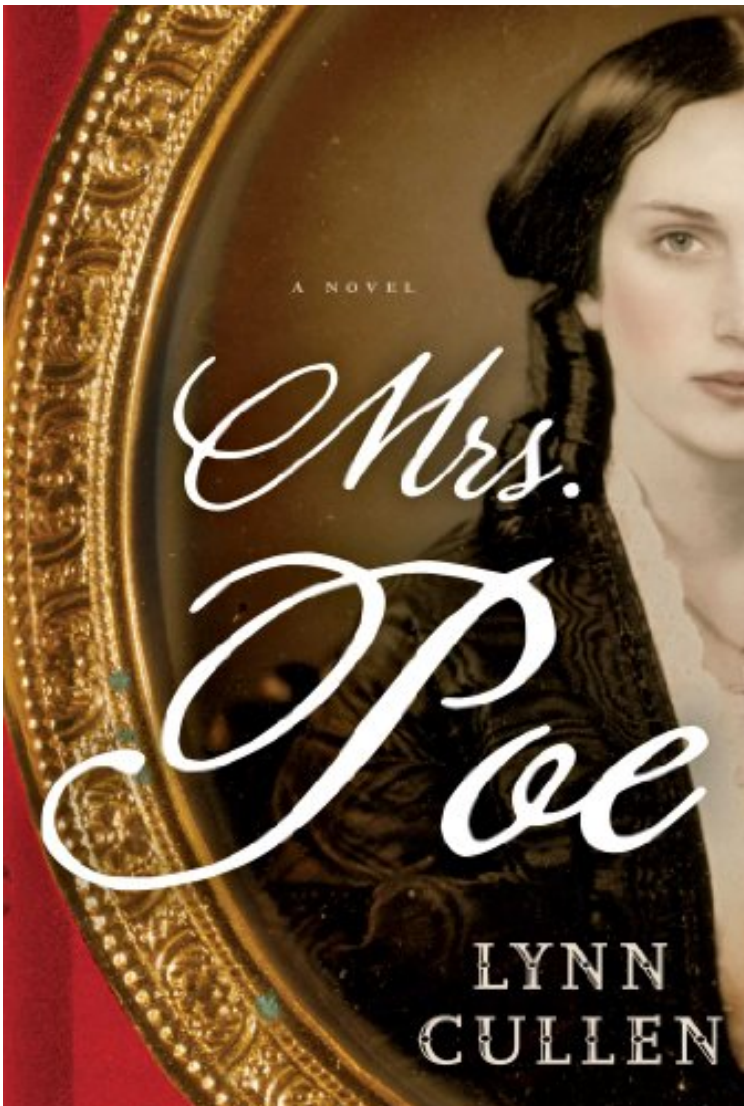


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## Mrs. Poe (English Edition)



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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurInspired by literatures most haunting love triangle, award-winning author Lynn Cullen delivers a pitch-perfect rendering of Edgar Allan Poe, his mistresss tantalizing confession, and his wives frightening obsession in this new masterpiece of historical fiction to which Sara Gruen says, Mrs. Poe had my heart racing...Don't miss it! And make sure to check out the captivating new novel from Lynn CullenTwains Endwhere the acclaimed author tells a fictionalized imagining of the relationship between iconic author Mark Twain and his personal secretary, Isabel Lyon.1845: New York City is a sprawling warren of gaslit streets and crowded avenues, bustling with new immigrants and old money, optimism and opportunity, poverty and crime. Edgar Allan Poes The Raven is all the rage the success of which a struggling poet like Frances Osgood can only dream. As a mother trying to support two young children after her

husbands cruel betrayal, Frances jumps at the chance to meet the illustrious Mr. Poe at a small literary gathering, if only to help her fledgling career. Although not a great fan of Poes writing, she is nonetheless overwhelmed by his magnetic presence and the surprising revelation that he admires her work. What follows is a flirtation, then a seduction, then an illicit affair and with each clandestine encounter, Frances finds herself falling slowly and inexorably under the spell of her mysterious, complicated lover. But when Edgars frail wife, Virginia, insists on befriending Frances as well, the relationship becomes as dark and twisted as one of

Poes tales. And like those gothic heroines whose fates are forever sealed, Frances begins to fear that deceiving Mrs. Poe may be as impossible as cheating death itself. *Extrait* Mrs. Poe One When given bad news, most women of my station can afford to slump onto their divans, their china cups slipping from their fingers to the carpet, their hair falling prettily from its pins, their fourteen starched petticoats compacting with a plush crunch. I am not one of them. As a lady whose husband is so busy painting portraits of wealthy patrons most of whom happen to be women that he forgets that he has a family, I have more in common with the girls who troll the muddy streets of Corlears Hook, looking to part sailors from their dollars, than I do with the ladies of my class, in spite of my appearance. This thought bolted into my mind like a horse stung by a wasp that afternoon at the office of *The Evening Mirror*. I was in the midst of listening to a joke about two backward Hoosiers being told by the editor Mr. George Pope Morris. I knew that the news Mr. Morris was obviously putting off giving me must not be good. Still, I laughed delightedly at his infantile joke, even while choking on the miasma created by his excess of perfumed hair pomade, the open glue pot sitting upon his desk, and the parrot cage to my left, which was in dire need of changing. I hoped to soften him, just as a

Hooker softens potential customers by lifting a corner of her skirt. I struck when Mr. Morris was still chuckling from his own joke. Showing teeth brushed with particular care before I had set off to confront him after a silence of twenty-two days, I said, About the poem I sent you in January.... I trailed off, widening my eyes with hopefulness, my equivalent of petticoat lifting. If I was to become independent, I needed the income. No sailor considering a pair of ankles looked more wary than Mr. George Pope Morris did at that moment, although few sailors managed to achieve the success he had at toilet, particularly with his hair. Never before had such a lofty loaf of curls arisen from a human head without the aid of padding. It was