



The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter

Ambrose Bierce

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On arriving at a rural monastery, the monk Ambrosius meets a young girl, Benedicta. She is shunned by the local community for being the daughter of the local hangman, but Ambrosius is drawn into a dangerous sympathy with her, and in defiance of the community and his superiors, he starts spending time alone with her. But when her virtue is corrupted by an impetuous young man, the stage is set for a battle between heart, mind, body, spirit, the sins of the past, and redemption. Allegedly a rewriting from a lost German original, Ambrose Bierce's 1892 novel reads as a seamless, almost folktale-like masterpiece.

The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter Details

Date : Published 1967 by Heritage Press (first published 1892)

ISBN : 9781199128546

Author : Ambrose Bierce

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From Reader Review The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter for online ebook

Caroline Beatle says

4.5/5

Hermosa edición, preciosas ilustraciones, traducción cuidadísima. Un relato sobrecojedor pero al mismo tiempo muy poético que te hace leerlo con una rapidez extraordinaria.

Perry Whitford says

An inexperienced Franciscan monk called Ambrosius is sent on a mission to the mountain wilds near Salzburg, where he is immediately entranced by the arresting sight of a beautiful young maiden singing and dancing by the gallows of a recently hung man.

The girl turns out to be the hangman's daughter, Benedicta, chasing away the vultures from the swaying body. Father and daughter are treated like outcasts in the remote community, with Benedicta accused of harlotry. Ambrosius is convinced of her purity, but fears that his own feelings for her are less than chaste.

By rights this story should probably be credited to Adolphe de Castro, a longtime correspondent of H.P. Lovecraft. Ambrose Bierce certainly translated it for him and gave advice on the ending, but that may have been all. That said, de Castro himself claims to have found the tale written down in a German monastery.

Whomever authored it, it's not particularly well written, but it does contain one or two memorable scenes (such as the one described above) and a truly spine tingling ending which really elevates the entire story.

Oh, the dangers of enforced celibacy!

Michael says

I found this in an antique bookseller. Originally published in the late 19th century (my copy is a 1967 print), it tells a story of a young Franciscan monk in pre-enlightenment Germany, who takes pity on the local hangman's daughter, a figure who by nature of her father's occupation is a social outcast. At first, due to the reverential language of the tale, it seemed that it would be a tale of temptation and mutual redemption. By the end of the book, it turns into something quite different. Not for a moment lurid in any way, it is a beautifully written tale that some may interpret as a warning of the dangers of a celibate life. I read it differently. I saw it as a warning of misplaced affection and the dangers of obsession in any walk of life.

On the whole, it was short, enjoyable, and told its story with a delicacy rarely seen in modern books.

Len Knighton says

Beautifully written, this book is akin to a Shakespeare tragedy. Ambrosius, the monk, is the personification of so many Christians past and present, displaying a zealousness that can triumph over evil or wreak destruction on the innocent.

Bierce, who was introduced to me in Drew Gilpin Faust's wonderful book **THIS REPUBLIC OF SUFFERING**, was well familiar with such zealousness as witnessed before, during, and after the Civil War. While recommending this book, I heartily recommend hers.

Five stars

Michael says

It was cool reading this alongside Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, because both stories go different directions from the same concept. They start with a virtuous monk, then put irresistible temptation in his way to see what happens. But while Lewis' character needs an outside influence to pull him towards sin, Bierce's falls all on his own.

Lewis has the more thrilling story (because it's so lurid), but Bierce's (which does go to some ghastly places as well) is the more effective warning. Not just for religious people, but for anyone tempted to justify selfish, prideful activity in the name of trying to "help" someone.

Angela says

The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter is a short, but effective, novel written by the American author, Ambrose Bierce. It is written in the form of an undated diary, detailing the arrival in Berchtesgaden of three Franciscan monks, including the diary writer, Ambrosius. He goes on to tell of his first meeting with Benedicta, the hangman's daughter, and of his subsequent meetings and dealings with her.

