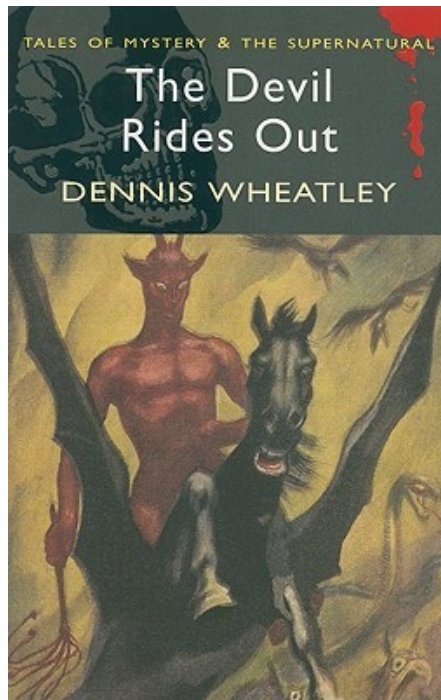




The Devil Rides Out

Dennis Wheatley

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The Devil Rides Out Dennis Wheatley

29 Apr 1935 - 4 May 1935

Black Magic is still practised in all the great cities of the world. This novel tells with macabre detail of a beautiful woman caught in a web of Satanists, of a young man brought to the verge of madness through his dabbling with the powers of evil.

As in Dennis Wheatley's *The Forbidden Territory* we meet the Duke de Richleau, Simon Aron, the Princess Marie Lou, and other characters. From London to the West Country, from the slums of Paris to a Christian monastery, the action of this powerful occult thriller moves with fantastic, compelling force..

The Devil Rides Out Details

Date : Published September 10th 2007 by Wordsworth Editions (first published 1934)

ISBN : 9781840225433

Author : Dennis Wheatley

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Horror, Fiction, Thriller, Occult, Fantasy, Gothic, Supernatural

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From Reader Review The Devil Rides Out for online ebook

Philip Boyes says

A group of very self-righteous, incredibly rich people swan around in a desperate race against time to stop some Satanists doing - well, it's never entirely clear what - while taking frequent breaks to sample the finer things in life, lecture each other condescendingly, patronise women and complain about the bourgeois, poor, socialists... Maybe those pesky Satanists intended to vote for Jeremy Corbyn? The hysterical tone of the ultra-privileged heroes comes straight out of Tory central casting. Oh, did I mention the racism? This is a very racist book. I know this is a book from the 30s, but I'm genuinely surprised Wheatley was on our side during the war. Quite a few lines in here suggest at least a passing regard for the Nazis. He probably just didn't feel they were from good enough families.

Anyway, sort of despite all that and sort of because of it, I had a lot of fun with this. The first half at least. It's not a long book, but it's twice as long as it needs to be. I haven't seen it, but I suspect the Hammer film adaptation may be the best way to sample it. That has Christopher Lee as the Duke and that guy who played Blofeld as the villain. Which, to be honest, is exactly how I imagined them both from the book anyway. And it's only an hour and a half.

Apres moi, la deluge, but for now, someone open the Chateau Lafite! It's nearly 11am and thanks to those pesky cultists I haven't had a drink yet!

Neil Davies says

Still the best Black Magic story I've read! Excellent.

Bill Kerwin says

A tale of upper-class Satanists who, while pursuing their decorous mischief, make the mistake of targeting one of the three good friends of the esteemed occultist and adventurer, the Duc de Richleau.

Although the tale is old fashioned, and the novel is marred by casual English public school snobbery and xenophobia, it cannot be denied that Wheatley really knows how to tell a story, and that the elegant Duc de Richleau, touring the rural roads of England in his Hispano-Suiza, is a memorable aristocratic hero.

Check out the 1968 movie version too (sometimes called *The Devil's Bride* in the USA). It is probably my favorite Hammer film, and stars Christopher Lee as the Duke.

