



Strait is the Gate

André Gide

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A delicate boy growing up in Paris, Jerome Palissier spends many summers at his uncle's house in the Normandy countryside, where the whole world seems 'steeped in azure'. There he falls deeply in love with his cousin Alissa and she with him. But gradually Alissa becomes convinced that Jerome's love for her is endangering his soul. In the interests of his salvation, she decides to suppress everything that is beautiful in herself - in both mind and body.

Strait is the Gate Details

Date : Published March 8th 2007 by Mondial (first published 1909)

ISBN : 9781595690623

Author : André Gide

Format : Paperback 104 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, France, Classics, European Literature, French Literature

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From Reader Review Strait is the Gate for online ebook

Ahmad Ashkaibi says

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## Nahed.E says

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## Perihan says

"Dar kap?dan girmeye çabalay?n. Çünkü ya?ama giden yol dar ve çetindir. Bu yolu bulanlar ise çok azd?r."

Kitap novella tarz?nda yaz?lm??, bir oturu?luk kitap. Ama bitince de bir ton a??r kederi yüre?e b?rak?p kaç?yor. Dü?ün dur, kederlen dur diye!

A?k, erdem ve ilahi a?k , bu de?erler birbirlerine dü?man ilan edilmi? sanki.

Birinden birini tercih etmeye mecbur b?rak?lm?? karakterler.

Halbuki üçü birden bir arada olabilir pek tabii.

Al?nt?:

"Tanr?m, a?k?m ve ben sana do?ru ilerleyebilesek, ama hay?r! Bize ö?retti?in yol Tanr?m , dar bir yol, iki ki?inin yan yana yürüyemeyece?i kadar dar."

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## Stephen Durrant says

Much about this novel could lead some current readers to brush it aside, maybe even with a sneer: overheated teenage romanticism, a struggle with a literalistic but now somewhat passe notion of what Protestant devotion should be, frequent Biblical references and quotations, a somewhat "old-fashioned" use of letters and diary entries to present several points of view, etc. But I confess this novel enthralled me precisely because I have seen in my own religious tradition so many of the same tendencies portrayed here, particularly the tendency to construct a relationship in such a religious-romantic way that only disappointment and frustration can follow. The narrator is a young man, Jerome who spends much of his youth with his female cousin, Alissa, reading poetry side-by-side in a lovely family garden (i.e., "Eden")--these are children of a hyper-educated, Protestant bourgeoisie. Alissa, for Jerome is obsessively enticing and entiringly maddening (the latter for me as well). She is determined not to fall into the sensuality of her



experience. A very young Jerome Palissier regularly spends holidays at the house of his aunt and uncle's estate in Fongueusemare in rural Normandy. One day, he happens upon his cousin Alissa, who is distraught at her aloof, hypochondriacal mother. Both desperate to rescue her and drawn by a genuine affection, Jerome takes it upon himself to sweep in and rescue her like a good, Christian knight errant. The subtle imagery of Jerome as a kind of salvific hero is only a foreshadowing of the religious unease that drives this novel forward toward its foreordained conclusion. As Jerome portentously declares, quoting Baudelaire, "Bientôt nous plongerons dans les froides ténébres."

Jerome and Alissa spend irenic summers together reciting poetry, reading from books to one another in their splendid garden, and enjoying music. The appropriateness of Jerome's name jumps out at you when he mentions another of their mutual literary interests: "We had procured the Gospels in the Vulgate and knew long passages of them by heart." (It was Saint Jerome who made the first Latin translation of the Bible.) Jerome wishes to become engaged before moving off to the Ecole Normale, but Alissa refuses. He is understandably upset by her rejection, but is only more spurred on by his ecstatic vision (again, that religious imagery) of eventually marrying her. Eventually, we learn that Alissa has sacrificed Jerome so that her sister, Juliette, will be able to get married first, yet even after Juliette gets married - to a boorish, business-minded vintner - Alissa continues to push him away.

