



## La Porte des enfers

*Laurent Gaudé*

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Au lendemain d'une fusillade à Naples, Matteo voit s'effondrer toute raison d'être : son petit garçon est mort. Nuit après nuit, à bord de son taxi vide, il s'enfonce dans la solitude et parcourt au hasard les rues de la ville. Un soir, dans un minuscule café, il fait la connaissance du patron, Garibaldo, de l'impénitent curé don Mazerotti, et surtout du professeur Provolone, personnage haut en couleur, aussi érudit que sulfureux, qui tient d'étranges discours sur la réalité des Enfers. Et qui prétend qu'on peut y descendre... Ceux qui meurent emmènent dans l'au-delà un peu de notre vie, et nous désespérons de la recouvrer, tant pour eux-mêmes que pour apaiser notre douleur.

C'est dans la conscience de tous les deuils - les siens, les nôtres - que Laurent Gaudé oppose à la mort un des mythes les plus forts de l'histoire de l'humanité. Solaire et ténébreux, captivant et haletant, *La Porte des enfers* nous emporte dans un « voyage » où le temps et le destin sont détournés par la volonté d'arracher un être au néant

## La Porte des enfers Details

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Author : Laurent Gaudé

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## From Reader Review La Porte des enfers for online ebook

### **Lisa says**

The Underworld doesn't often make it into the books I read. I used to read Charles Mikolaycak's exquisite illustrated version of the story of Orpheus and his doomed quest for Eurydice to my students, and of course there is Dante's Inferno which tells the story of the poet's journey through Hell, guided by the shade of Virgil. But as Professor Provolone remarks in this novel, the modern world regards such ideas as insane.

Laurent Gaude's Hell's Gate – with its allusion to Dante's concentric circles of suffering on the cover – is a story of parents driven mad by grief when their eight-year-old only child Pippo is shot dead in the crossfire of a gangland shootout in Naples in 1980. But the story begins in 2002 with an adult Pippo on a vengeful quest. He is a barista par excellence who makes coffee that is just right for however his customers are feeling, but he's about to abandon his growing fame because he's going to take his revenge on Toto Cullaccio, the man who shot him and got away with it scot-free. And he's not afraid of what he's about to do...

I sip my coffee slowly as the steam rises off it. I'm not afraid. I've already been to hell – what could possibly be scarier than that? All I have to fend off are my own nightmares. At night, the bloodcurdling cries and groans of pain come flooding back. I smell the nauseating stench of sulphur. The forest of souls surrounds me. At night, I become a child again, begging the world not to swallow me up. (p.6)

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To read the rest of my review please visit <https://anzlitlovers.com/2017/03/17/h...>

### **Cathy says**

I received an advance review copy courtesy of NetGalley and publisher, Gallic Books, in return for an honest review.

This is a strangely unnerving little book, blending a story of loss and vengeance with elements of magical realism and questions about the nature of life and death. Gaude powerfully depicts the impact on Matteo and his wife, Giuliana, of their son's death. Matteo is consumed by guilt, constantly reliving the day his son was shot and wondering about "the minute microscopic changes that could have altered the course of events". Giuliana's response is implacable anger – at the man who killed their son, at the sympathy of friends and relatives, even at God for allowing it to happen – becoming like some avenging angel or heroine of Greek tragedy. Her challenge, "Bring me my son, Matteo. Bring him back to me" sees Matteo embark on a Dantesque journey. A thought provoking read that I admired rather than loved.

See my full review at <https://whatcathyreadnext.wordpress.c...>

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### **Bo'ness Library Bookgroup says**

"When his son is killed by gangsters' crossfire on his way to school, Neapolitan taxi driver Matteo is consumed by despair. But just when he feels life has lost all meaning, he encounters a man who claims the living can find ways into the afterlife. And legend says that there's an entrance to the underworld beneath Naples. What if Matteo had a chance of bringing Pippo back from the dead?"