L. says

Wheatley - cz?owiek o pono? pod?ym charakterze i okropnych pogl?dach - by? swojego czasu bardzo poczytnym autorem. Zupe?nie si? temu nie dziwi?! Sprytnie prowadzi narracj?, ko?cz?c rozdzia?y w takich momentach, ?e serce wali z ekscytacji i nale?y wr?cz czyta? dalej. Kibicujemy dobrym i m?drym g?ównym

bohaterom, którzy pod??aj? za satanistami, poszukuj?cymi fallusa, a ów ma sprowadzi? na ten ?wiat kolejne wojny i kl?ski urodzaju. Drodzy, je?li potrzebujecie lekkiej lektury, wspania?ej rozrywki i u?miechania si? pod nosem w komunikacji miejskiej - musicie po to si?gn??!

Bettie? says

Description: 29 Apr 1935 - 4 May 1935: *Black Magic is still practised in all the great cities of the world. This novel tells with macabre detail of a beautiful woman caught in a web of Satanists, of a young man brought to the verge of madness through his dabbling with the powers of evil.*

As in Dennis Wheatley's The Forbidden Territory we meet the Duke de Richleau, Simon Aron, the Princess Marie Lou, and other characters. From London to the West Country, from the slums of Paris to a Christian monastery, the action of this powerful occult thriller moves with fantastic, compelling force..

Watch here

See Paul Eddington and Patrick Mower in the casting mix? Bet they regretted that.

Craigb says

Erm...I read this because my Dad said Dennis Wheatley was one of the masters of horror. Yes Dad....maybe before the 1970s. But I decided to placate him and read at least one of Wheatley's novels. Well this book will NOT scare you. Maybe because we've become familiar to more psychological horrors since the Exorcist. That said this book is extremley well written and Wheatley does have a gift for narrative prose. It will not scare though and read at your peril.....!!!!

Sandy says

When I first saw the 1968 horror film "The Devil Rides Out" several years back at one of NYC's numerous revival theatres, I thought it was one of the best Hammer films that I'd ever seen, and made a mental note to check out Dennis Wheatley's 1934 source novel one day. That resolve was further strengthened when I read a very laudatory article by Stephen Volk on the book in Newman & Jones' excellent overview volume "Horror: Another 100 Best Books." Now that I have finally read what is generally deemed Wheatley's most successful and popular novel, I can see the Hammer film for what it is: a watered-down filmization that can't hold a Black Mass candle to its superb original. The great Richard Matheson's screenplay condenses much, simplifies more, excises whole sections and changes the central plot entirely. In short, the book is where the real thrills and chills reside.

In it, readers once again meet the Duke de Richleau and his friends Rex Van Ryn (an American), Simon Aron (an English Jew) and Richard & Marie Lou Eaton, whom Wheatley first introduced to the world in his earlier novels "Three Inquisitive People" and "The Forbidden Territory." When Simon comes under the

power of a group of Satanists and their Aleister Crowley-like leader, Mocata, the Duke must take quick steps to save his young friend from their sinister hold. Wheatley obviously did a prodigious amount of background research before the writing of this, his first of an eventual nine novels dealing with black magic and the supernatural. He throws reams of information at us dealing with witchcraft, numerology, werepeople, vampires, the undead, seances, Egyptology, Kabbalah, and Crowley's "The Book of the Law." The effect of all this detail is to make the reader really buy into the increasingly evil events and suspend disbelief. As our heroes one by one find their skepticism eroded by the book's horrifying events, so too is ours. As in the film, the book's two main set pieces are the midnight Sabbat (more atmospheric and chilling in the novel, taking place on the Salisbury Plain; not to mention more licentious) and the defense of our heroes within the pentacle as Mocata visits on them one evil conjuration after another. The film's oversized giant spider in this scene cannot possibly compare to Wheatley's leprous, sluglike blob creature that leaps, laughs and pulsates. These two passages alone would guarantee Wheatley's book a place in the horror pantheon, but almost as fine are the scenes dealing with Simon's party, the initial materialization of the demon in the observatory, a minutely detailed car chase, Mocata's attempt at hypnotizing Marie Lou and, finally, a breakneck trans-Europe plane chase, culminating in the crumbling tombs of a Grecian monastery, and a showdown with Mocata for the legendary mummified phallus of Osiris--the Talisman of Set--which will enable its possessor to start a world war. Matheson jettisoned the entire central plot point of the Talisman in his screenplay...unwisely, I feel, as it is necessary for increased suspense and a greater atmosphere of urgency.