The story is a tragic one, being "a battle between body and spirit, the sins of the past and the desire for redemption." I particularly enjoyed Bierce's descriptions of the scenery as seen through the eyes of the young monk, Ambrosius.

Beth says

Very short story that reads like a cautionary fairytale. Simply written in a diary form with succinct and sharp descriptions of the landscapes that you can see immediately in your minds eye! The style it is written in reminds me of Evelyn Waugh, but I'm not sure why exactly!

Mike Puma says

My, my, my. So this is Ambrose Bierce. A twist of fate, a twist of a knife. A well-intentioned monk overcome by desire makes a fatal mistake when judging another's character. Things aren't as they seem; they rarely are. Interesting. Somewhat predictable. Whatever else you do, if you should get your hands on the Heritage Press edition, DO NOT read the Introduction unless you do so as an Afterword.

Sarah says

Literary device: cognitive dissonance/ irony

Nickolas the Kid says

?μορφη ιστορ?α, μακρι? ?μως απ? ?φος του Μπηρς (φαντ?σματα, μ?γισσες κλπ κλπ)...

Μ?σω της ιστορ?ας και της αφ?γησης του Μοναχο? Αμβρ?σιου, ο συγγραφ?ας μιλ?ει για την θρησκε?α, την π?στη, τον ?ρωτα και την λογικ?.

Νο?ματα δοσμ?να με απλ? τρ?πο, παν?μορφες περιγραφ?ς και χαρακτ?ρες βγαλμ?νοι απ? παραδ?σεις και θρ?λους.

Ο συγγραφ?ας χτ?ζει, σε ?λη την δι?ρκεια αυτο? του μικρο? διηγ?ματος, την πλοκ? που θα οδηγ?σει στην απ?λυτη λ?τρωση.

Εν τ?λει διασκεδαστικ? και ελαφρ?ς φιλοσοφημ?νο δι?γημα.

3,5*

Octavio Villalpando says

Este es otro de esos libros que he comprado únicamente por el trabajo visual de Santiago Caruso, aunque me gusta mucho también el trabajo de Bierce. No lo había leído anteriormente "El monje y la hija del verdugo", aunque me daba la impresión de que no iba a ser algo típico a lo que ya he leído en el pasado del autor, y tuve razón. En esta ocasión, se trata de un relato más inscrito dentro de la tradición europea de esas viejas leyendas tomadas como base para una obra literaria. Esta en particular, puede inscribirse un poco dentro del género gótico, y es imposible que no recuerde obras como "El monje" de Mathew G. Lewis, y aunque no abunda tanto en el tema de la maldad, si trata acerca del tema del alma con buenas intenciones iniciales, pero que acaba sucumbiendo cuando se le presenta la primera tentación.

Está escrito en primera persona, así que nos es posible recorrer de primera mano los caminos que acaban en la tragedia que le acontece al Monje del relato, salpicado con unas descripciones que no desmerezcan para nada las mejores obras del gótico, predisponiendo al lector al estado de ánimo ideal para testificar el descenso del protagonista hasta la sima más abyecta del pecado.

¿Y de las ilustraciones? Bueno, de esas no hay nada que decir, como siempre con el trabajo de Caruso, son

magníficas y se nota el excelente trabajo al transcribir en forma visual las emociones contenidas en el relato.

Muy recomendable.

G. Lawrence says

The words are poetic, the subject as gothic as could be... I loved this book. Short, anything but sweet... dark, beautiful and haunting... Everything a reader could look for in a gothic fiction.

Roger Senra says

Un relato excelente, con una gran ambientacion gotica. Unos monjes son cambiados a un convento ubicado en lo alto de las montañas y alli, uno de ellos conoce a la marginada pero bellisima hija de un verdugo, la cual lo deja turbado desde el principio. Muy buenas descripciones del ambiente, de las costumbres de la epoca y tambien de los personajes. No hay que leerlo con expectativas de que sea un relato de terror, sino un relato de suspenso gotico.

