



Les caves du Vatican

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Qu'une vieille mule comme Amédée Fleurissoire rencontre des escrocs, et le voilà en route pour Rome, persuadé d'aller sauver le pape. À ce jeu de dupes, il n'a pas grand chose à perdre sinon quelques illusions et beaucoup d'argent.

Qu'un jeune arriviste comme Lafcadio décide de se faire passer pour le fils naturel d'un grand auteur et le voilà maître à chanter. À ce jeu de dupes, il a tout à gagner.

Mais que ces deux destins se croisent à bord d'un vieux train et tout bascule : que se passerait-il si Lafcadio poussait cet inconnu hors du train, comme ça, gratuitement, un crime pour rien ? Ça n'aurait aucun sens, mais c'est justement pour ça que ce serait grisant : la liberté dans l'acte gratuit...

Les mécanismes de la pensée, les rouages de la décision, la teneur de notre liberté : autant d'aspects de la nature humaine qui fascinent Gide, et qu'il traque dans toute son oeuvre, flirtant avec les frontières de l'absurde, non sans humour, mais toujours avec style et raffinement. --*Karla Manuele*

Les caves du Vatican Details

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Marmott79 says

Fleurissoire tra Lancillotto, Don Chisciotte e il surrealismo

Quando Amédée Fleurissoire, marito di Arnica, viene a conoscenza del rapimento resta folgorato da un impulso mai provato prima e anziché sostenere la finta colletta che dovrebbe aiutare a liberare il Papa, decide dipartire lui stesso in missione. Lui, novello don Chisciotte che non aveva mai viaggiato al di fuori della sua città, che viveva nel terrore di prendersi un raffreddore, lui si sente ormai predestinato: finalmente ha trovato lo scopo della sua esistenza e si mette in viaggio, solo, alla volta di Roma.

Come gli antichi eroi di chiara fama consacrati dalle canzoni di gesta, a cavallo del suo treno, con un foulard come scudo e nessuna arma al fianco parte in missione lasciando moglie e amico tra stupore e ammirazione.

Inutile dire che il viaggio è già di per sé qualcosa di ridicolo tra treni sbagliati, pulci, cimici, zanzare, brufoli e il terrore delle correnti d'aria ma alla fine riesce ad arrivare a Roma e a portarsi il più vicino possibile a quel Papa che crede di dover salvare. E' vicino, si sente vicinissimo a compiere la sua (ridicola) missione ma... cade in tentazione e la mattina si risveglia con una donna che giace nuda al suo fianco.

E' la fine.

Per quanto desideri portare a termine la sua missione il senso di colpa lo divora, la distrazione di un momento fa crollare in lui tutta la sicurezza di essere il predestinato e alla fine confessa il suo peccato, tra le risate degli impostori e del lettore:

"... e siccome i fumi del vino si mescolavano alle nubi della tristezza e i rutti dell'ubriachezza al gemito dei singhiozzi, chino dalla parte di Protos cominciò col vomitare il pranzo. Poi raccontò confusamente la notte passata con Carola e il dolore per la recente perdita della sua verginità. Don Bartolotti e prete Cave fecero un enorme sforzo per non soffocare dalle risate."

Come Lancillotto a un passo dal Santo Graal, Fleurissoire si sente a un passo dal portare a termine l'arduo compito: ha trovato degli alleati, prodi cavalieri in abito talare che lo supporteranno e lo indirizzeranno dritto alla meta.

Come Lancillotto perduto a causa di una passione dannata per Ginevra, Fleurissoire peccherà, a sua insaputa oserei dire, e tutta la forza delle sue più nobili intenzioni crollerà come castello di carte al vento per una prostituta.

Fleurissoire è l'uomo comune: anonimo, intristito, privo di immaginazione, grigio, lo stereotipo del borghese dei primi del Novecento, non c'è possibilità di salvezza per la sua anima.

