



presenta

LE MOINE

di Dominik Moll



Genere: thriller gotico
colore
Durata: 101'

Produzione:
Diaphana Films

Coproduzione:
Morena Films

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Sinossi

L'ascesa e la caduta di un frate cappuccino nel XVII secolo a Madrid.

Abbandonato da bambino sui gradini di un monastero e cresciuto secondo la stretta dottrina cappuccina, Ambrosio diventa il predicatore più famoso del paese. Mentre grandi folle da tutto il paese accorrono per ascoltare le sue affascinanti prediche, è allo stesso tempo invidiato per il suo successo da alcuni monaci.

Convinto della sua virtù e giustizia, Fratello Ambrosio pensa di essere immune alla tentazione. Fino a quando oscuri eventi cominciano a terrorizzare il monastero. Possono essere connessi all'inaspettato arrivo di Valerio, un apprendista monaco che ha il dono miracoloso di alleviare i lancinanti mal di testa di Ambrosio e che nasconde il suo volto sfigurato dietro una maschera di cera?

Tratto dall'omonimo romanzo cult gotico.

Basta la prima inquadratura a Dominik Moll, per mettere le basi di *Le moine* e invischiare lo spettatore in una storia di misticismo e perversione che terrebbe incollato alla poltrona chiunque, anche chi non è portato verso questo genere di film. Un primo piano di tre minuti del monaco Vincent Cassel mentre confessa un peccatore (Sergi Lopez). "Cosa può essere peggiore di ciò che ho fatto?", sussurra l'uomo da dietro la grata del confessionale. "Non sta a me stabilire la gerarchia dei peccati: ogni peccatore commette peccati a sua misura. Dio li condanna tutti", lo apostrofa severamente il frate. Adattamento di un classico della letteratura gotica inglese, *The Monk* di Matthew G. Lewis, dal quale anche Luis Buñuel e Jean-Claude Carrière trassero la sceneggiatura per un film mai realizzato, *Le moine* ha gustosi ingredienti cinematografici. Innanzitutto il tema: la tentazione e il peccato. Il protagonista: Vincent Cassel, mattatore assoluto, intenso e sensuale (notevole il suo nudo integrale). L'ambientazione: città, chiese e conventi della cattolicissima Spagna del Seicento, girati tra la Catalogna e le crete desertiche della Navarra.

Un bambino in fasce viene abbandonato in piena notte sul sagrato di una chiesa e salvato dai frati. Nel convento, dove cresce con la parola del Signore, Ambrosio sviluppa doti rare di predicatore. Ammirato dai fedeli e... dalle fedeli per il suo fervore, diventa baluardo dell'intransigenza, finché lui stesso non dovrà lottare contro la tentazione e ripensare al monito lanciatogli dallo stesso peccatore della prima scena: "Anche Satana ha potere sugli uomini".

Cast

Vincent Cassel	Ambrosio
Déborah François	Valerio
Joséphine Japy	Antonia
Sergi Lopez	Il dissoluto
Catherine Mouchet	Elvira
Jordi Dauder	Fratello Miguel
Geraldine Chaplin	Madre superiora
Roxane Duran	Sorella Agnès
Frédéric Noaille	Lorenzo
Javivi Gil Valle	Fratello Andrés
Pierre-Félix Gravière	Fratello Iago
Martine Vandeville	Leonella

Crew

Regia	Dominik Moll
Produttore	Michel Saint-Jean
Sceneggiatura	Dominik Moll e Anne-Louise Trividic
	Tratto dal romanzo « <i>Il monaco</i> » di Matthew G. Lewis
Musiche originali	Alberto Iglesias
Fotografia	Patrick Blossier
Production Designer	Antxón Gómez
Costumista	Bina Daigeler
Sound Engineer	François Maurel
Editor	François Gedigier, Sylvie Lager
Sound Editor	Gérard Hardy
Tecnico del suono	Olivier Dô Huu
Casting Director	Emmanuelle Prevost
1° assistente alla regia	Thierry Verrier
Production Manager	Stéphane Riga e Jordi Berenguer
Produttore associato	Alvaro Longoria

DOMINIK MOLL

Nel corso dei suoi studi all'IDHEC realizza sei cortometraggi fra i quali *Le gynécologue et sa secrétaire*. Nel 1993 dirige il suo primo lungometraggio *Intimité*. Di lui in Italia ricordiamo *Harry, un ami qui vous veut du bien* e *Lemming*.