We found it impossible to categorise this book. It isn't Crime, although crimes are committed, and it isn't Horror, although some of it is horrific. It isn't really a book you "enjoy" as the themes of the loss of a child, the ensuing grief, revenge, redemption, and love make for quite painful reading. It is very well written, though of course we read it in translation, and it gave us a lot to think about and discuss. There is a very bleak portrayal of the underworld, very vivid and descriptive, reminiscent of Dante's 'Inferno', 'Pilgrim's Progress', and the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, some very odd yet likable characters, and the story line is unlike anything we had read before. Our rating of 2 stars is possibly a bit harsh, and as the book is quite short, we would recommend trying this if you like books that are unusual and intriguing.

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### **Chrissie says**

This is a brave book that changes the way we think about what happens after death .I found it very haunting and heart wrenching for the parents of the dead little boy ,but the aspect of a Hells Gate was very daunting and frightening .Why would an innocent child end up in hell, what happened to Heaven ? I loved the characters and its true that when a tragedy happens to a family it either makes them stronger or tears them apart .If you could exchange your life for the life of your dead child you would .

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### **Jimena says**

A thrilling story that will change the way to think about death and what lies beyond.

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### **Jim Coughenour says**

What began (I thought) as a Neapolitan revenge story shifted into a more sinister key, with visions of the afterlife more horrifying than anything in Virgil or Dante. I found the plot almost incoherent, and fairly sickening – despite (at mid-book) a somewhat enjoyable cast of disreputable characters, including a café owner who can craft a coffee for any mood or occasion. I need a cup now to chase this story from my mind. Death comes as the end, said Agatha Christie, and we can only hope she's right.

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## **Aaron Nash says**

2 and a half stars.

Sometimes when you read a book it just doesn't do it for you. This was one of those times. It isn't bad, but I just found myself bored with it. The characters weren't all that good to read about and for a relatively short book many times I found that it dragged.

The premise itself is interesting though and the descriptions of hell were really smart.

It was Good but not great.

I received a copy of this from netgalley and these are my thoughts.

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## **Mandy says**

I enjoyed this up to a point. Gaudé writes so well, so fluently and so empathetically that his exploration of how grief and loss undo couple Matteo and Giuliana after the death of their son is both haunting and very moving. But I just couldn't buy into the central premise of the book that there exists some sort of mythological underworld with access from our own world and the events that transpire in that cross-over from one world to the next didn't work for me. Nevertheless, it's an interesting and compelling tale and one that has stayed with me.

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## **Chris says**

I received an advance copy of this book from the publisher through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

The nice people at Gallic books sent me an email asking me if I would "Fancy a Trip to the Underworld" and asked me to consider reviewing this book. I confess that I wasn't sure about this one, but I do like Gallic and they have provided a constant stream of books that I love by authors that I am unfamiliar with but have now become favorites. Despite my hesitation, I gave it a try and hoped that this novel wouldn't turn out to be one of those allegorical mind-benders that just made my brain hurt.

Wow, was I wrong.

The underworld is painfully (and geographically) real as are the terrible circumstances that bring our protagonist Matteo to its bronze gates. His six year old son Pippo is killed in the cross fire of a gang fire fight and his sudden and violent death drop Matteo and his wife Giuliana down an elevator shaft of grief which destroys their relationship and leaves them reeling with violent thoughts of violence and revenge. Matteo reaches out to Giuliana but she is unavailable to him and instead gives him an ultimatum--bring me back my son or kill his murderer.

Matteo sets out on a mission of revenge but instead winds up meeting up with other lost souls, also seeking comfort, and finds a professor who tells him, in all seriousness, that the gates to the underworld are real and

that he can direct him to their location. With a faithless priest seeking redemption by his side, he enters the underworld with the intention of dragging Pippo back into the world of the living.

The underworld is vaguely Dantesque in terms of the fact that the souls are in torment, but Gaude's underworld is much more like the Greek Hades. The inhabitants of the underworld are "shades" whose main suffering seems to be a unrequited desire to return to the land of the living and there apparently is no true heaven or hell. I won't go into more detail because to do so would be to spoil the pleasure of the discovery. Suffice it to say that Gaude's underworld is a very interesting and profound place with fascinating locations.

