be dedicated to one historical event, so the Meritocrat’s line of thinking is that naturally some people “deserve” to be forgotten so that this can free up space for important people to be remembered. Only those who are “meritorious” will last forever. As a character, the Meritocrat has mysterious abilities, which he uses to possess the other ghosts and to oppose Our Hero’s mission...

If you’re like us, you enjoy the good old-fashioned ghost story. This book is rife with them. Every chapter is named after the ghost that the protagonist is seeking within that chapter, and each time he has a mission to accomplish in order to save the ghost. Plus, ghosts and the internet combined? Yes, please.

As you might expect, many of these ghost stories feature people who have died not-so-nice deaths, and as a result there is a bit of creepiness and scary happenings whenever they are encountered. This is all good fun. Even awesomer? A lot of these stories feature real people. Yes, you read that correctly. You can look up these people's lives on Google. This adds a fun layer of realism to the book.

This author dances a bit around the fourth wall in this book. How? Well, he has his own characters mention him! His main character, the protagonist, happens to share the same name as the author, David Michael Ewald. This is originally depicted as a coincidence. Other characters bring up this fact, specifically mentioning that there is an author named "David Michael Ewald from Denver." Now, we've seen other authors pull this trick (naming their main character after themselves, even though they are not the same person), so this isn't unique, but it's still rare enough that it's notable and therefore deserves praise...for the way that it's handled.

There is also an implication that the connection between author-DME and character-DME that goes deeper than just their name. Several times, characters bring up the tale of Narcissus, which is a Greek myth of a handsome man who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool and drowned in it. The association of this myth with character-DME seems to imply that he has a closer relationship to author-DME than is being explicitly stated. Maybe he is a mirror image? If so, maybe he is somehow "drowning" in himself? This was an intriguing diversion, and...the anticipation was exciting.

— The Good, the Bad, & the Bizarre

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"This is a provocative book about what we choose to remember and what is chosen by others for us to remember. Using both real characters from the past and fictional characters, the author brilliantly brings together our current society's obsession with technology and fame with historical and fictional people, making us wonder through his insight and satire what it would be like if his characters lived in today's e-world. A book that made me think long after I had finished the last page."

— Sundevilgirl

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“I enjoyed this book very much. As stated in the previous reviews, it inspires you to turn to the internet on a consistent basis, to investigate further these sometimes very shocking deaths.

I took the book’s theme to revolve around death and the question of how we will be remembered after we die. This of course made it quite morbid at times...but I think that’s what made it even more beautiful. Within all of the death and searching for lost memories of the dead there is a thread of light in just the fact that this character took interest in the deceased. Just the simple act of looking at the internet and in response, the reader looking themselves showed respect from the curiosity in the act.

“Katherine” was really beautiful, and created an incredibly emotional ending for the book. I felt that I connected most with it, in questioning my own mortality and my relationships with others.

“Chris” was an amazing story. It had a definite ‘horror film’ feel to it.

“Harriet” was also incredibly strong. It had a visually surreal ending that felt a bit like a Dali painting. I loved it!

Overall, a good solid read. I have already recommended it to friends.”

— karen0anne