Filmografia:

2011 *Le moine*

2005 *Lemming*

2000 *Harry, un ami qui vous veut du bien*

1994 *Intimité*

Note di produzione

When Matthew Gregory Lewis's novel *THE MONK* was published in March 1796, it caused strong indignation. The conservative critics lashed out, calling it blasphemous and immoral. Coleridge declared that « if a parent saw *THE MONK* in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale.» For a novel was supposed to instruct; it had to promote virtue, not vice. The story of a Capuchin friar who gives in to his sexual impulses and commits heinous crimes, a book describing a criminal Mother Superior and the bloody apparition of a defrocked nun, would only corrupt English youth and undoubtedly lead to such horrors as the French Revolution.

The public ignored these warnings and *THE MONK* became an immediate success. It was reprinted in succession until 1798 when Lewis was forced to purge it of its most controversial passages. As a result, the uncensored first editions became much sought-after items and sold at high prices.

The scandal was further heightened by the fact that despite his young age, Lewis was part of the political establishment. Like his father, he was intended for a diplomatic career. Yet, very early on, he showed a passion for literature. In 1792, at the age of 17, he spent several months in Weimar, Germany. During his stay he met Goethe, and became enthralled with the «*Sturm und Drang*» movement, which put strong emphasis on emotions and passion rather than on the prevailing rationalism. An even more important influence was the «*Schauerromantik*»: the romanticism of horror which through many legends, poems and novellas, called to life ghosts, devils and assassins.

In 1794 Lewis was appointed to the English embassy in The Hague. There, at the age of 19, he wrote *THE MONK* in the space of 10 weeks - allegedly with the purpose of entertaining his mother.

THE MONK holds a special place in the English Gothic novel, a genre that had made the supernatural very popular, starting with Horace Walpole's *THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO* in 1764. Writers like Ann Radcliffe made her readers tremble at the depiction of chaste young girls fainting at the sight of ghosts in haunted Gothic castles. But in the end, the young girl

always survives, the supernatural disappears and a rational ending prevails. With *THE MONK*, Lewis goes much further, bringing in the German influences : the supernatural is no longer an optical illusion – it truly exists. Satan becomes a real person and it is his direct intervention that causes the hero to turn to blasphemy and depravation. This leads to an even more revolutionary change : the explicit evocation of sexual impulses. Prudishness and chastity are tossed to the wind. And rather than concentrating the narrative on the innocent victim, Lewis focuses on a man too dark and too weak to foster any hope for redemption, be it from God or from the reader. The novel of terror becomes a novel of evil.

THE MONK's success was just as dazzling on the Continent as in England. In Germany, Hoffman was largely inspired by it to write *THE DEVIL'S ELIXIR*. In France, the Marquis de Sade sang its praises in his essay «Reflections on the Novel » in 1800. His influence on French Romantic writers such as Hugo, Balzac, or Mérimée is undeniable. The archdeacon Frollo, in Victor Hugo's *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE-DAME*, is the spiritual son of Ambrosio.

In the first half of the 20th century, *THE MONK* was rediscovered by the French surrealists. André Breton wrote : « It is infused throughout with the presence of the marvelous. ». Artaud - who considered it a « Poem of Evil » - reworked it into a very faithful literary adaptation (*LEWIS' THE MONK* by Antonin Artaud). He dreamt of a cinematographic adaptation as well (with himself playing the role of Ambrosio), but never succeeded. In 1972 a screenplay by Luis Bunuel and Jean-Claude Carrière was brought to the screen by Ado Kyrou, with Franco Nero and Nathalie Delon.