as if he had used his top hat for a mold. Whether by design or accident, one large curl had escaped the mass and now dangled upon his forehead like a gelatinous fishhook. Might you have misplaced it? I asked lightly. Maybe he would appreciate putting the blame on his partner. Or perhaps Mr. Willis has it. His gaze slid down to my bosom, registered the disappointment of seeing only cloak, then snapped back to my face. Im sorry, Mrs. Osgood. To be quite frank, it is not what we are looking for. Im certain that your female readership would enjoy my allusions to love in my descriptions of flowers. Mr. Rufus Griswold has been so kind to include some of my poems in his recent collection. Perhaps youve heard of it? I know Griswolds collection. Everyone does hes made sure of it. How that little bully got to be such an authority on poetry, Ill never know. Threats of death? Mr. Morris laughed, then wagged his finger at me. Mrs. Osgood! Quickly before I lost him: My own book, published by Mr. Harper, *The Poetry of Flowers and the Flowers of Poetry*, sold quite well. When was that? he asked distractedly. Two years ago. Actually it was four. As I thought. Flowers are not what is selling of late. What everyone is interested in these days are shivery tales. Stories of the macabre. Like Mr. Poes bird poem? He nodded, causing the great greased curl to bounce. As a matter of fact, yes. Our sales soared when we brought out the *The Raven* at the end of January. Same thing happened when we reprinted it last week. I suspect we could reprint it ten times and it wouldnt be enough. Readers have gone Raven-mad. I see. I didnt see. Yes, I had read the poem. Everyone in New York had since it had first been published the previous month. Even the German man who sold newspapers in the Village knew of it. Just this morning, when I asked him if he had the current issue of the *Mirror*, hed said with an accent and a grin, Nefermore. My dearest friend, Mrs. John Russell Bartlett, part of the inner circle of the New York literati, thanks to her husband, a bookseller and publisher of a small press, would not be quiet about him. She had been angling to meet him ever since *The Raven* had come out. In truth, I had thought I might get a glimpse of the wondrous Mr. Poe in the office that morning. He was an editor at the *Mirror* as well as a contributor. Mr. Morris seemed to read my mind. Evidently, our dear Mr. Poe is feeling his success. He is threatening to leave the magazine. Wherever he goes, I wish them luck in dealing with his moods. Is he so very moody? I still hoped to cajole Mr. Morris into friendship and, therefore, into indebtedness. Mr. Morris gestured as if tipping a glass to his mouth. Oh. I made a conspiratorial grimace. Hes really quite unbalanced, you know. I suspect hes more than half mad, and its not just the drink. A shame. He smiled. Look, Mrs. Osgood, you are an intelligent woman. Youve had some luck with your story collections for children. My

own little ones loved Puss in Boots. Why dont you go back to that? I could not tell him the real reason: money. Writing childrens stories did not pay. I feel that its important for me to expand my writing, I said. I have things I would like to say. Which was also true. Why must a woman be confined to writing childrens tales? He chuckled. Like which color brings out the roses in ones complexion, or how to decorate at Christmas? I laughed, good Hooker that I am. Still smiling, I said, I think you might be surprised at what I am capable of. His parrot squawked. He fed it a cracker from his pocket, then wiped his hands on his pantaloons, his sights making their habitual rounds from my eyes to my bust and back again. I forced myself to keep a cheerful gaze, although I wished to slap the curl off his forehead. He frowned. A beautiful woman like you shouldnt have to trouble your head with this sort of thing, but what if you came up with something as fresh and