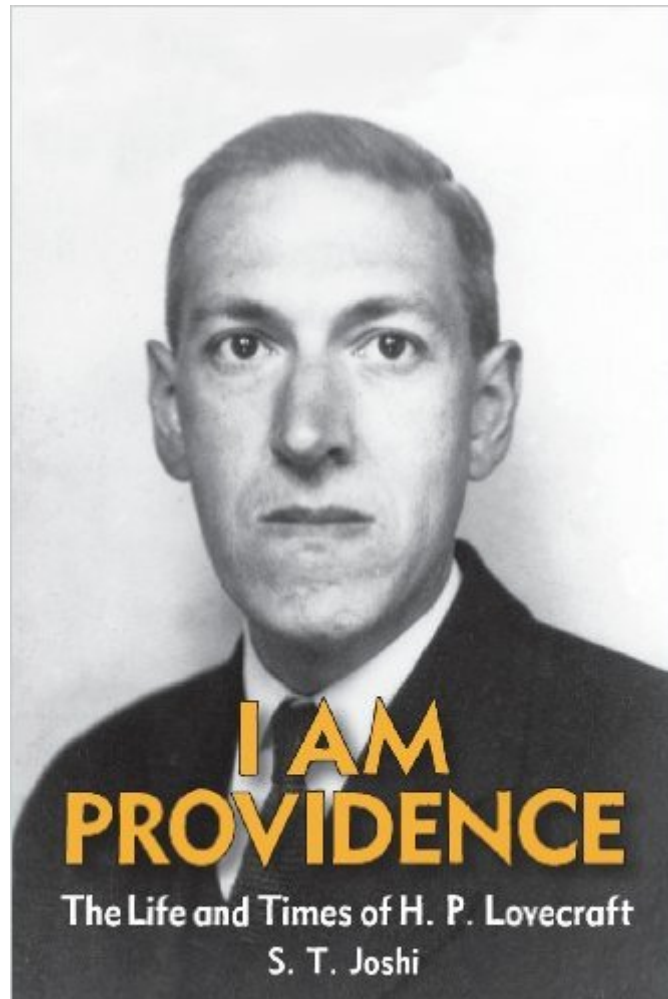


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I Am Providence: The Life And Times Of H. P. Lovecraft, Volume 2



Synopsis

As the second volume of S. T. Joshi's comprehensive biography of H. P. Lovecraft begins, we find Lovecraft dwelling in misery in a one-room apartment in Brooklyn Heights: his wife, Sonia, has had to move to the Midwest for work, and he must rely on the companionship of the Kalem Club, the informal band of friends in the New York area. In 1926, in part through the intervention of his close friend Frank Belknap Long, Lovecraft finally decided to return to his native Providence, Rhode Island, effectively ending his marriage. That return spurred the greatest spurt of literary creativity he would ever experience: in less than a year, such works as "The Call of Cthulhu," The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, and "The Colour out of Space" would emerge from his pen, establishing Lovecraft as the leading weird fictionist of his generation. In spite of his increasing poverty, antiquarian travel occupied much of Lovecraft's time, and he gained an impressive knowledge of such oases of antiquity as Charleston, Quebec, St. Augustine, and Richmond. These voyages both renewed his connection with the past and infused his literary work, as such later tales as "The Whisperer in Darkness" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" drew ever more profoundly upon his far-flung travels. Intellectually, Lovecraft evolved as well. Recent developments in science confirmed his materialism and his atheism, and the onset of the Great Depression gradually caused him to reassess his political and economic theory; he emerged as a moderate socialist and advocate of the New Deal. Late in life he became a giant in the world of fantasy fandom--a development that foreshadowed his worldwide fame in the decades following his early death.

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Customer Reviews

This review was originally written for the single-volume edition, H. P. Lovecraft: A Life. Although I have not read the new 2-volume edition, several friends who have report that Joshi's tiresome and amateurish focus on himself as the hero of the story (at the expense of Lovecraft) is even worse in this edition. The Publisher's Weekly review summarizes perfectly: "Joshi fans may enjoy his frequent personal asides...but others might wish a firm editorial hand had kept the biographer more in the background."*****The good: Until S.T. Joshi's book, the only serious, widely-available biographical information on HPL apart from his letters was 'H.P. Lovecraft; A Biography' (1975) by L. Sprague de Camp, which left many gaps and open questions. Joshi's book fills in the gaps and then some. It is the closest thing we have to a definitive Lovecraft bio, and if you're a Lovecraft scholar of any seriousness, you'll eventually need to read it. The not-so-good: While Joshi's book reads like a rigorously well-researched first draft, I wish he'd consulted a manuscript editor before publication. This massive, expensive and ponderous 708-page book could perhaps be edited into a more readable and reasonably-priced 300-page book, with another 100 pages of small print endnotes, merely by removing Joshi and his scholarship from the foreground and replacing them with Lovecraft. For example:- Joshi includes himself in the story, using the first person pronoun on nearly every page. "I..." this and "I..." that.

The title of the review says it all. This two-volume set is a massive expansion of S. T. Joshi's already-monumental H.P. Lovecraft: A Life, originally printed by Necronomicon Press in 1996. I Am Providence restores more than 150,000 words cut from that previous edition and, at over 1,000 pages (both volumes combined), is THE most detailed, most thorough, and--above all else--most *accurate* biography of H. P. Lovecraft ever published. S. T. Joshi is the world's leading expert on Lovecraft, and immediately upon publication H.P. Lovecraft: A Life became the definitive bio of the Gentleman from Providence--easily superseding L. Sprague De Camp's loathsome, criminally-inaccurate Lovecraft; A Biography,. I Am Providence in turn supersedes A Life, and is an absolute must for any scholar of HPL's life and works, and a valuable addition to even the casual Lovecraft fan's library. I Am Providence dispels many myths about Lovecraft, especially those perpetuated by De Camp's vile text. Drawing on literally thousands of primary sources, including Lovecraft's own manuscripts and notes housed at the John Hay Library at Brown University, as well as the *thousands* of surviving letters Lovecraft wrote to his many, many friends and correspondents, I Am Providence is as much an AUTObiography as it is a critical supplement to HPL's own personal revelations.

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