La grande rivoluzione di Gide risiede nell'utilizzare questo buffo personaggio per mettere nella pratica narrativa ciò che André Breton teorizzerà dieci anni più tardi nel 1924 nel Manifesto del Surrealismo:

"Il più semplice atto surrealista consiste nello scendere in strada con una pistola per mano e sparare a caso, finché si può, sulla folla"

E così fa André Gide: all'improvviso, senza minimamente preannunciarlo, senza motivo, l'autore Boooooom! Getta il povero Fleurissoire fuori dal treno e fuori dalla storia lasciando il lettore a guardare dal finestrino il

corpo scomposto dell'incolpevole borghesuccio.

"Un crimine senza motivo... Non è tanto degli avvenimenti che ho curiosità, quanto di me stesso"
Così pensa Lafcadio mentre compie il gesto assurdo e quando cerca di motivare l'atroce atto riesce solo a dire

"Non lo so... Non aveva un aspetto felice."

Per Fleurissoire nessun ritorno in patria da eroe, nessun funerale in pompa magna, nessun bardo canterà il suo coraggio e nessun re o papa piangerà sulle sue spoglie, solo la prostituta Carola aspetterà che i parenti stretti si allontanino dalla tomba per porgere il suo ultimo saluto sotto la pioggia e posare un mazzo di crisantemi.

E qui si conclude la storia dell'uomo qualunque che si mise in testa di fare l'eroe e che fu ucciso senza motivo.

<https://marmott79.blogspot.it/2017/10...>

Claire McAlpine says

A rollicking, entertaining satire republished and retranslated in 2014, 100 years after its first publication. It makes fun of those of faith, the bourgeois, the gullible and the innocent. All are victims, except perhaps the illegitimate.

A much more comprehensive review here at Word by Word.

Mike says

Gide has a brilliant ability to weave subplots together into a unified narrative, while offering perspectives and shades of meaning from characters who seem peripheral, but whose final integration into the novel becomes essential. His structural form is quintessentially modernist.

Lafcadio's Adventures (or *The Vatican Cellars*) is the funniest and most satirical work I've read so far from Gide, telling the story of various con artists and ne'er-do-wells who hatch plots to trick faithful Catholics into handing over money in the belief that their current Pope is an imposter and that the real Pope is being held hostage. Amid these enjoyable chapters is thrust Lafcadio, whose "adventures" involve a motiveless murder, which ends up pulling Lafcadio further into the machinations of the con artists and their victims.

Throughout the novel, Gide provides a sharp critique of the way religious acolytes exist so separate from the tenants (and leaders) of their church that they might as well be living totally independent from their own religion, at least morally speaking. At the personal or individual level, our interactions with each other are so full of rationalizations, hypocrisies, and morally dubious shenanigans that followers of any faith might very well be living as if their leaders were imposters and their religions were shams; the impossibility of gaining access to the power of faith (both in terms of the structure of their churches and the dogma of their belief) places each person in a position of ethical limbo. (There are no literal Vatican cellars, but we are all essentially living beneath them!) We might as well just be cast adrift to figure it all out on our own.

And so Lafcadio must do so, ultimately caught between the frauds of religion, social relations, and the law -- none of which can save him. The question becomes: can love save him, or is it another ruse? Can Lafcadio

Rebecka says

I find it difficult to fully explain how disappointed I am with this book. Not only did it take me quite long to read, but it never even came close to interesting me. The various plots? Bah. Couldn't care less. The writing? Atrocious. I can't stand characters who talk to themselves Days of our Lives-style. The characters? Brutally boring (and what's with the names?). Lafcadio has a shimmer of intrigue to him, but not enough to make up for the extreme platitude of the rest of the cast. The female characters? Wait, were there any? Except for the characterless fool and the even more characterless whore?

French literature, here you failed miserably.

Felix says

An odd book (maybe I missed something crucial?).

The way I perceive it, there are essentially three different books here, rolled into a slim volume:

1. A social satire, a Balzac parody of sorts.
2. A caper about swindlers.
3. A poor man's Crime and Punishment, with an open ending.

But all three share the same characters!

I liked Book 2 the best, it was uproariously funny; I laughed aloud a lot.