Wheatley has been justifiably accused of racism and bigotry in his writings (55 novels over a course of 39 years), but happily, this early novel of his contains no statements that should grate on modern-day PC sensibilities. At worst, he can be accused of some fuzzy writing on occasion, of having his characters lecture at times rather than speak realistically, and of continuously mistaking the word "aesthetic" for "ascetic." Minor quibbles, indeed, for a book as exciting, innovative and, yes, downright scary as this one. At one point in this longish tale, Rex Van Ryn tells us that his taste in literature tends to "popular novelists who can turn out a good, interesting story." I think that Rex would have been a fan of Dennis Wheatley, based on that statement. Although enormously popular from the 1930s to the 1960s, Wheatley today seems to be little mentioned, but I for one am going to be seeking out more...

Louise Sinclair says

Highly detailed book for those interested in Satanism. First read this aged 14 and was captivated.

A set of wealthy people set out to rescue a friend who has fallen into the clutches of a powerful satanist.

Mocata will stop at nothing to obtain The Talisman of Set and unleash the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse on the world.

To locate the talisman he needs the unwilling assistance of Simon Aaron and hypnotises him into becoming a satanist.

Led by the Duc de Richleau, his friends begin a race against time and encounter the terrifying experience of Satanic entities.

Detailed descriptions of Sabbats, kidnap and murder enthrall the reader.

The beautiful doomed Tanith, the charismatic Duc, the naturalised Russian Princess, Simon the banker, Rex Van Ryn the suitor and skeptic Richard Eaton fill a cast of fascinating characters pitted against the sinister cruel Mocata and his fellow satanists.

Filled with suspense, old fashioned glamour and detailed accounts of black witch craft. Recommended to anyone sick of modern writing with a politically correct slant.

Hilary says

Given the author's dire warnings in the foreword, I have to wonder why he would continue to write in such detail about abhorrent and dangerous practices. If you believe in God, you'll notice from some statements made throughout that Wheatley did not - a strangeness, for a writer of an occult thriller about Satanists and black magic, though possibly not quite as strange as one denying the existence of the Devil. (He posits "earthbound spirits" and "elementals" instead.) And there's *a lot* of the black magic. (view spoiler)

So those are my thoughts on the occult side of this. As a classic thriller it's got all the elements: a mysterious organization that must be stopped, huge conspiracies, a beautiful girl in trouble and a plot that moves between countries while drawing on aspects from both East and West. But this was a minor part of the overall story, and rather overshadowed by all the occult stuff.

Ultimately, I didn't feel comfortable reading it, didn't particularly enjoy it, and won't read any more of these.

Disclaimer: I received a free copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

George K. says

Ενδιαφέρον και ευκολοδιάβαστο μυθιστόρημα τρέμου παλαιάς κοπής, τι πρέπει για να περσει ευχρήιστα η ρα. Η αλθθεια είναι τι δεν τρέμαξα ιδιαιτερα οτε νιωσα κποιο γχος για την κατληξη των πρωταγωνιστών, σγούρα όμως ευχαριστήθηκα την σκοτεινή περιπέτεια στην οποία μπλεξαν και όλες τις αναφορές γρω απ τον σατανισμό και την μαγεία που υπρχαν στο βιβλίο. Φάνεται τι ο συγγραφέας μελέτησε πολύ πριν κτσει να γρψει την ιστορία αυτ.

