



# Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography

*D.L. Macdonald*

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## **Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography** D.L. Macdonald

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), the English novelist, playwright, poet, and composer, is best known for his Gothic novel *The Monk*. (1796). His literary endeavours included translations and adaptations of works by Goethe, Kleist, and Schiller. Lewis is said to have inspired and influenced such diverse writers as Artaud, Coleridge, Dickens, Flaubert, and Scott.

D.L. Macdonald presents a modern critical biography of Lewis, who until now has been neglected as a cultural figure. This is the first study to consider all of Lewis's works and their connections to his personal life. In particular, Macdonald considers the significance of Lewis's position as a liberal slave-owner in the age of abolition and as a (probable) homosexual in an age of virulent homophobia. He begins by focusing on Lewis's personal life and his constant preoccupations stemming from the failure of his parents' marriage, from his relationships with his mother and his father, and from his sexuality. Macdonald then proceeds to a discussion of Lewis's public life as part of the literary and political history of the period.

The biography is based on extensive archival research in England, Scotland, Jamaica, and North America, drawing on recently discovered manuscript and printed material as well as contemporary views.

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