Panos says

“[...]βασ?λευε αν?μεσα τους μια κ?ποια αρμον?α και στις σχ?σεις τους πλανι?ταν ?να ε?δος ψευτοευτυχ?ας. Ο καθ?νας τους, υποφ?ροντας τον ?λλο, θεωρο?σε ?τι ασκο?σε κατ? κ?ποιο τρ?πο, αρκετ? διακριτικ?, την αρετ? του[...]”

John Kemp says

"Is it possible to choose freely to do evil?" is the question that Gide set out to explore in this "sotie", a kind of light-hearted philosophical jeu d'esprit and satire, interesting too as an early novelistic exploration of the theme of paranoia and conspiracy theory. The answer is no, but much fun is had at the expense of the Church and bourgeoisie along the way.

Justin Evans says

Wonderful, but also a bit of a hot mess. *The Vatican Cellars* starts off as a painfully dull 19th century novel of family disagreement, roughly as entertaining as Fontane, and then, for no apparent reason, turns into a

glorious farce involving a fake pope kidnapping, an egregiously intrusive narrator, a motiveless murder (well before Camus), metanarrative silliness, a beautifully executed plot resolution, and a typically excellent Gidean moral conundrum: if we judge morality based on intention, can an act be wrong if it's unmotivated? This must slot into the fake pope kidnapping in some way, but I haven't puzzled that out yet, unless those who charge this book with nihilism are right, and the point is that the very idea of intention is useless, just as the pope-as-symbol is (this book suggests) empty, given that we can never be certain that the pope is actually the pope, and not someone stuck on the throne by conspiratorially minded free masons.

All of which is great. The difficulty is getting through that god-awful opening, which Gide clearly knew was god-awful, but kept there just to make sure you realized that he was making fun of such very respectable people in the text that followed. It's intellectually satisfying, but aesthetically offensive, and certainly I'll be skipping it when I re-read this.

J de Salvo says

One of the finest Novels ever written. One in a cycle of Old Great Novels about "Crime and Punishment", which includes Dostoevsky, Gide, Camus, and Celine, that Nazi.

Jim says

André Gide is not always a fun writer. His **Strait Is the Gate** is a work of devout even pseudo religiosity. It didn't take long for Gide to have a Freemasons' cabal hold Pope Leo XIII captive in the caves under the Vatican and replace him with a lookalike, just so that his hero can collect money from the devout rich to release him.

Lafcadio's Adventures is lighthearted throughout, even though one of Lafcadio Wliuki's "marks" gets pushed off a train to his death near Capua. The plot ranges from France to Italy and involves, on one hand, a cast of what Lafcadio calls "slims," and, on the other, what he calls the "crusted" those who have money and are not a little stupid.

Rob Atkinson says

A new addition to the list of my all time favorite novels. Funny how that often seems to be the case with things I picked up decades ago and left languishing on my shelves, unread! A brief mention of Lafcadio in "Dada In Paris" finally piqued my interest.

This is a nasty, witty farcical novel which squarely takes aim at the credulous and convention-bound, particularly those of a pious bent. I won't share any spoilers as to the plot, so as not to deny the same pleasure I felt reading "Lafcadio's Adventures" to the uninitiated. The eponymous hero is amorality incarnate, and recalls Dorian Grey in some respects, notably in his beauty. A host of cunning rogues and blinkered fools populate his world, as the action jumps from Paris to the south of France to Rome and Naples. I expect that in 1914 when this was released under its original French title "Les Caves du Vatican" it must have offended all the right people.

Anesa says

Possible spoiler--

Despite my expectation that Gide must be a thoroughly anti-establishment writer, developments in this racy and sometimes humorous narrative place the author in company with Dan Quayle and other conservatives who've decried the evil effects of illegitimate births & child-rearing. Lafcadio's "unmotivated crime" comes to pass as a result of his rootless lifestyle and devotion to fleeting amusements. The evil impulse fills an emptiness where attachment is lacking. His mother's wanton ways in passing him from uncle to uncle clearly established the unfortunate pattern! And despite being drawn to pleasure, Lafcadio is also a bit of a Buddhist: he enters the void outside of social convention and even finds it possible to "quit a society as simply as all that, without stepping at the same moment into another..." A very interesting read!