He visits her at Fongueusemare while finishing both his schooling and a military stint, but every time he mentions wanting to marry her, she rejects him and requests that he leave soon, that she cannot bear his presence. Eventually, she tells him that her love of God surpasses her love for him, even though she has always passionately loved Jerome. During their last meeting together, Alissa has grown thin and pale, presumably because of her anchorite-like existence; she has also removed the books of poetry and novels she and Jerome used to read together, and replaced them with works of cheap, vulgar piety. Even while there is room here to doubt Alissa's love for Jerome, a chapter that includes her personal journals makes it perfectly clear that she loved Jerome just as much as he loved her, if not more so. Jerome has a final meeting with Juliette while she is enceinte with her fifth child by the vintner. Seeing him calls to mind both her sister's Christ-like sacrifice and makes her reflect on her own uneventful, bourgeois life. As Flaubert said: "Madame Bovary, c'est moi."

For maximum effect, as noted above, read this right next to Gide's "The Immoralist" for a most effective couple of case studies. Considering the year of publication (1909) and the ideas considered – repression, sexuality, sublimation – it should be noted that Gide almost certainly had Freud in mind when he was writing this, though it yields wonderful insights into human psychology even without a Freudian reading.

When reading a novel, sometimes the most difficult obstacle to being able to truly and fully appreciate it is the historical change that has taken place between the time in which it was written and when you read it. Judging from some of the reviews I have seen, that seems to be the case with this novel, too. In both this and "The Immoralist," Gide looks at the tension, confusion, and repression that can often come about when romantic love is pitted against, and forced to compete with, love for the divine. Since this novel was published, this antagonism has almost completely died, which may lead some readers to accuse Alissa of being frigid. Once we are able to bridge that historical gap, however, and realize that Alissa did not see her torment as self-imposed but rather something that was required of her, this novel proves itself to be a superior meditation on both romantic passion and, what was once thought to be its opposite, sacrifice.

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**Mary says**

A haunting tale of doomed love.  
Sad, powerful and deeply moving.  
Stimulates the emotions with beautiful prose.  
Such a sad ending!

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### **Shovelmonkey1 says**

This book is been hailed as one of the most sensous and sublime love stories of the 19th century, as well as being one of Andre Gide's most vaunted publications. Me? I have no basis for comment or comparison at this time as this was my first tentative foray into the world of Andre Gide. I don't think it will be my last but I don't think I will be charging out the door to clasp all of his other publications lovingly to my bosom. It also seems a little ironic that a gay Frenchman produced one of the best received and highly praised (but devoutly and notably chaste) novels about the ritual trials and tribulations of heterosexual romance?

Gide was alive and kicking in Paris at a time when you could barely walk down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées without rubbing shoulders with a literary giant, artist or poet. The avant garde and the artistic were practically falling over each other and no doubt causing endless obstructions in the bars and backstreets of Paris as the sought out each other for drinking, philosophising, trysting, quaffing absinthe and howling at the moon beneath La Tour Eiffel. Ok, I'm not sure how much of that is true but it is infinitely more interesting to imagine it that way, non?

Ultimately I failed to see the great romance of this book and was more generally struck by how it portrays the unchecked spiral of a young girl who quite clearly has some fairly severe mental health problems. These may or may not have been brought on by all the general "ardent-ness" and love-struck mooning which took place around her. Yes, yes young Jerome is an admirable chap who really does love Alissa in his own naieve and youthfully love-struck way, but with all the too-ing and fro-ing and self sacrifice going on, no one actually turns around for long enough to spot the onset of severe depression with religiously zealous overtones which is clearly manifesting itself in Alissa. That, and I found it a little dull at times.

Nil point for joie de vivre.

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### **Ahmad Sharabiani says**

758. La porte étroite = Strait Is The Gate, André Gide

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## Rania Chokor says

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## Shaghayegh.l3 says

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## Amr Raouf says

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## Laila says

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın kitaplarından birinde adı geçen romandır. Dar Kapı, bu vesileyle okuma listeme almıştır...

