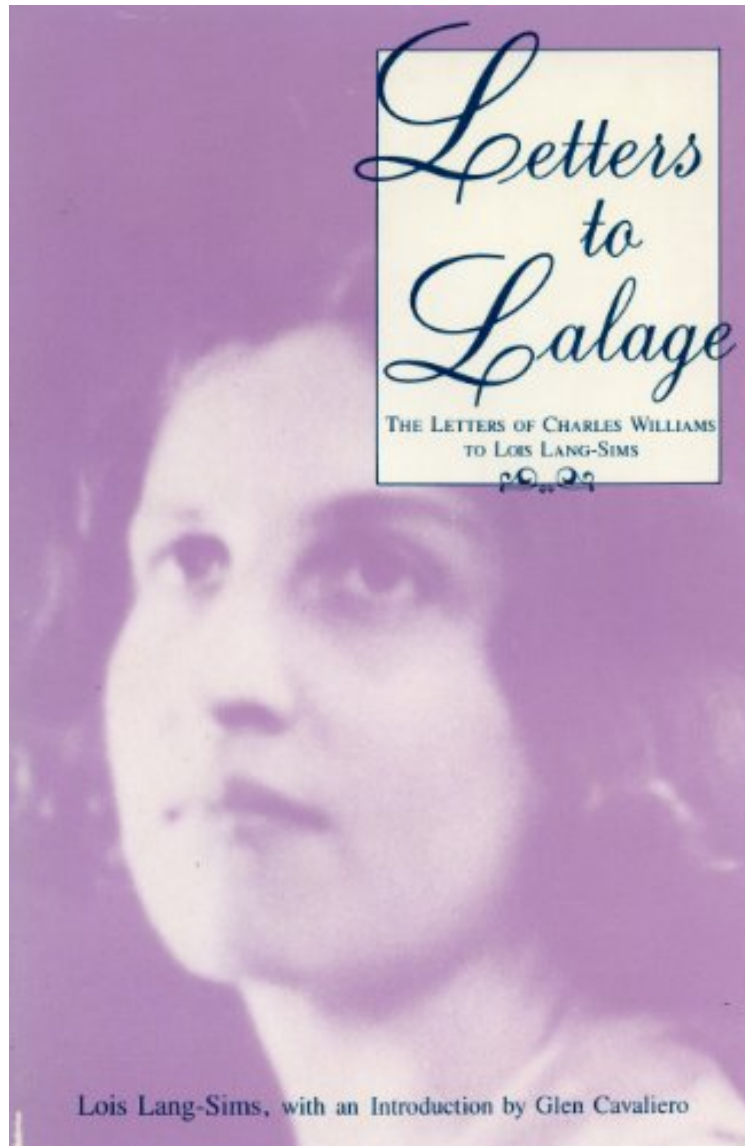


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Letters to Lalage: The Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims

Lois Lang-Sims

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Lois Lang-Sims : Letters to Lalage: The Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Letters to Lalage: The Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. The dark side of that most mysterious and intriguing Inkling, Charles Williams By D. Kovacs The remarkable Lois Lang-Sims passed away recently, which was enough to prompt

this review. This book of letters is essential to giving a well-rounded portrait of this mysterious man. There seems to be agreement among the young women, like Lang-Sims, who experienced his controlled and slightly sadistic dark side that it was the mirror image of a man who also radiated an undeniable goodness, even holiness. The ability of Charles Williams to convey supernatural reality -- in a warmly blessed or in a chillingly evil way -- in his novels and other writing has been remarked on by many of his readers. Lang-Sims has her own way of conveying that which is basically impossible to express in words. It comes across not only in this book of letters but also in her own writing. If this review prompts even one reader to learn more, not only about Charles Williams but about Lois Lang-Sims herself -- and to benefit from the inner tradition that she so gracefully conveys in her own writing -- then the few moments it took to write this will be time well spent, with eternity in view.

The short-lived but remarkable correspondence presented in *Letters to Lalage* took place toward the end of Charles Williams' life. Lois Lang-Sims was not the first young woman to seek his help or to fall beneath his spell. When she wrote to him in September 1943 L. Williams had already had numerous admirers, pupils, and disciples who looked to him for counsel, for advice, and most especially, for encouragement. His affinity with Lois Lang-Sims was not surprising. Some thirty years younger than he was, she was in due course herself to become a forceful and individual writer whose literary output, though relatively small, was almost as varied as Williams' own. In Lois Lang-Sims' writings, as in those of Charles Williams, a variety of literary forms embody a singleness of imaginative vision. But at the time of their first meeting she was only twenty-six years old and, according to her autobiographical *A Time to be Born*, in a state of great mental and emotional confusion. Now, nearly fifty years later, she presents the letters Williams wrote to her, together with her own comments on a relationship that was to come to such an abrupt, and in some respects disturbing, end. The intense demands of Williams' mental and imaginative life did not permit him to be readily or relaxingly gregarious, though in whatever company he happened to be, for example as part of the Inklings group at Oxford, he was a powerful presence. *Letters to Lalage* enables us to study his involvement in one particular relationship with one particular person. As such they form an invaluable supplement to the more general accounts of Williams' life supplied by his biographers. As a writer Williams blends to a remarkable degree those seemingly contradictory characteristics of impersonality and mannered idiosyncrasy which were features of his daily bearing. We see here something of the hypnotic quality of Charles Williams' character and may obtain from it a deep if glancing insight into his extremely vulnerable humanity. At times a painful document, *Letters to Lalage* is of the greatest value in illuminating some of the more troubled aspects of a Christian writer and teacher who, more convincingly than most, could evoke the nature of joy, and who could induce joy in other people, however precariously he may have been aware of it himself. Most especially this book gives one an insight into the price Charles Williams paid (and unwittingly exacted) for his particular gifts and vision.