Ο Δοκας Ντε Ρισλ και ο νταβραντισμός και θερμαιμος Αμερικνός φίλος του Ρεξ Βαν Ρυν, ανησυχούν για την παρξενή συμπεριφορά του Εβραού φλου τους Σίμον Αρν, ο οποίος φάνεται τι μπλεξε στα δχτυα της Μάρης Μαγέας και του Σατανισμού. Θα ανακαλψουν τι κποιοι παρνοκο τποι παζουν με επικνδυνα παιχνδία, χοντας ως σκοπ να καταστρψουν τον κσμο και να κνουν χαρομένο τον Σαταν. Τις ο Δοκας και ο Ρεξ θα πρπει να αντιμετωπσουν τις δυνμεις του σκτους, τσο για να σσουν τον φίλο τους, σο και για να σσουν τις τχες της ανθρωπτητας...

Αυτ είναι το δετερο βιβλίο με τους παραπνώ ρωες, πρτο είναι να κατασκοπευτικ μυθιστόρημα με τον ττλο The Forbidden Territory, το οποο δυστυχς δεν χει μεταφραστε. Μπορ να πω τι συμπθησα τους πρωταγωνιστές και το φιλικό κλμα ανμεσ τους, η δρση ταν αρκετ χορταστικ και συνεχς, αν και χωρς ιδιαιτερη αγωνα για τον σγχρονο αναγνστη, το υπερφυσικ στοιχεο ντονο και ενδιαφέρον και η ατμσφαιρα σκοτειν σε μερικ σημεια και πιο ανλαφρη σε άλλα. Η γραφ μου φνηκε καλοτσικη και ευκολοδιάβαστη, αν και λιγκι γλυκανάλατη σε ορισμένα κομματα της ιστορίας.

Σε γενικς γραμμές πρκειται για να ευχρήιστο και ψυχαγωγικό βιβλίο τρέμου, που προσφέρει δρση και σκηνς υπερφυσικο, χωρς όμως να τρομζει ιδιαιτερα τον σγχρονο αναγνστη. χει τα προβληματακια του στην αφήγηση και την ρο της ιστορίας, κποιες φλυαρες και κοιλτσες στην πλοκή, όμως ως τελικό αποτλεσμα είναι σγούρα ικανοποιητικ. Πντως στο παρατσκ του

ββαλα τ'σσερα αστερ'κια, αντ' για τρ'α. Προτε'νεται υπ' προ'ποθ'σεις.

Mel says

I bought this book because I am very fond of the Hammer film, and wondered how the book compared. I have to say I enjoyed it tremendously. It was a very fast read, it was written quite simply, but there were very effective passages of action as well as lots of interesting discussion between the characters on the nature of magic and good and evil. I was amused by the introduction which mentioned how in order to do research he met with both Crowley and Montague Summers, and that it was Montague Summers who disturbed him the most, inviting him to stay at his house and then trying to sell him a very rare occult book that Wheatly didn't want and couldn't afford, after which Summers apparently freaked out and Wheatly had to fake an excuse to leave. At first I was surprised to see how closely the book followed the film and had a hard time picturing everyone in nice 1930s clothes instead of their 60s Hammer attire. But as I read further it was easier to see the characters in the book quickly over shadowed their counterparts in the film, (with the exception of De Richelieu who always remained a lot like Christopher Lee). This started with the abduction of the friend Simon; the older and wiser De Richelieu in order to protect him from the occult influences put a swastika around his neck. His young friend was horrified that he'd do this being that their friend was Jewish and it was 1935! The book was a sequel and there were constant references back to their previous adventure in Russia I found this rather reassuring rather than annoying. As that adventure has simply been a straightforward adventure story with no supernatural or occult events, to me it added further spookiness to what they were going through this time. There were a lot of great moments, one of my favourite early on was when they were exploring their friend's house to discover the nature of his involvement in the occult and made a point of bringing the champagne with them on their explorations. There was also a very striking scene set on the river as they young American hero attempted to woo the beautiful medium and she told him why she was attracted to the left hand part and why she wanted to participate in the ritual. I found it very interesting and highly enjoyable book.