As for Lewis, after *THE MONK* he turned to the theater and wrote numerous plays. But his reputation as an author remained marked by his only novel and its scandalous creature, so much so that he was often called « Monk » Lewis. During a trip to the West Indies where he visited plantations bequeathed to him by his father, he contracted yellow fever and died at age 43.

Vincent Cassel

Filmografia

2011

A Dangerous Method di David Cronenberg

Le Moine di Dominik Moll

2010

Il Cigno Nero di Darren Aronofsky

2008

Nemico pubblico n. 1 (L'istinto di morte - Parte 1) di Jean François Richet

Nemico pubblico n. 1 (L'ora della fuga - Parte 2) di Jean François Richet

2007

La Promessa dell'assassino di David Cronenberg

2005

Derailed - Attrazione Letale di Mikael Hafstrom

2004

Agents Secrets di Frédéric Schoendoerffer

Blueberry di Jan Kounen

Ocean's Twelve di Steven Soderbergh

2002

Irreversible di Gaspar Noé

2001

Il patto dei lupi di Christophe Gans

Birthday Girl di Jez Butterworth

Sulle mie labbra di Jacques Audiard

2000

I fiumi di porpora di Mathieu Kassovitz

1999

Giovanna d'Arco di Luc Besson

Guest House Paradiso di Adrian Edmondson

1998

Elizabeth di Shekhar Kapur

1997

Dobermann di Jan Kounen

1996

Come mi vuoi di Carmine Amoroso

L'appartamento di Gilles Mimouni

1995

L'odio di Mathieu Kassovitz

1993

Métisse di Mathieu Kassovitz

Interview with Vincent Cassel

When Dominik spoke to me about « The Monk » I had two films to shoot and so couldn't imagine how I would be able to dive into such a project. But I'd seen his films and found them really fascinating. I had never before played a member of the clergy. It seemed obvious that I had to do it. I don't always have very good reasons to say yes or no to a film – it's a matter of desire. And in this case, I wanted to go for it.

Did you know the novel ?

I'm not an avid reader of Gothic literature. But I discovered the aura surrounding the book. I realized that many people had read it when they were young and had never forgotten it. . Buñuel had been interested in it. While I was shooting « The Monk » I was also working with David Cronenberg [on "A Dangerous Method"] who said to me : « I love that book! How fantastic to make it into a movie ! » And the character I was playing – Freud's student Otto Gross - was the exact opposite of the Monk ; his motto was « Never repress anything ! » And so I had to play both characters at the same time : on one hand a monk who denies himself the pleasure of flesh and on the other hand a cocaine and sex addict. It was very interesting because for me it was the same subject : can you restrain yourself , can you hold yourself back ?

How did you approach Ambrosio ?

It was strange to interpret the main character yet at the same time feel like you're not the driving force behind the story. Ambrosio is constantly observing what's happening around him. He is victim of the supernatural, of destiny. It seemed to me that the story didn't come from him. Yet in the finished film that's not what happens,.. Actually Ambrosio takes quite a bit of action. We just don't see him make the decisions. It's as if he was driven by some internal force.

You talk about a character who is restrained, inhibited.

Fortune hasn't favored Ambrosio: he never knew his parents, he was raised by Monks.... That's rough! He discovers sexuality at age 40 ! That can't make you a very balanced person ! I am convinced that the effect a film has on the audience is something that escapes those who make the movie. Yet in this case I realized that in heightening the asexual nature of the character, in keeping him withdrawn, the result is quite disturbing. It's a question of the gestural and non-gestural.... My arms never move... I am always speaking in whispers, or else in a learned softness compelled by the monastic system. It's much too constrained and

ultimately has to explode. And that's exactly how I feel about religion in general. To me, living with so many precepts and rules is contrary to life.

You don't seem very much into religion.

