



**Poe in His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of
His Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews,
and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates
(Writers in Their Own Time)**

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An image of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) as a man of gloom and mystery continues to hold great popular appeal. Long recognized as one of the greats of American literature, he elicited either highly commendatory or absolutely hostile reactions from many who knew him, from others who claimed to comprehend him as person or as writer, and from still others who circulated as fact opinions intuited from his writings. Whether promoting him as angel or demon, “a man of great and original genius” or “extraordinarily wicked,” the viewpoints in this dramatic collection of primary materials provide vigorous testimony to support the contradictory images of the man and the writer that have prevailed for a century and a half.

Noted Poe scholar Benjamin Fisher includes a comprehensive introduction and a detailed chronology of Poe’s sadly short life; each entry is introduced by a short headnote that places the selection in historical and cultural context, and explanatory notes provide information about people and places. From John Allan’s letter to Secretary of War John Eaton about Poe’s West Point life to John Frankenstein’s hostile verse casting him as an alcoholic, from Rufus Griswold’s first and second posthumous vilifications to James Russell Lowell’s more sensible outline of his life and career, from scornful to commendable reviews to scathing attacks on his morals to recognition of his comic achievements, Fisher has gathered a lively array of materials that read like the most far-fetched of gothic tales.

Poe himself was creative when he supplied information to others about his life and literary career, and the speculative content of many of the portrayals presented in this collection read as if their authors had set out to be equally creative. The sixty-nine recollections gathered in *Poe in His Own Time* form a dramatic, real-time biographical narrative designed to provide a multitude of perspectives on the famous author, sometimes in conflict with each other and sometimes in agreement but always arresting.

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