Graham says

My awareness of this Dennis Wheatley occult classic comes from repeated viewings of the 1968 film version of the story, which as a huge Hammer Horror fan I have seen multiple times. I'd always wanted to find out how the novel ranked alongside the Christopher Lee starrer, and it turns out to be very nearly as good. I haven't encountered Wheatley previously and his writing style is a little bit dated in the long-winded passages of description every time the character enter a new setting, but otherwise this is pacy and exciting, with a great deal of research having gone into the descriptions of black magic rituals and the like. Otherwise, it's a typical early 20th century thriller, with chases, vehicles, a little romance, sinister characters, upper class settings, plenty of suspense, and enough twists to see you through to the end. The whole last quarter of the novel was entirely new to me, given that Hammer didn't have enough money to film it so excised it from the film version entirely.

David says

I picked up a set of Dennis Wheatley paperbacks recently a car boot sale for a few pounds. They were sixties editions, bashed about a bit, pages yellowing, with faded covers depicting pistol-toting Tom Jones-type men and scantily-clad women clutching bed-sheets to their bosoms, wrapped in a thick elastic band (the books,

not the bosoms). A sudden wave of pure pleasure swept over me as the floodgates of memory opened, drowning present cares with images of happy school holidays spent in the company of the suave and sophisticated Duc de Richelieu and the dashing Roger Brook, whilst my ignorant chums wasted their time on comics and the telly.

To me, as a child growing up in the sixties, every bookshelf seemed to include at least five or six Georgette Heyers, and as an adolescent I used to sneak a look at them in search of racy bits, though I was always disappointed, despite the lurid bedroom scenes of half-naked damsels and Regency beaus on their dustcovers. I pretty soon discovered, however, that the Wheatleys contained far naughtier bits. Within the pages of his thrillers one could always expect something about heaving, half-exposed bosoms or seductively pale thighs, and the hero's fingers would often be found lingering in such places, when not fingering the pommel of a sword or the trigger of a pistol.

These novels were written in less complicated days, and Wheatley was unapologetic for - or probably simply unaware of - any offence he might be causing to ethnic minorities and people who had to work for a living. None of his heroes ever did what you or I would think of as work. They were all fabulously rich and handsome, and spent a large part of their time drinking cocktails, donning evening-gowns and smoking-jackets, eating exquisite foods and puffing on the most expensive cigars. When, that is, they weren't dealing with Satanists and Nazis and teaching them a thing or two about Imperial British values and the difference between right and wrong.

By modern thriller standards, Wheatley is perhaps rather slow in getting on with the story, and his characters have a habit of lecturing one another rather than holding a proper conversation. The historical background is usually introduced not incidentally and gradually as a part of the natural texture as the story unfolds, but as the sort of lesson a rather stiff teacher might deliver at school, put into the mouth of one character in response to some pertinent query by another. 'But how on earth did Germany, the country of Goethe and Mozart, arrive at such a sorry state?' would be a typical trigger, precursor to half a dozen dense pages about the rise of the Third Reich that have no direct bearing on the plot, and by the end of which you've either dozed off or have had to glance back to pick up the thread.

I think that the chief appeal of Dennis Wheatley nowadays, at least for me, is that he offers an illusion of moral certainty in the face of that peculiar curse of modern life, relative values. For him, there are no compensating circumstances to a case. Some things are right and other things are just plain wrong, and the perpetrators of the latter are the clear villains of the piece and therefore bound for a sticky end. Political correctness was a completely alien concept to him, and he would no doubt have identified it as a major cause of the rot when it came to the decline and fall of the British Empire. Nazis, Communists, Socialists, Uppity Minorities of all shades and persuasions - these were basically a Bad Lot as far as he was concerned, and he was not the sort to bow to public opinion on such matters.