exciting as The Raven, only from a ladys point of view? Do you mean something dark? Yes, he said, warming to the idea. Yes. Exactly sodark. Very dark. I think there might be a market for that. Shivery tales for ladies. Youd like me to be a sort of Mrs. Poe? Ha! Yes. Thats the ticket. Will I be paid the same as Mr. Poe? I asked brazenly. Desperate times call for uncouth measures. He marked the inappropriateness of my question with a pause before answering. I paid Poe nothing, since he was on staff. I should think youd want to do better than that. Although already envious of Mr. Poe for his recent success, I felt a twinge of sympathy for the man. Perhaps he was independently wealthy, as was Mr. Longfellow or Mr. Bryant, and did not need the money or my compassion. In any case, he was not wed to a philandering portrait painter.

Mr. Morris led me to the door. The Mirror is a popular magazine, Mrs. Osgood. Were not interested in literature for scholars. Bring me something fresh and entertaining. Something dark that will make the lady readers afraid to snuff their candles at night. You do that, and Ill see what I can do for you. Just dont turn your back on us when youve reached the top, as did our Mr. Poe. I wouldnt. I promise. Poes his own worst enemyhe no sooner makes a friend than he turns him into a foe. I wonder what has made him such a difficult character. He shrugged. Why do wolves bite? They just do. He held open the door, letting in a cool draft. Give my regards to Mr. Osgood. Thank you, I said. I will. If he ever tired of his current heiress and came home. I soon found myself on the sidewalk of Nassau Street and, it being a mild day for February, ankle-deep in slush. Gentlemen passed, encased in buttoned overcoats and plugged with top hats. They flicked curious gazes in my direction, not sure whether I was a lady to whom they should tip their hat or a Hooker who had wandered into their inner sanctum. Few females of any sort ventured into the hallowed business precincts of New Yorkthe engine room of what was becoming the greatest money factory in the world. I bent into the biting wind, ever present in winter in this island city, and rounded the corner onto Ann Street. A landau clattered by, its wheels flinging melted snow. Across the way, a hog rooted in refuse, one of the thousands of pigs who plied the streets, be it rich district or poor. The wet had brought out the smell of the smoke rising from the forest of rooftop chimneys as well as the stink of horse manure, rotting garbage, and urine. It is said that sailors can smell New York City six miles out at sea. I had no doubt of it. Two short blocks later, across Ann Street from Barnums American Museum, with its banners advertising such humbuggery in residence as President Washingtons childhood nurse and the Feejee Mermaid, I arrived upon the shoveled promenade of Broadway. Vehicles poured down the thoroughfare before me as if a vein in the city had been opened and it was bleeding conveyances down the bumpy cobblestones. The din they made was deafening. The massive hooves of shaggy draft horses clashed against the street as they pulled rumbling wagons bulging with barrels. Stately carriages creaked by behind clapping bays. Hackneys for hire rattled alongside omnibuses with windows filled with staring faces. Whips cracked; drivers shouted; dogs barked. In the midst of it all, on a balcony on the Barnums building, a brass band tootled. It was enough to test ones sanity. Clutching my skirts, I hurried through a gap in the thundering traffic. I landed breathless on the other side of the street, where the Astor House hotel, six stories of solid granite gentility, sat frowning down its noble pillars at me. It seemed aware that I had only two pennies in the expensive reticule on my arm. Just a month previously I had been one of its pampered residents. I had been among the privileged to bathe in its hot-running-water baths. I, too, had