



H.P. Lovecraft: A Life

S.T. Joshi , Jason C. Eckhardt (Illustrator)

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The basic facts of H.P. Lovecraft's life have long been known, but before this book the only account of his life worth having was L. Sprague de Camp's 1975 biography, which was lively but sketchy, giving a fragmented view of Lovecraft's life and work. S.T. Joshi has delivered the goods. This is not only the finest and most definitive biography of Lovecraft, it is likely to remain so for many decades into the future. While at nearly 700 pages, it's not necessarily a book every Lovecraft fan will sit down and read cover to cover, it's almost as compulsively readable as it is compulsively detailed. Joshi is sympathetic toward his subject but doesn't pull any punches: he includes Lovecraft's less flattering qualities, such as his "contemptible" racism and his "shabby" treatment of his wife. Best of all, perhaps, for fans of Lovecraft's fiction, are the accounts of how the stories came to be written, concise plot summaries, and well-chosen historical-critical remarks

H.P. Lovecraft: A Life Details

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From Reader Review H.P. Lovecraft: A Life for online ebook

Dennis O'leary says

I really enjoyed this book, it informed me of things in H.P. Lovecraft's life that I didn't even know. I learned that one of his stories was based on a town he lived in when he and his wife had to move to a town called Red Hook. This Story is mainly about the life of Howard Phillip Lovecraft and his slow downward spiral from sanity. It shows his influences as well as how his nightmares have caused many problems in his life.

I rated it 5 stars because I really enjoyed learning about Lovecraft and his life of insanity. He has helped me to find my love for horror as well as my love for the old one's. It also helped me to learn how he created the infamous old one's as well as Cthulhu.

Stephanie says

Exhaustive, but exhausting. On the plus side, it does contain everything you could ever want to know about Lovecraft. On the other hand, I don't need to know what Lovecraft had for lunch. Does include insightful analysis of the influence of HPL's life on his work, but Joshi is a bit too much of an apologist for HPL's unsavory qualities.

Eddie Watkins says

I can't imagine any bio of Lovecraft ever superceding this hefty tome. Exhaustive doesn't even begin to describe the details included, but as old H. P. was such a strange and fascinating creature no detail is too much.

The book even comes with an appropriately tacky portrait of the man on the cover. Just take a look at it, it's such a bad painting, but it does take one back to the gauche old covers of Weird Tales magazine.

One thing I found particularly interesting in this book was the coverage of Lovecraft's involvement in the amateur publishing of his day (early 20th century). I had no idea there was such an organized (actually beaurocratic) and lively alternative to mainstream publishing.

Tiago "Salvador" Souza says

A very interesting book, with a nice "progressive" feel to it, like biographies are supposed to provide. It is not the most unbiased of biographies, as at times Joshi's views and opinions are made clear, specially when at trying to excuse or explain certain not so flattering of Lovecraft's behaviors and ideas.

A must read for Lovecraft fans.

Wilum Pugmire says

I was lucky enough to have a kind friend who sold me his signed hardcover copy of this book. I have read my original softcover edition three or four times, and then when the book was re-issued I read it another two times. I am constantly returning to it, as I study Lovecraft's Life and Fiction in an effort to write weird fiction that is authentically Lovecraftian (and for me that authenticity comes when a story is rooted in Lovecraft's works, rather than merely being "inspired" by one particular facet of Lovecraft's tales; it is still a question not clearly answer'd in my wither'd brain, what is it that "makes" a story "Lovecraftian". Happily, I was able to be in Providence at the same time that S. T. Joshi was there doing work on Clark Ashton Smith papers at the John Hay Library, and he took me on a walking tour of Lovecraftian sites. It was wonderful for many reasons, but especially because I was able to see "in the flesh" S. T.'s continuing love and excitement for Lovecraft. He became extremely animated and JOYFUL as he led our tiny group around ye Ancient Hill. This book is a fulfillment of that love, that joy, and that tireless work that S. T. Joshi has given to this great writer of weird fiction.