Gaude's background is theatrical and it shows in this novel. In theater it is always all about the characters and this novel is very theatrical in that respect. You ache for these poor souls. The pain is relentless and it is impossible to not be moved by their suffering. However, I also found the plot, especially when we venture past the gates of the underworld, to be thrilling. Gaude is a wonderful writer with great style and depth.

I am pretty sure that this book will show up on my 2017 favorites list.

5 stars.

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### **Ryan Sparks says**

I received this ARC from NetGalley and the publisher, Gallic Books.

I know I'm not the first (and I'm sure to not be the last) person to pick this one up expecting a horror novel. However, don't let the genre deter you from giving this a read. I was pleasantly surprised to find this was not just another author's take on the horrors of hell. Instead, Hell's Gate focuses more on the grief and psychological effects parents go through when losing a child. There's not much to the characters in this novel, though. Each one, to include the main characters, father Matteo and mother Giuliana, were incredibly two-dimensional. I was not in any way attached to them and wasn't necessarily effected by their inevitable fates. If it wasn't for the fact that I myself have children, I don't think I would understand the motivations of the either of them.

That's not to say this made for a bad read. To me, the characters were the only issue, but not anything that ruins the book. The story kicks off on a high note and maintains a high level of excitement throughout. You're made aware (kind of) from the start about what's going, with the details unfolding as you continue the journey. Even with the sequence in hell being a fairly short stint, there is no shortage of action. Gaudé was somehow able to take the aforementioned two-dimensional characters and place them in a unique situation, which made for a truly page-turning story.

Overall, I give this one a solid four stars. I am able to forgive the issue with the characters since this a truly original story told from a unique perspective. I recommend Hell's Gate to anyone that's a fan of a non-horror story tackling the ideas of if life, death, and the after-life.

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### **Breakaway Reviewers says**

There is no hope in this book yet it is strangely life affirming

Although this novel is set in Naples and its surrounding areas the author is French and the book is a translation from his mother tongue. Translated books often lose a good deal in the transition. There are a few wonderful exceptions such as “The Name of the Rose” and “Focault’s Pendulum” by the marvellous, late Umberto Eco and the Kurt Wallander series by Henning Mankell but by and large it usually pays dividends if books can be read in the original language in the same way that foreign films often benefit from being watched with sub titles instead of a dubbed version. Fortunately, this translation, as far as I can judge, retains all the flavour of the original.

It is a story about love but more predominantly it's one about death. The death of six-year-old Pippo who is caught in cross fire on an Italian street while being hurried along to school, gripping his father's hand. The effect of little Pippo's death on his parents, Matteo and Giuliana, can subsequently be experienced in the text which follows the opening sequence. Effectively their lives stop. Nothing in the world matters – not even each other.

A chance meeting with other dark characters leads Matteo to a determination that he can go through the gates of Hell of the title and retrieve his son. He may have failed his wife but he will not fail Pippo. It may be arrogant to suggest it but I feel that no-one who is not a parent can fully understand the love of a parent for a child. It transcends all other types of love and most parents would give their lives for their children. What follows is a descriptive passage par excellence. The underworld in all its glory and the suffering of the souls of the dead.

The novel in a strange way is life affirming even though there is no explanation as to why an innocent six-year-old should be trapped in the underworld. The reader is transfixed by the action which rolls out in front of him and totally suspends disbelief.

There is little joy in the book. Instead there is total grief and endless sadness. It's not at all uplifting yet it tackles a subject most people would prefer to ignore although it is a wonderful reminder that life is short and transitory and death lasts for infinity. It's also a fine example of how a relatively short book can also be a great one. The read is well worth the effort and highly rewarding.

mr zorg

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.

—Η αγκαλιά του διαβόλου ανοίγει στη Νέα πόλη —

«Ας ακουστε; το γ?λιο σου μ?χρι εκε? κ?τω κι ας ζεστ?νει ?σους μας λε?πουν».