enjoyed reading by the gaslights and dining with the rich and beautiful at the table dhte. Samuel had insisted that we take rooms at the Astor House when we had moved to New York from London, to make a good impression. Had I known of the ruinous state of our ledgers, I would have never agreed to it. But Samuel thought that as the daughter of a wealthy Boston merchant, I expected no less of him. He could never get over the inequality of our backgrounds, no matter how much I assured him that it didnt matter to me. I, on the other hand, had gotten over it the moment he first kissed me. I had no care if we took up housekeeping in a soddy, as long as I spent the night in Samuel Osgoods arms. Samuel, though, could never quite believe this. There is no more prideful creature than a man born poor. Now, hunched

against the icy wind and feeling the pinch of my thin pointed boots and the stabbing of my corset stays, I marched up the assault on the senses that is called Broadway. The loud swirl of striving people and their beasts dazzled the eyes, as did the brightly painted establishments bristling with signs that bragged LIFE-LIKE DAGUERREOTYPES! WORLDS FRESHEST OYSTERS! MOUTH-WATERING ICE CREAM! FINEST QUALITY LADIES FANS! The stench of rotting sea creatures commingled with the sweet scent of perfumes, as did the spicy odor of unwashed human flesh and the aroma of baking pies. Soon the flapping awnings of tobacconists, haberdashers, and dry-goods emporiums gave way to mansions with ornate iron fences that fringed their foundations like chin whiskers. Although the richest man of them all, Mr. Astor, refused to budge from his stone pile at Broadway and Prince, the fashion was to show off ones newly minted money by constructing a castle in the neighborhoods north of Houston Street. It was in this vaunted district that I turned westward on Bleecker. In boots made to stroll across a manicured square, not march up a mile and a half of flagstones, I minced painfully past ranks of stately brick houses at LeRoy Place, in many of which Id had tea. Near the writer James Fenimore Coopers ostentatiously large former home on Carroll Place, about which his wife liked to complain often and loudly that it was too magnificent for our simple French tastes, I veered right onto Laurens Street. With an end in sight, I picked up my pace as much as my cursed corset and destroyed feet would allow. I hobbled elegantly by a tumbledown row of stables, smithies, and small wooden dwellings meant for those who served the denizens of the palaces around them, until at last, a block short of Washington Square, I came to Amity Place, yet another enclave of new four-story Greek Revival town houses caged in by black ironwork fences. From a third-story window, through an oval that had been cleared in the frost by the sun, peered two young girls. My heart warmed. I opened the wrought iron gate, climbed the steep flight of six stone steps, and pushed open the door. Five-and-half-year-old Vinnie was running down the narrow staircase as I entered the hall. Mamma, did he buy your poem? Hold on to the railing! I exclaimed. Behind her, my elder daughter, Ellen, three years older than her sister and worlds more cautious, took the stairs at a more judicious rate. Vinnie threw herself against me. A loud crash descended from an upstairs room, followed by a wail and the exasperated voice of my friend Eliza. Ellen made a safe landing and held out her arms to take my mantle and hat. Henry is being bad. I glanced above her. Yes, I can hear him. Mamma, Vinnie demanded, did the man buy your poem? He didnt buy that one. But he did ask to see more. I opened my gloved palm, upon which lay two peppermint drops. I had taken them from a dish on Mr. Morriss desk when I had waited for him to arrive. Vinnies grin revealed a newly naked arch in her upper gums. She popped in the candy. Ellen shifted my things in her arms, then took her