



The Monk

## The Monk: A Romance

by Matthew Lewis (1775-1818)

The Monk

*The Monk* is a story of unrequited desire between mentor and pupil mixed with elements of the supernatural. It includes several subplots involving rape, torture and incest. It is the old story of the forces of good versus the forces of evil – except that in this one evil comes out ahead.

When *The Monk* was first published in 1795 it was received well by readers and reviewers, and a second edition to be printed the following year. By the third year there began a growing criticism of the book and its author, mostly on the basis of immorality. The book caused such a scandal that Lewis published another version complete with redactions and rewrites to remove the shame it had brought upon his family and the political institution of which he was a part.

*The Monk* straddles the genres of Gothicism and Decadence, and includes elements of Romanticism. Lewis also blended the roles of gender in this work--particularly in the character of Rosario/Matilda. The sexual tension between Ambrosio and this character--along with the eventual revelation of true identity--are an exposé on the topic of same-sex love and makes this work an early contribution to LGBT literature.

In spite of the mountains of criticism against the book, it remained a best seller well into the 19th century. The version read here is the unexpurgated version including all of the “scandal and immorality” of the original.

Matthew Lewis

Total running time: 16:17:38  
Read by James K. White

Cover design and photograph by Kathryn Delaney

Matthew Lewis