Μετωπική επιθεση στο θυνάτο με οδηγία διβολο και τοπογράφο των δημιουργιών σε αυτή τη μακρινή περιοχή.

Η δαντικ? κωμωδ?α και οι μ?θοι του Ορφ?α μας οδηγο?ν με απ?λυτη ακρ?βεια στην ξεχασμ?νη π?λη της κολ?σεως στη β?βηλη και iερ? N?πολη.

?να εξ?χρονο αγορ?κι χ?νει με β?αιο και ?δικο τρ?πο τη ζω? του και οι γονε?ς του ?ρχονται αντιμ?τωποι με την πιο τραγικ? εκδ?κηση της ανθρ?πινης μο?ρας, πρ?πει να ζ?σουν καταραμ?νοι και στοιχειωμ?νοι με την απ?λεια του παιδιο? τους.

Η σχ?ση τους καταστρ?φεται και ο καθ?νας ξεχωριστ? βι?νει το αναπ?δραστο μ?σα στο ?ρεβος της δυστυχ?ας.

Δεν υπ?ρχει χειρ?τερη κατ?ρα,δεν μπορε? να εξομοιωθε? με καν?ναν π?νο,καν?ναν εφι?λτη,τ?ποτα πιο οδυνηρ? και σπαρακτικ? αδιαν?ητο,?λα τα δειν? μαζ? με την απ?γνωση και την απελπισ?α εν?νονται,τρ?νε σ?ρκα και ψυχ? ?σχημα και β?αια,?ταν δυο ?νθρωποι γονατ?ζουν μπροστ? στον τ?φο του παιδιο? της.

Το ρ?γος της β?ρβαρης απ?λειας σκ?ζει ψυχ?ς. Τα ?ρια της ανθρ?πινης φ?σης ξεπερνιο?νται και τ?τε ?λα μπορε? να συμβο?ν!

Μετ? απο το τραγικ? γεγον?ς η μητ?ρα διαλ?γει τη λ?θη. Βουλι?ζει στη λ?σπη της δυστυχ?ας,εγκαταλ?πει ?τι αγ?πησε,οδηγε?ται β?αια στην τρ?λα και την αυτοκαταστροφ?. Ο πατ?ρας θ?λει να θυμ?ται. Διαλ?γει τη μν?μη ως παρηγορι? στον αδηφ?γο π?νο του,?μως δεν μπορε? να διαχειριστε? το ψυχοφθ?ρο θανατερ? και αποφασ?ζει να εκδικηθε?.

?σως,να ε?ναι αληθιν? η σκι? της ιστορ?ας που θ?λει τη μν?μη να ε?ναι η μοναδικ? επικοινων?α και η ?σχατη επαφ? αν?μεσα στους ζωντανο?ς και τους νεκρο?ς.

?σως, πρ?γματι ?ταν χ?νουμε ?ναν δικ? μας ?νθρωπο του δ?νουμε μαζ? εκε? που θα π?ει ?να κομμ?τι απο τον εαυτ? μας για συντροφι?. Αυτ? τα κομμ?τια μας μ?νουν για π?ντα κρεμασμ?να στους αιμοσταγ?ς θ?μους. Ε?ναι στην π?λη της κ?λασης και δεν κ?νει να περ?σουν στην π?λη των νεκρ?ν.

?σως,οι ψυχ?ς στην κ?λαση να ζο?νε και να ζεστα?νονται αν?λογα με το φως που εκπ?μπουν,το οπο?ο τροφοδοτε?ται απο τη νοσταλγ?α των δικ?ν τους ανθρ?πων.

Οι ψυχ?ς φωτ?ζουν και χαμογελο?ν και κλα?νε απο χαρ? ?ταν τις θυμ?μαστε τρυφερ?. ?λλες π?λι,κλα?νε και αδει?ζουν,εντελ?ς δι?φανες π?φτουν στο κεν?,τις τρ?ει το απ?λυτο κεν? γιατ? κανε?ς πια δεν τις σκ?φτεται.