piece. Not yet seven and she was as somber as a Temperance lady on Christmas. You should write more stories for children, she said as I peeled off my gloves. They always buy your childrens stories. Im trying to spread my wings. What do I say about birds who dont spread their wings? The candy rattled against Vinnies remaining teeth as she moved it to her cheek to speak. They never learn to fly. You dont need to fly, Mother, Ellen said. You need to make money. How did she know these things? At her age, I was dressing paper dolls. Blast you, Samuel Osgood, for stunting her with worry and spoiling her childhood. I could spin all manner of tales about his care and concern for us and she always saw right through them. What I need to do now is to help Mrs. Bartlett, I said cheerfully. Vinnie, how is your ear? She gingerly touched the ear with the tuft of cotton sprouting from it. Hurts. Just then, a young boy in a rumpled tunic trampled down the stairs, followed closely by a plain but kindly looking gentlewoman of my age, who was in turn followed by a pretty red-cheeked Irish maid carrying a toddler. Fanny! cried Eliza. Thank goodness youre back. I have news! Although I had lived with Eliza Bartlett and her family for several months, my heart still swelled with gratitude at the sight of her. She and her husband had taken me in when the Astor House had turned me out. It seemed that prior to decamping for lusher pastures in November, Samuel had not paid the bill for the previous three months. After I showed up on Elizas doorstep with my shameful story, she made no verbal judgment, just said, Youre staying with us. Nor did she speak up when our other friends inquired about Samuel, but silently sat back and let me lie about his imminent return. She thus saved me from the pity that our circle would have rained upon me for being the abandoned wife of a neer-do-well. I would have gained their sympathy but lost my place and my pride. She took little Johnny from her maid. Mary, please take Mrs. Osgoods things downstairs to dry and Henry along with you. Henry: be good. To me she exclaimed, Goodness, you look frozen. Why didnt you take a hackney home? What is this news? She removed little Johnnys hand from inside her blouse. Mr. Poe is coming! Here? She laughed. No. Not unless he wishes to change a diaper. Hes going to appear at the home of a young woman named Anne Lynchthis Saturday! And we, my dear, are invited. I found my excitement to meet the renowned writer was tempered by the fact that I

had just been encouraged to be his competitor. Wonderful! Do we know this Miss Lynch? Eliza gave little Johnny to Vinnie, who had been silently begging for him with open arms. She's new to this city from Providence, a friend of Russell's family. She stopped in his shop and told him she was attempting to start a salon not just for the usual bon ton but for artists of all kinds, rich or poor. I daresay she might have a chance at success after having snagged Poe. I wonder how she lured him in. She might come to regret it. He's sure to be horribly ruthless. Poe doesn't like anything. It was true. I had seen his reviews in *The Evening Mirror*. Prior to *The Raven*, he was best known in literary circles for his poisoned pen. For good reason he was called the Tomahawker, happy as he was to chop up his fellow writers. He regularly tore in to gentle, gentlemanly Mr. Longfellow with a savagery that made no sense. In truth, I had wondered about his sanity even before Mr. Morriss's accusation, or at least his motives for such abuse. The gathering is to be at seven. Say that you'll come with me. I told her about you. She saw my wince. That you are a poet. Bless you, Eliza. I'll go, if the girls are well by then. Vinnie jogged little Johnny on her hip. I will be! There you have it, I said with a nonchalance that I did not feel. If I became his competition, I, too, might soon be on the wrong side of the dangerous Mr. Poe.