Girisgahtan bir al?nt? ile baslayay?m: "Fedakarl?k nedir, insan a?k iin nelerden vazgeer, peki ya ilahi a?k? Safl?k iin, Tanr?'ya tertemiz geri dnmek iin, erdem olarak kabul edilen de?erleri korumak iin insan bazen kendi hayat?n? verebilir mi?"

Kitapta ba?larken çevirmenin yazd??? sunu?tan yapt???m bu al?nt? öyle de?erli ki, eserin devam?nda bu



sorular?n cevaplar?na yazar?n ya?am?ndan kesitler kullanarak verdi?i cevaplar? bulacaks?n?z.

Sade anlatıml?, çabucak biten, derin bir eser Dar Kap?.

Okumak hayam?n?za farklı kap?lar açacaktır.

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## Sunny says

Wow. So I'm going to put this right into the sufferings of young werther, the devil in the flesh, the blind owl mould. Yes I would mention Gide in the same breath as Goethe and Radiguet and Hedayat for sure. If you have ever been in love read on, if not then this will not impact you as much. The book is essentially about 2 cousins who fall in love with each other but the girl (Alissa) sacrifices her love for the boy (Jerome) because her own sister falls in love with the dude. Ok maybe a bit unrealistic but there was something about the writing style that moved me. Gide won the Nobel prize for literature and I can totally see why. Here are some of the amazing parts of the book:

- I pressed her head against my heart and I pressed my lips to her forehead, while my whole soul came flooding through them.
- I lived with the thoughts of Alissa, and covered my favourite books with notes meant for her eyes, subordinating the interest I sought in them myself to the interest they might have for her.

The book did take a little while to get going but then the last half Gide must have downed some red bulls because it really gets going. The last few chapters are a journal of what Alissa meant to say to Jerome but never revealed to him and it was an incredibly emotional part of the book. It's a short 128 page penguin classic which anyone could finish off in an evening if you have the time. HIGHLY recommended.

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## Kirsty says

*Strait is the Gate* is, for some reason, the first of Andre Gide's books which I have read, despite his having been on my radar for years. I had written his name upon the list of authors whom I hoped to get to during 2017, and also thought that he would be a great inclusion upon my Reading the World list. First published in France in 1909, and in Dorothy Bussy's 1924 translation, I could not pass up the chance of adding yet another marvellous classic of French literature to my list.

*Strait is the Gate* also seemed a wonderful place to start, being, as it is, the first novel by the Nobel Prize for Literature winner of 1947, and one of his best works in English; indeed, its blurb states that it is '... regarded by many as the most perfect piece of writing which Gide ever achieved. In its simplicity, its craftsmanship, its limpidity of style, and its power to stimulate the mind and the emotions at one and the same time, it set a standard for the short novel which has not yet been excelled'.

*Strait is the Gate* is a 'story of young love blighted and turned to tragedy by the sense of religious dedication in the beloved'. The novella's opening paragraph is relayed in one of my favourite styles: 'Some people might have made a book out of it; but the story I am going to tell is one which took all my strength to live and over which I spent all my virtue. So I shall set down my recollections quite simply, and if in places they are ragged I shall have recourse to no invention, and neither patch nor connect them; any effort I might make to dress them up would take away the last pleasure I hope to get in telling them'. All of Gide's writing holds this strength, and his descriptions in particular are absolutely beautiful, and often quite startling. Of the house of

an uncle, our narrator, Jerome, says thus: 'Certain others [windows] have flaws in the glass which our parents used to call "bubbles"; a tree seen through them becomes distorted; when the postman passes he suddenly develops a hump'. He describes his aunt, Lucile, whilst she is playing the piano: '... sometimes she would break off in the middle of a bar and pause, suspended motionless on a chord'.