Αν κατ?βουμε στη χ?ρα των νεκρ?ν θα διασχ?σουμε τον Ποταμ? των δακρ?ων γεμ?το ψυχ?ς που στριγκλ?ζουν πριν παραδοθο?ν στη χειραγ?γηση του Θαν?του αδι?φορες και υπ?κουες.

Θα συναντ?σουμε δι?φορες καταστ?σεις ακαθ?ριστου τρ?μου πριν φτ?σουμε στην καρδι? του Βασιλ?ου του ?δη,εκε? που ο θ?νατος στοιβ?ζει τις ψυχ?ς.

Και θα καταλ?ξουμε στο Κ?στρο των Νεκρ?ν στην καρδι? της κ?λασης,εκε? που επικρατε? η απ?λυτη παγερ? σιωπ? που διαπερν?ει,ανασα?νει,πατ?ει και αισθ?νεται τα π?ντα.

?ταν ακο?σουμε τα ανατριχιαστικ? βογγητ?,τις κατ?ρες,τα ?ντονα ουρλιαχτ? π?νου και βο?θειας θα ?χουμε φτ?σει στη «σπε?ρα των νεκρ?ν». Ε?ναι η πορε?α των σκι?ν σ?μφωνα με το φως που εκπ?μπουν λ?γο πριν οδηγηθο?ν στον «δε?τερο θ?νατο». Στο κ?ντρο της σπε?ρας υπ?ρχει το ?ρεβος του απ?λυτου κενο?. Εκε? εξαφαν?ζονται για π?ντα οι ψυχ?ς δ?νοντας τη θ?ση τους σε ν?ες αφ?ξεις.

Η «π?λη της Κ?λασης» ε?ναι ?να β?ρβαρα υποβλητικ? βιβλ?ο και σ?γουρα δεν ενδυκνε?ται για αναγ?στες που δεν αντ?χουν το ψυχρ? και θανατερ? συναισθηματικ? σ?μπλεγμα του τραγικο?.

Συγκλονιστικ? αν?γνωσμα -κυρ?ως για ?σους ε?ναι γονε?ς ? για αυτο?ς που πιστε?ουν στην αι?νια αγ?πη-αφιερωμ?νο στους νεκρο?ς που κ?ποτε υπ?ρξαν στη ζω? μας με ?ποιον βαθμ? οικει?τητας κι αν ε?χαμε και μας μεταβ?βασαν λ?γο απο τον εαυτ? τους.

Βασ?ζεται σε μια συγκλονιστικ? ιστορ?α αν?μεσα σε μ?θο, φαντασ?α-πραγματικ?τητα και στορ?α.

Οι π?λες της κ?λασης εδ? ανο?γουν και υποδ?χονται μ?νο ?σους τολμ?με μια κατ?βαση στον ?δη και στο συλλογικ? ασυνε?δητο.

Καλ? αν?γνωση!!

Κολασμ?νους ασπασμο?ς!

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### **Clem's says**

sublimissime... entre la mythologie, la marginalité et l'amour famillial... a mettre entre toutes les mains!!!

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### **SueLucie says**

An unusual take on grief and remorse, and a very effective one. Matteo feels responsible for his son's death and jumps at the chance to see if he can locate him in the underworld. He finds that 'Hell' is a place of no comfort, where the dead are constantly reminded of their mistakes and missed opportunities - much the same as Matteo's life has become since his son died. His journey takes him through the different stages the dead experience before they are snuffed out for good. I was particularly taken with the concept of the Spiral of the Dead - a mechanism where spirits move inexorably towards oblivion at the centre of the whirlpool, their inner light dimming, some faster than others depending on how long they are still remembered back in the land of the living. I defy anyone to become at all engaged with any of the characters, they are so sketchily drawn, but their purpose is to lead us on the journey and that is a work of great ingenuity (and not too gruesome, which I found a relief).

Review copy courtesy of Gallic Books via NetGalley, many thanks.

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### **Becky says**

I loved this story of guilt, revenge and loss set against the backdrop of Naples. The characters are brilliantly portrayed and the concept of portals to the underworld being squirreled away under various cities is handled very well. A really interesting and well written short novel.

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