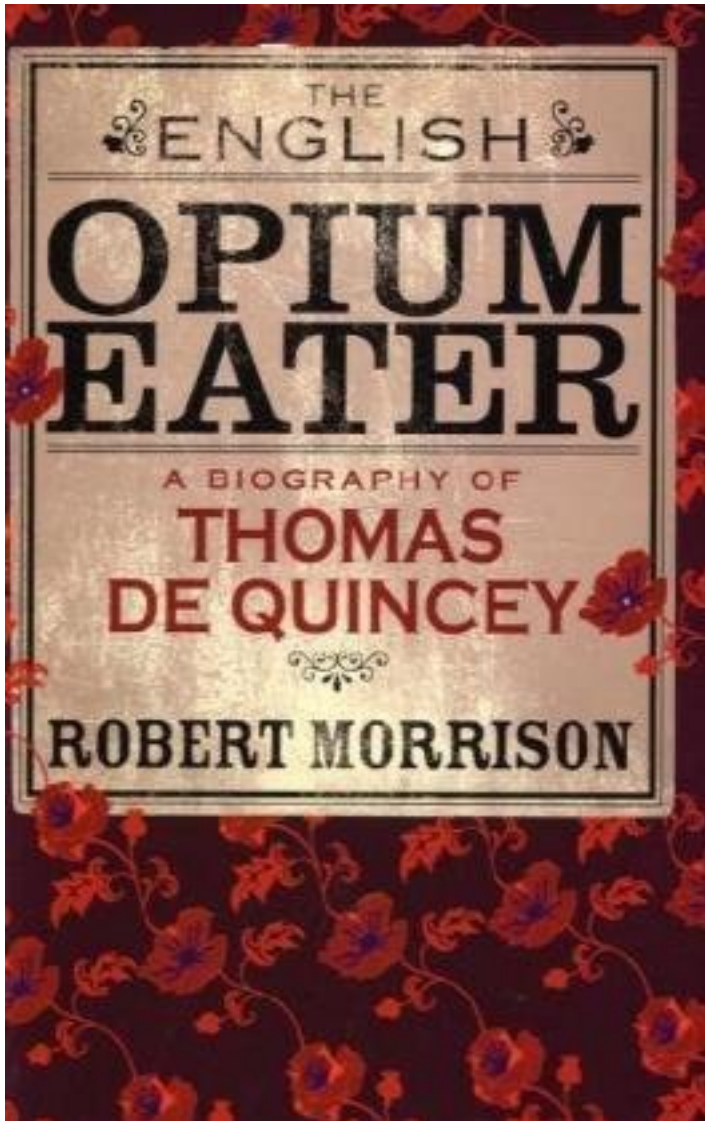


The English Opium-Eater



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Author of the famous and semi-scandalous CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER, Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) has long lacked a fully fledged biography. His friendships with leading poets and men of letters in the Romantic and Victorian periods - including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle - have long placed him at the centre of 19th-century literary studies. De Quincey also stands at the meeting point in the culture wars between Edinburgh and London; between high art and popular taste; and between the devotees of the Romantic imagination and those of hack journalism. He was a man who engaged with nearly every facet of literary culture, including the roles played by publishers, booksellers and journalists in literary production, dissemination and evaluation. His writing was a tremendous influence on Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, William Burroughs and Peter Ackroyd. De Quincey is a fascinating (and topical) figure for other reasons too: a self-mythologizing autobiographer whose attitudes to drug-induced creativity and addiction strike highly resonant chords for a contemporary readership. Robert Morrison's biography passionately argues for the critical importance and enduring value of this neglected essayist, critic and biographer.

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目录:

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