So in a sense he managed to time his own literary demise rather well, as it coincided with just such a sea change in the mid-seventies, which witnessed the beginning of a steady decline in the sales of his novels. A new breed of, shall we say, more socially aware and diplomatic writers was emerging, and the world of debutantes' balls, stiff upper lips and adherence to duty, which had managed to hang on through two world wars, was finally let go of.

For those of us who enjoy a thumping good yarn laced with sex, violence, nasty Nazis and devil-worshippers, gallons of port and cognac, smoked salmon and caviar by the bucketful, and of course the best cigars that money can buy, Dennis Wheatley leaves the competition way behind.

Mel says

Literary equivalent of Hammer Horror. It struck me early on that this would make a classic Hammer Horror Movie, with the emphasis on 'ham'. And in fact, it did, with Christopher Lee playing the hero for a change, as Duke de Richleau. That is pretty much all you need to know. However, I will make a few personal observations. It's a group of upper class rich stereotypes from a bygone era that I am not sure ever even existed. They go charging about the English country side and dashing off in conveniently fuelled and ready to take off private aircraft across Europe to foil a dreadful satanic plot in which they have unwittingly become embroiled. They are temporarily thwarted at every turn by villains, who can be readily identified by their various physical peculiarities and deformities. Obviously.

The text is littered with all manner of references to satanic practices and daft myth and legend relating to the dark arts, to the point that it just becomes very, very silly. How much bunk the author must have waded through to end up with such a mish-mash of nonsense I can only imagine, but he must have been overwhelmed because he certainly wasn't discerning in the final cut. The effect is an overload that renders any reasonable suspension of belief impossible.

No occurrence or situation is so terrible it seems, not even the kidnapping of one's only child, that one cannot make the time at least, to manage a ham sandwich, if not a full 4 course meal and every venue has access to a well stocked cellar of excellent wines. Every repast is detailed. At first, I found it 'quaint' and nostalgic but I struggled to complete it because it is just so 'twee' and dated without the depth or skill needed to elevate it above this perception. No suspense, no terror, angst or pathos, oh and in the end, everyone, save the chronically obvious villain, lives happily ever after.

Does it work? No, It fails on the horror front. Just not at all frightening but it did make me laugh in a couple of places. I think the difference between a novel being described as dated and a novel really achieving classic status must be in the execution. Bram Stoker's Dracula is a classic. The Devil Rides out is just daft. Read it for nostalgia or comedy effect.

Mymymble says

God knows what I'd rate this now... As a teen I loved them. Bizarrely the one author my parents refused to let me read in those days - so of course I did.

Dfordoom says

Dennis Wheatley is one of those authors who has gone from topping bestseller lists to complete oblivion in the space of less than 30 years. As recently as the 1970s he was one of the most widely read authors in the world, with total sales exceeding 50 million copies. He has a reputation for jingoism, racism, sexism and insanely reactionary political views, and for his unswerving belief that Satanism is a major force in the modern world and that we should have nothing to do with it because it's really wicked and terribly naughty. He even includes an amusing little warning at the beginning of each of his books, which essentially amounts to "don't try this at home boys and girls." In fact his approach to magic and religion is rather more complex than you might expect from his Colonel Blimp-ish image. He dismisses any idea of the literal existence of Satan or of Hell as simplistic nonsense, and his heroes use Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist and even pagan rituals in their battles with the forces of darkness. He certainly does believe in the forces of darkness though. His

style is a bit like one of those wonderful 1950s movies warning of the dangers of fast cars, dope and heavy petting. But combined with X-Files-type conspiracy theories plus wicked devil-worshippers who'll stop at nothing to get innocent young women to take their clothes off, plus non-stop action. His stuff works superbly as High Camp. I just love him.

