



## Poe

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*Poe* challenges two flawed views of Edgar Allan Poe's life and work: that he was a drunken, even mentally ill character whose personality defects led to his downfall; and that his writing was of little literary quality. James M. Hutchisson convincingly demonstrates that Poe's disposition was not as difficult as it has been depicted, and that the drinking problems he did have were the result of a (probably inherited) unusually low bodily tolerance for alcohol, combined with a series of tragedies in his life. Hutchisson's coverage of Poe's fiction, poetry, and literary criticism provide readers with an unbiased view of Poe as a writer, untainted by writers with a personal or professional agenda against him from the past.

*Poe* is a refreshing view of the author and his works, intended for general readers, not Poe specialists. Hutchisson dusts the cobwebs off Poe's writing, putting in its proper context of a time when people actually were buried alive and "mourning art" or a "cult of death" made Poe's works seem less morbid by contrast; readers will understand how and why Poe's stories were published in women's magazines of the time. Readers will understand Poe as a working journalist, a literary critic, and a writer firmly entrenched in the Southern literary heritage, which in the past had been questionable.

Readers in search of a good general introduction to Poe, the man and his works, will find a highly readable, useful, if somewhat iconoclastic, volume here.

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