Revue de presse "When struggling poet and betrayed wife Frances Osgood meets Edgar Allan Poe, she is hoping only for a boost in her literary career—certainly not what came next. Swept into an illicit love affair with the complicated, magnetic, and married Poe, Osgood and Poe must together face the consequences, which are no less horrific or revenge-filled than his best loved horror stories and quite possibly as deadly. Mrs. Poe had my heart racing...Don't miss it!" (Sara Gruen, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Water for Elephants* and *Ape House*) "Mrs. Poe is a compelling tale of ill-fated love, passion, and the writing life in antebellum New York, rich with period detail and suspense." (Jennifer Chiaverini, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker*) "Layered with the atmosphere and intensity of Poe's prose, Cullen's *Mrs. Poe* infuses a tale of tragedy and loss with a spirit of passion and vitality. Fans of historical fiction and Poe will devour this novel." (Erika Robuck, bestselling author of *Call Me Zelda*) Readers can expect a page-turning tale exposing the transgressions, antics, and heroics behind a literary icon. Literary fiction fans and readers who loved Paula McLain's *The Paris Wife* will relish another novel based on historical scandal and romance. (Library Journal (starred review)) Part romance, part mystery, part biography, this fictional reenactment of the mistress of Edgar Allan Poe escorts you into the glittering world of New York in the 1840s, when poets were celebrities and the admission of emotions like silk gowns and glossy beaver hats were a luxury...A bewitching, vivid trip into the heyday of American literary society." (Oprah.com) "A vivid portrait of New York's cultural life in the mid-1800s, when writers like Poe were practically rock stars. Don't miss it." (People) Is it true that Edgar Allan Poe cheated on his tubercular, insipid young wife with a lady poet he met at a literary salon? Cullen makes you hope so. (*New York Times*) "Mrs. Poe is such a compelling novel, bringing history to vivid life. Danger, sensuality, mystery and passion fill the pages of this bewitching story set in the crowded cobbled streets, alleyways, cheap boardinghouses and literary gatherings of mid-nineteenth century New York City. Everyone warns the lovely, near penniless poet Mrs. Osgood, a deserted wife with two young children, to stay away from the dark-eyed writer Edgar Allan Poe who has fallen in love with her. She writes tender verses; he creates blood-curdling tales but he is darker than his writing, carrying secrets of his frail much younger wife and his heinous past. Even when Mrs. Osgood understands that someone is trying to kill her because of him, she cannot put aside her passion until it is almost too late." (Stephanie Cowell, author of *Claude and Camille*) "Lynn Cullen seems to have transported herself to Old New York. Mrs. Poe feels that authentic. Without a doubt, this is one of the best historical fiction novels I've read in a long time. Evocative, compassionate, intelligent, sexy and utterly addictive. The passion between Frances Osgood and Edgar Allan Poe burns up the pages while at the same time her relationship with Mrs. Poe makes your heart ache. Truly a book to savor!" (M.J. Rose, International Bestselling Author) At once beautiful and heartbreaking, Lynn Cullen has woven together a tapestry of fact and rumor to give us an intimate view into the forbidden love between two complicated, creative lives. Historical fiction fans, you're in for a treat. (Susan Crandall, bestselling author of *Whistling Past the Graveyard*) "In *Mrs. Poe*, Lynn Cullen conjures a darkly atmospheric 19th century New York with a masterful hand. Rich with period detail and compelling characters, Mrs. Poe weaves a thread of creeping menace into the true story of Edgar Allan Poe's obsessive liaison with Frances Osgood for a thoroughly unforgettable and chilling read. Enthralling." (Deanna Raybourn, author of *A Spear of Summer Grass*) "The fierce ambitions and dangerous rivalries of literary New York in the 1840s come vividly alive in Lynn Cullen's riveting novel *Mrs. Poe*. With masterful skill, Cullen tells the story of the real-life fatal attraction between the toast-of-the-town Gothic storyteller Edgar Allan Poe and vulnerable poet Frances Sargent