After the death of both of his parents, young Jerome becomes infatuated with his cousin, Alissa, with whom he spends every summer at her family's secluded house in Le Havre. 'No doubt,' he says, 'like all boys of fourteen, I was still unformed and pliable, but my love for Alissa soon urged me further and more deliberately along the road on which I had started'. Alissa's younger sister, Juliette, fast becomes a go-between for the pair: 'She was the messenger... I talked to her interminably of our love, and she never seemed tired of listening. I told her what I dared not tell Alissa, with whom excess of love made me constrained and shy. Alissa seemed to lend herself to this child's play and to be delighted that I should talk so happily to her sister, ignoring or feigning to ignore that in reality we talked only of her'.

Religion was not so much of an aspect here as the blurb makes out; rather, it is more of a familial novel, and a wonderfully wrought one at that. Interesting family politics are at play throughout. Letters which Gide writes from the perspective of others in Jerome's family feel entirely authentic; he has captured such nuanced elements of voice, and renders each distinctive. His prose is packed with emotion, which grows as the work progresses.

Bussy's translation is seamless; there is such a marvellous elasticity to the writing, and the whole has been rendered beautifully. *Strait is the Gate* is a truly beautiful work, and a novella which I was immediately immersed within. Whilst it is my first taste of Gide's work, it certainly will not be my last. I can fast see him becoming one of my favourite authors, in fact.

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## **Manny says**

Gide said that he meant this book to be treated as one half of a pair, together with *L'Immoraliste*. I took him at his word and read them in rapid succession. By the way, I should say this was atypical - I'm a "when all else fails, read the instructions" kind of person, but I found both books together at a second-hand bookstore and it seemed silly not to do what he said.

Looking at other reviews, I seem to have a fairly different take on the book, and perhaps my reading route has something to do with it. So, here we have a guy who's in love with this charming girl, Alissa, and is hoping to marry her. Alissa, however, takes it into her head that God doesn't want her to marry her nice fiancé, but rather to contract a form of anorexia, coupled with depression, which eventually kills her. On the way, she also manipulates her unfortunate sister into marrying someone she doesn't much like, trapping her permanently in a loveless marriage.

Well, if Alissa was someone I knew personally, I wouldn't be rhapsodizing about her moving closeness with the Divine. I'd be trying to get her into therapy as quickly as possible, and meanwhile reading up the literature on religious mania. When I did what Gide suggested, and compared her with the main character in *L'Immoraliste*, I decided that his take on her wasn't very different from what mine would be in a real situation. He thinks Alissa is falling into one of two possible errors with religion, allowing it to take such a large part in her life that it drives her mad, destroying her and also several people she supposedly cares about. The hero of *L'Immoraliste* falls into the opposite trap. He rejects religion entirely, living an utterly selfish life which ends up killing his beautiful and loving wife in a particularly horrible way.

So, to sum up both books, I'd say Gide was telling people not to abandon religion - but also not to overdo it, and not to forget to listen to their normal human feelings and their common sense. Pretty balanced advice, in fact.

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## David says

Is Andre Gide always pointing in the wrong direction? And does he ever have any fun? Can someone please tell him that the First World War's coming and that very soon we're all going to be living in a world of "if it's a bit warm, take off your jacket. You don't have to move your entire household 200 miles to the north"?

I think I'd probably have been kinder if the secret diary had been more fun. A book with a boring secret diary? That's just rubbish, isn't it?

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## Teresa Proença says

*"Esforçai-vos por entrar pela porta estreita, pois a porta larga e o caminho espaçoso levam à perdição, e numerosos são os que por aqui passam; mas estreita é a porta e cerrado o caminho que conduzem à vida, e poucos são aqueles que os encontram."*

(Mateus 7:13,14)

Julieta ama Jerónimo.

Jerónimo ama Alissa.

Alissa ama Jerónimo.

Julieta casa com Eduardo.

Alissa e Jerónimo são infelizes para sempre...

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