Orcun says

Yazar?n önsözünden anlad??m kadar?yla, bu hikâyenin kökeni Bavarya Alplerindeki bir Fransisken Manast?r?nda bulunan el yazmas?na dayan?yormu?. Richard Voss'un buna dayanarak yazd??? öyküden (muhtemelen "Der Mönch von Berchtesgaden" / 1891) yap?lan çeviriyyi, bir dostu düzeltmesi için Ambrose Bierce'a getirmi?, o da öyküyü geni?letip detayland?rarak kendi uyarlamas?n? yapm??.

?imdiye kadar Bierce'dan kötü bir ?ey okumad?m, bu k?sa romanda da bu kural bozulmad?. Sade üslubuyla a??r a??r felakete yakla?t???n?z? hissettiren, Alman romantizmi tarz?ndaki bu kasvetli tarihsel hikâyeyi (17. yy) çok be?endim. Bierce'a özgü sert, alayc? ironi yok, ama gene son sayfada trajik bir sürpriz var.

Hani Abdullah says

Asked by a contemporary to translate this novella to English (from yet another translation to German), Ambrose took it upon himself to add some of his own spice to the mix. Ironically, that very contemporary whom Ambrose was asked by, disclosed later that that original author had told him that the whole base of the story was from a manuscript he had found in a Franciscan monastery somewhere in Bavaria.

This is the first work of Ambrose that I have read. With the nature of Ambrose's contribution, it's hard to judge his writing style and choice of genre, when not knowing when it was it his words I was reading, or the translator to German's, or of the person initially thought to be the author, OR yet more of the original author whose manuscript was held by the Franciscan Bavarian monks. It certainly creates some confusion.

The ambiguous history of the novella doesn't make clear the literary intention that the author/s had by

writing/editing this piece. It also is unclear, when keeping in mind where the manuscript was held, whether at some instances the author/s intended sarcasm, or were quite genuine.

I did enjoy this 2-day read quite a lot. For some reason, one which I hope isn't to my disadvantage, I love reading novels that have in them detailed false narrations, and the slow degeneration of the mental and physical states of protagonist. Also found in Dostoevsky's works, this novel too did that well.

It's only around 70 pages, so it doesn't require much to experience.

latner3 says

Like a fairy tale.Grim.

Paul Beech says

Haunting psychological thriller, set in the forests and monasteries of medieval Germany. It is perhaps most notable for the convincing way in which its first-person narrator quickly descends into murderous monomania.

Liam Bryant says

The Monk and the Hangmans daughter by Ambrose Bierce. A short novel which is written in a first person diary from, its the diary of a young monk called Ambrosius. The story follows Ambrosius' pilgrimage and on his journey he meets the hangman's daughter. The rest of the story follows his subsequent meetings with her. Slowly he becomes obsessed with the girl, she is shunned from town (and the church) because of her fathers job and Ambrosius makes it his mission to save her soul not matter what the cost. The author is very good at describing the young monks views on the landscape and he really brings across the monks inner turmoil. A small cast of characters really help bring out the obsessive nature of the monk. What an ending!

Verdict? I loved it.

TOM says

A short yet poignant and beautifully written tale concerning the young Franciscan monk Ambrosius, who is torn apart by the conflict between the religious beliefs and instruction of his order and his blossoming love for the daughter of the local hangman, who is abhorred by the community.

In many ways this short novella exposes the duplicity and bigotry of religion, and the sheer cruelty and sadistic intent behind the dogma (or so I felt) of the Franciscans. Ambrosius is an innocent, used and scorned

by the monks themselves and the local populace.

Bierce is an excellent writer and this is a very readable tale which I highly enjoyed. Wonderfully descriptive prose and very evocative imagery. You are drawn in by the torment and agonies of the narrator.

From the Oneworld Classics series.

Mark Barrett says

What a wonderful little read. A fairytale style at times - certainly at the start and with a sense of magic and whimsy brought about by referred-to legends and the imagination of the narrator.

The best aspect of this story is the naive voice that the narrator has adopted - always with an undertone which leaves you questioning his fallibility. Such great writing to have produced this.

The battle between earthly love and heavenly love within the narrating monk is superbly played out, and the ending does little to answer this eternal question.

A wonderfully disturbing quick read.