Adam Baker says

Pretty much one of the best literary biographies ever written. A wonderfully warm and sympathetic portrait of a fascinating man. Easily one of my favourite books. I've read it three times so far, and no doubt I will read it again.

Ron says

This is a great book...but...it's an abridged version of "I am Providence" so I can only give it 4 stars. Spend the extra cash for Joshi's full text if you can find one of the limited editions of 'Providence', it's worth it!

Lynda Rucker says

An exhaustive (yet somehow not at all exhausting--I would say instead exhilarating) account of the life, fiction, and philosophy of the gentleman from Providence. Now I'm really looking forward to going back and rereading some of his stories with new insight. I always find S.T. Joshi an entertaining critic to read, even when I wholly disagree with him. There are lots of surprises in this book--one for me was the discovery of how far and how often Lovecraft traveled to visit his huge circle of friends. I knew that he was known as a prodigious correspondent but always imagined him as far more reclusive; I couldn't have been more wrong.

Nick says

The biography of Lovecraft by S.T. Joshi is not a book for the meek or semi-committed. It is a hefty tome whose density of text is truly astounding; don't be fooled by it's length of 700+ pages, it feels much much longer.

It is not often that I find a book that is both incredibly interesting and a challenge to work through. There is just so much information compiled by Joshi on Lovecraft's life, combined with astute analysis of his works, philosophy and even a brief examination of the field of analysis of his work and events in publication following his death; events that led to his being misrepresented and misunderstood for more than thirty years.

It is not a happy read. Lovecraft's philosophy is sobering and his lifestyle is, quite frankly, heart-breaking. From his disastrous marriage and residence in New York to his impoverished last years in Providence, where he subsisted on 30c for food a day - worrying even during the great depression.

Joshi provides a sympathetic view of this complex and misunderstood giant of 20th century literature whilst pulling no punches whatsoever. In particular his racism, which has been well documented in the past, is examined many times throughout the biography without apology, but also without the overblown hysteria common to much of the earlier commentary.

This biography supersedes and perhaps makes irrelevant the earlier work by L. Sprague de Camp, but it is difficult to conceive of any biography replacing this one, at least without some major new evidence being unearthed. Any fan of Lovecraft who wishes to understand the work and life of the man can do no better; the analysis of his work alone will change the way you forever read the stories of Lovecraft.

Ruby Hollyberry says

5 stars for thoroughness and attention to detail, 5 stars for sympathetic but objective pictures of the subject, 2 stars for writing ability, 2 stars for soapboxing in promotion of atheism. Best part is the list of weird fiction works by other authors I now have to go find!

Δημ?τρης Δελαρο?δης says

The bible for HPL's life!

Martin says

A magnificently well-researched, interesting and at times deeply moving account of the life of one of the most significant practitioners and theoreticians of the weird tale during the 20th century.

Bill says

I could not decide whether to give this book three or four stars. The author obviously wanted to write a book of literary criticism about Lovecraft and included it in this rich and dense biography. I would have given the book four stars had I followed the author's advice in the preface and skipped the interminable scrying of the stories. So follow the author's advice and skip these unless you are a true diehard Lovecraft fan. The biography proper is extraordinarily detailed. Lovecraft managed to live his entire life without holding a proper job, in penury of course, and seems to have lived a richer and fuller life than most with

money. He was not a reluse, travelled extensively and wrote stories that have become more fully appreciated as the years have past. If you are from Rhode Island or interested in supernatural literature, or interested in marginal writers or colonial America or early twentieth attitudes toward all these things read this book.

Morgan Scorpion says

I am very impressed with this biography of Lovecraft, which is by far the best I have read so far. It is very detailed, and full of eyewitness accounts. It presents a balanced view of the man, being neither too positive or too negative. This is a warts and all portrayal of the Old Gentleman of Providence, which attempts to redress some of the errors made by previous biographers.

It also contains an analysis of Lovecraft's major stories, as well as insight into his political and philosophical beliefs.

Charles says

A heavily detailed depiction of the creator of the cosmic horror tale.