I went to parochial schools growing up, I had my first communion, I went to church... so I'm quite familiar with all that. All religions are beautiful metaphors for the dreams of humanity. But I don't find it a very courageous way to lead one's life. It's much more difficult to say that nothing exists. I cannot conduct my life based on a religion.

So it's an expiatory role for you ?

No, but taking part in a film that asks such questions interests me.

Do you feel that Ambrosio is a realistic character ?

I find him much closer to reality than many 'hero' characters. He is very human. In the end, it's not about god or the devil, but just about life. Ambrosio has to face his own inner dialectic. He has no choice. And when he finally decides to act, he goes a thousand times further than any other - from the moment he first tastes flesh and thereby understands that his self-imposed religious regimen has failed to fulfill his life. Perhaps he could have been able to live this love more serenely.

Are you sure of that ?

Ok, fine, she was his sister.... But he was in love. In any case, it was all their mother's fault.

... And he kills her !

Yes.... It's all inextricably linked in such a way that it can only be a tragedy. The true moral of this story should be : « You cannot abandon your children ! » Seriously though, it ties up with something that I truly believe in : the only real duty that exists is neither religion nor politics. It is first and foremost to take care of your children ! The film therefore relates to something so simple, so accessible.

In this film you have such new-found control and intensity.

It was not easy at all. I'd previously acted in much more contemporary stories. Even in foreign languages I was able to have a certain kind of freedom. With Dominik it was much more complicated than I thought it would be. He was very attached to his text. Everything was very precisely written. He wanted to keep even the most convoluted lines exactly as scripted. I'd gotten out of the habit of doing that. In film we rarely have lines that merit being memorized down to the last comma. Often we energize and adapt lines to make them sound more natural, less written. Dominik didn't agree with this at all ! He immediately told me and of course I corrected myself. I recited my lines with precision. I completely gave into his way of doing things, to draw out each moment. In the beginning, he forced me to do so. Then I let myself go in that direction - towards something extremely minimalist.

As soon as I would cast a glance he would say, « What're you doing there ? » « I don't know... » « Well don't do it, it's better without it ! » I tried to draw things out so he'd be pleased, but he always would say, « You turned your head too fast and you picked the object up from the table

too quickly ». Nothing was done without thinking about it first. I felt like I was doing tai-chi during each take !

He completely slowed down my natural rhythm, which is quite energetic and sunny. I was forced to repress my natural acting style. But it was quite nice actually. At the end of the shoot I told him « I think I learned something with you. I learned to stretch out time. I discovered areas of acting that I didn't even know existed. » That's what he did in his other films, with Laurent Lucas for example, and the result on screen is magnificent. I learned to give into a style of acting that at first I wasn't too comfortable with. In certain scenes I really couldn't do it. There are moments where an actor defies his director, it's always a ping pong match between them. Which gives a tinge of the unexpected to those scenes. I think that Dominik likes that as well. You can't totally direct someone, it's not what's the most interesting. In the end, the moments where I wasn't able to go exactly where he wanted me to, brought something interesting to both him and me.

Dominik has a very personal way of working - which is often the case with quality directors. I am not comparing Darren Aronofsky, Jan Kounen, David Cronenberg or Dominik. But he has a unique way of working. It's funny... he's a big guy, with a good sense of humor, he's always laughing. When he works, he's always very nice but at the same time he is very concentrated... When he's doing his thing, he can be quite formal. I would make fun of him while we were shooting : « German style ! let's do it German style ! » During the shoot we were so immersed in Gothic - with all the cemeteries and crucifixes - that at a certain point I couldn't take it anymore and I had to laugh. They're all just abominable symbols. The cold, the stone, crucified bodies, praying in pain... everything is so strict, so dry. But Dominik was the first one to crack up. I found that he was always ready to have a laugh.

He is also very respectful. In scenes where the girls had to get undressed, he took a lot of care telling them what he wanted. And I actually still don't know if he is religious... or not at all ! Maybe he's asking himself the question. And it fascinates him....

Interview by Harold Manning