Osgood. The fact that both are unhappily married did not sanction any sort of romance in this judgmental society, and Cullen skillfully charts the course of a fraught and forbidden love affair. As the lonely Mrs. Osgood is pulled further and further into Mr. Poe's dark world, the tensions in the Poes' bizarre marriage explode. Full of longing, this is a story both poignant and shocking and not easily forgotten." (Nancy Bilyeau, author of *The Chalice*) Clearly composed and carefully researched, the book's vivid prose accentuates the passion, jealousy and hatred that evolve from a tangled three-way relationship that could easily have come straight from the pages of Poe's stories. A must-read for those intrigued by Poe, poetry and the latter half of 19th-century America. (RT Books (four stars)) Taking advantage of letters and published poems, imaginative historical novelist Cullen cleverly spins a mysterious, dark tale told by Mrs. Osgood about the long-ago intrigue, with just enough facts to make it believable. (Booklist) Lynn Cullen weaves a dark, sensuous love triangle between three real people, and in the midst of many real historical details, she creates something truly and wonderfully surprising... Devotees of dark historical fiction will devour Mrs. Poe, but so too will fans of Gothic romance and forbidden love stories. This is an invigoratingly creepy historical novel propelled by brilliant pacing. If you like books that send a little shiver up your spine, don't miss it. (Book Page) "Mrs. Poe is an entertaining tale with interesting characters, a vibrant locale, a good dose of romance, and even some intrigue, which is what an historical novel should be." (The Copperfield) "Cullen creates a delicious sense of suspense and impending doom; antebellum Manhattan and the ruling literati cast an irresistible spell." (Atlanta Magazine) Brilliant, a wonderful and fascinating novel, Poe absolutely comes to life in Cullen's novel. Mrs. Poe is truly one of the best historical fiction novels of 2013 and possibly ever. (Examiner.com) "With obvious love and admiration for Edgar Allan Poe and his works, the author writes her dialogue scenes with such authenticity you swear you are in the parlor of one of Poe's closest friends [and have] somehow received an invitation to one of these private gatherings where Mr. Poe will arrive with his ailing younger wife, Virginia, to read his latest published poem." (Kimberly Eve Musings of a Writer) "If you want to lose yourself in another time and place and become wrapped up in the drama of the life of literary New York and the characters who populated it, then look no further. Mrs. Poe is a treasure and one you'll want to reread and research and remember." (Stephanie Piro, The Militant Recommender) "Lynn Cullen's Mrs. Poe delivers the passion for characters that I had found in *Anna Karenina*, the tragedy that I discovered in *Splendor in the Grass*, and the thrill ride that I experienced in Poe's eerily written stories." (Dilettantish Reader) "I'm already a fan of Poe's work. To see another side to him, a softer side to his tormented soul, was refreshing and wonderful. There is no way I can give this novel any less than 5 stars." (Literary RR Book Blog) "I absolutely loved everything about this book, starting with the literary references right down to the forbidden romance. Cullen took all the pieces, fact and rumors, about Edgar Allan Poe and the characters around him and wrote a beautiful story that delves into feminism, technological progress, NYC literary society, and so much more." (ShelfNotes.com) "Coupled with lyrical prose and a fascinatingly complicated love triangle, the book held my attention from start to finish, giving me an insight into the tumultuous life of not only the characters, but of writers and the struggles they faced." (GreatHistoricals.com) This is one of the best books that I have EVER read and I strongly encourage you to check it out, Poe fan or not, the writing is just that good. (Ionia Martin, Readful Things) "Mrs. Poe is a captivating novel. Cullen's attention to historical detail, lush prose and enlightening evocation of an interesting moment in American literary history make this story a fascinating read. (Arts ATL)