Jean-marcel says

While Dennis Wheatley may have been quite a sensation in his day, I certainly hadn't heard of him until I came across the Hammer Productions film based on this novel. I've owned the film for years now and frankly love it, and because it's indelibly imprinted on my psyche, I'm going to talk about the movie more than I normally would in a book review. Normally, I feel that the two artistic media are of equal merit and should generally be kept apart and considered as separate entities even when they are supposedly tackling the same story.

All right, I may as well lay my cards on the table right now: I like the film a fair bit more than the book. I'm chuckling to myself over here because writing this now, I realise I can't really think of another instance where this is true for me. Maybe it's down to Richard Matheson writing the movie script and turning a sometimes meandering, occasionally pontificating and sometimes even unintentionally funny novel into a taut fast-paced screenplay. Maybe it's Christopher Lee, whose grave, saturnine Duc De Richleau somehow comes off as more dignified and charismatic than the old fart of the novel. It could even be the way Hammer and the actor Charles Grey handled the villain, which seemed to make him a more active presence in the story.

Dennis Wheatley's style is solid and engaging, if nothing too remarkable. I found myself wanting to skip pages at times, but I almost never do that and was for the most part able to resist the urge, with the possible exception of the sticky family-oriented scenes near the end. Wheatley has an interesting habit here of leaping onto the soapbox occasionally, taking jabs at all kinds of stuff that usually come from the mouth of his wise and learned protagonist, the Duc, but which feel like they just stem from nothing when you read the book. While Wheatley obviously did plenty of research and talks about the occult convincingly, I don't feel he revels in it as much as he should. It almost feels like he's caught in a jam with on the one hand trying to warn people about the dangers of this stuff and on the other tell a ripping/lurid yarn about evil occult ceremonies and the devilish doings of black magicians. If his heart was really in the latter, he might have given the story a bit more juice, but I feel it's the former Wheatley that sort of wins out here. Interesting that while the Hammer film does feel necessarily a bit tamer because of what could be shown on screen in England at the time, it somehow comes across as enjoying its subject matter a little more and not really trying to preach against it, except maybe for all the "Jesus stuff", but I'll come to that in a bit.

The villain seems like he'd be interesting, but we mostly hear about him and what he does because of other characters relating events. Frankly this is a pretty boring method of storytelling; I almost think Simon should have been more at the centre of things, as his conversion to satanism and possible eventual redemption would probably have made a more interesting tale than what we got. About three quarters of the way through it struck me: Mocata doesn't do a damn thing in this book! He mostly just shows up and pronounces ominous things, and instead of seeing the scene directly we get to hear about it afterwards. The nadir is when he shows up at Richard's house and ... begins to eat chocolates threateningly in Richard's wife's presence! Oh, there's something vague about an attempted mind control in there, but it doesn't seem to really work on anybody important. The film certainly made him seem much more of a credible adversary.

All the "good guys" are pretty flat and boring to read about, I'm afraid, and the satanist girl everyone is chasing after falls in love with the big American fellow for some reason, even though she leads everyone on

a really plodding car chase halfway through the book that is the sort of thing people always criticised early 70s Doctor Who for doing but which it didn't actually do all that much. The evil Mocata is portrayed in the novel as a greasy fat foreigner, whereas in the film he's "one of us", rather english seeming and handsome, which seems like it should work much better for a charismatic cult leader. But, you see, Dennis Wheatley kind of has a distrust of the un-english, and most of the people in Mocata's cult are shown as being from some foreign place or having something wrong with them, the suggestion being that a strong and proper English protestant would be happy with his lot and see no reason to join up with a bunch of satanists. Much is made in the novel of Simon's Jewishness, and how while everyone loves him for the man he is, his history and background basically have set him up for this fall, and it's the job of the Duc de Ricleau and good ole' Rex to rescue him from his follies. They first do this by hanging a swastika around his neck, and when he's almost killed the Duc says, "oh no! I made a mistake! That's a symbol of the East! I can't use that here!" Yes, I laughed at this and wasn't appalled or anything; such things generally don't bother me much, but Wheatley is just a bit too strident at times.