Czarny Pies says

Andre Gide the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947 is talked about less now than when I was attending secondary school in the 1970s. Because of his great reputation, I laboured through a half-dozen or so of his works before I tired of him. I found several of his works (La Porte Etroite, La Symphonie Pastorale and l'Immortaliste) to be remarkable primarily for the lack of joy they created in the reader's spirit.

I suggest then that someone wishing to know more about Gide start with Les Caves de Vatican which is the only of his novels that I have read that I have found to be truly funny. It is sparkling and full of Gallic wit. It comments on the evil of gratuitous actions and also stands as a good example of the Symbolist literary movement.

Try reading this short book described by the author as a *sotie* (which Larousse defines as a 'piece of gross buffoonery written for fools'). If you enjoy it, then you might try *The Counterfeiters* (Les faux-monnayeurs) which would be Gide's masterpiece if in fact he has one.

Rosanna says

Càpita sempre così: quando leggo un nuovo autore mi serve un po' di tempo per 'entrare' nel suo modo di scrivere, il suo stile mi risulta da subito ostico, mi metto sulla difensiva e procedo lenta, capitolo dopo capitolo. E' accaduto anche con Gide. Solo dopo il Libro Primo ho incominciato addirittura a divertirmi e ad imparare qualcosa, dei tempi, degli animi, delle ipocrisie del periodo in cui è ambientata la storia.

Storia di una farsa, piena di simbolismi e disvelamenti.

I personaggi non sono molti, ma tutti ben delineati e collegati tra loro da legami parentali che rendono l'atmosfera di un'intera famiglia. Agiscono come pensano e quando il loro comportamento cambia se ne comprende la motivazione psicologica per cui accade, come la guarigione 'miracolosa' autosuggestionata dall'aver ascoltato una preghiera di bimba e il successivo ritornare claudicante dopo aver saputo del rapimento del Papa e sua sostituzione al soglio con un sosia.

Questa non è che una truffa, la traccia che segue l'autore per smascherare ipocrisie di tempi e uomini, oltre la loro ingenua creduloneria. Ho notato, ma forse sbaglio, che ognuno di loro è inserito in una propria esistenza circolare, tutti tornano a ciò che erano all'inizio della storia, alle convinzioni che avevano, alla loro vita,

come se questo fosse il destino che hanno in comune, mentre è nel mezzo che li potrebbe sorprendere una qualche verità. Questo mi ricorda qualcosa....

Adottando un solo filtro per ripensare al romanzo, quello mio personale di donna, noto come ad ogni personaggio maschile ne corrisponda uno femminile, figure in secondo piano certo, ma il loro 'tipo' è speculare a quello del compagno. Ciò non è vero, mi pare, per la vittima che in quanto tale susciterà emozioni e sentimenti caritatevoli in chi non te lo saresti aspettato.

In molti romanzi la prostituta ha in se i migliori sentimenti e nel giusto momento, moti d'animo che porteranno a decisioni difficili e, pur volendolo fare, non mi sbilancio definendole anche giuste. Sempre per rispettare l'intento dell'autore che è quello di evidenziare le piccinerie ipocrite dell'animo umano oltre a quello della sua genitrice.

Rares Hudac says

Unexpected

The first 1/3 of the book goes on and blabs about nothing and nothing without giving signs of wiling to be interesting; then, by the time you get to it's half, you are bombarded with everything you could want from a book-> plot twists, kidnappings, murders, more plot twists, and all the characters coming together (more or less) in the end; almost as if by the end, the author is trying to make up for the boredom caused at the beginning.

In regards to the themes, there is, again, a bit of everything: religion, love, family, life in general, crime; these are combined with some parts where the story tries to be funny (but it pretty much fails).

Probably the worst thing about it (besides the horrible beginning) is the author. The author sometimes tries to be, let's say a 'character', by giving direct explanations or by writing "I'm not going to detail because it might bore you", or "But this description will be found interesting only by a certain type of readers"; first of all, we don't care; second of all, can we please skip to the good part?

All in all, it's pretty enjoyable if you get to it's half and can get over the author's constant interruption .
