



Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story: A Life of David Foster Wallace

By D. T. Max

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The acclaimed *New York Times*–bestselling biography and “emotionally detailed portrait of the artist as a young man” (Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*)

Since his untimely death by suicide at the age of forty-six in 2008, David Foster Wallace has become more than the representative writer of his literary generation—he has become a symbol of sincerity and honesty in an inauthentic age, a figure whose reputation and reach grow by the day. In this compulsively readable biography, D. T. Max charts Wallace’s tormented, anguished, and often triumphant battle to succeed as a novelist as he fights off depression and addiction to emerge with his masterpiece, *Infinite Jest*. Written with the cooperation of Wallace family members and friends and with access to hundreds of Wallace’s unpublished letters, manuscripts, and journals, this revelatory biography illuminates the unique connections between Wallace’s life and his fiction in a gripping and deeply moving narrative that will transfix readers.

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Editorial Review

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Visit Amazon's books blog, Omnivoracious.com, to read an exclusive essay from D.T. Max: "5 Things You Didn't Know About David Foster Wallace - But Should."

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review As endlessly interpretable writer David Foster Wallace's first biographer, New Yorker staff writer Max seeks to be foundational. His straight-ahead approach corrals the commotion of Wallace's struggle with his epic artistic visions, substance abuse, and severe depression into an involving, fast-flowing narrative rich in facts and free of speculation. So seamless is Max's reportage that one loses sight of how many sources he consulted to fully chronicle young Illinoisan Wallace's inherited passions for language and philosophy, spectacular academic achievements, self-medication with pot and alcohol, chaotic relationships, teaching gigs, and sustaining alliances with his agent, editors, guiding light Don DeLillo, and friend Jonathan Franzen. Max presents meticulous coverage of off-the-charts-smart Wallace's literary intentions and innovations, from his impressive early first book, *The Broom of the System* (1987), to his nonfiction escapades to the bludgeoning demands of his masterpiece, *Infinite Jest* (1996), and *The Pale King* (2011), the brilliant novel this MacArthur fellow left unfinished when he committed suicide, in 2008, at age 46, at which point this biography abruptly concludes. Max's thorough account of Wallace's breakdowns, stints in psychiatric institutions and a halfway house, and profound reliance on support groups reveals the conviction and risks inherent in Wallace's mission to write with integrity, humor, sincerity, and artistic incandescence and to make "the head throb heartlike." --Donna Seaman

From Bookforum

Aside from acknowledging that Wallace's experience with depression left him humbled and more sensitive to the terror and the survival strategies of others, Max's terrifically intelligent and (crucially) modest bio does Wallace the great courtesy of treating as distinct his work and his mental health. —Gideon Lewis-Kraus

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