Having said that, Wheatley does appear to at least make an attempt at giving his story broader, more universal concerns. The Duc of the book interestingly appears a bit more worldly and less outwardly religious than his counterpart in the film. I don't think the book even mentions Christ directly more than once, and this is a contrast to the screenplay, where in several instances the protagonists invoke the name of Jesus and the movie even ends on a somber note that they should all thank God and his son for having allowed them to triumph in the end. I have to confess that the overtly Christian angle is the one thing about the movie that I didn't entirely like, and Wheatley seems to take some pains to imply that it isn't necessarily christianity that will save the world, and that one positive religious or spiritual faith is essentially as good as any other (although he does condescend to make a list of the applicable ones, I believe).

Another facet of the novel which surprised and pleased me was the ending, which is quite a bit different from the film's and which actually felt more satisfying. I don't want to spoil it for anyone, but there's a section of several dozen pages near the climax where the characters don't quite seem like themselves and something feels deliberately altered in the writing style. It feels kind of dreamlike and oppressive in a strange way, and in the end, when I realise this was purposefully done, I felt like cheering Wheatley, because he'd managed to push some of my irritation buttons and yet kind of came through as being rather good in the end.

I came down a bit hard on this novel, but the truth is that I'll probably read more Wheatley. he seems to be just weird and exciting enough to entertain me, at any rate, and just may have a few surprising tricks up his sleeve.

Simon says

An action packed thriller focusing on the practice of black magic. Good fun but some infuriatingly dense characters.

Kathy Davie says

First in the Black Magic series and sixth in the Duke de Richleau series revolving around best friends: the Duke de Richleau, Simon Aron, the Princess Marie Lou and Richard Eaton, and Rex Van Wyn.

This ARC was sent to me by NetGalley for an honest review.

My Take

This is a very religious book, but more along the lines of Light versus Dark, Good versus Evil, and the Powers of Good.

I should think Simon has an “inkling” that he’s dabbling in wrong things when he tries so hard to keep de Richleau out of it all. I suspect de Richleau would do better to ensure Max was better informed about black magic.

Tanith was a pain. She comes across as an intelligent woman, but her reasoning for following the Left Hand Path is so immature. She’s a nasty-minded person with her desire to have power over people. Doesn’t she realize that this is an evil desire? What’s wrong with helping people? I do wish Wheatley hadn’t been so cryptic about the Malagasy and the Goat. Did the Malagasy give himself over to the demon, was he the demon, or what?

The slang of the 1930s was interesting to read, and Wheatley has a very black noir atmosphere with all the drama of the times in referring to “magic”. Also typical of the times is the attitude towards people of other races. It’s embarrassing to think people could actually believe such drivel, and a relief that we’ve come as far as we have. We do still have a ways to go, but at least we are making progress. Wheatley certainly has some “interesting” beliefs in why the white man has done as well as he has.

I knew the swastika was an ancient symbol adopted by the Nazis, but I don’t think I’ve ever heard this explanation about it. De Richleau’s explanation of baptism is encompassing, on both sides. Even more interesting is Wheatley’s take on the Albigensians, the Templars, and the Rosicrucians. More history involves La Voisin, Prince Borghese’s taking back his palazzo, the magic of Nicolas Flamel, Rasputin’s real identity, the real reason why World War I broke out, Tanith’s use of numerology, and the tale of Osiris’ murder of Set (very clever if totally wicked).

The duke uses some interesting analogies to explain magic to Rex, Richard, and Marie Lou. And they are good points.

People of my generation and older were taught to be polite to everyone. It’s a definite handicap when encountering the bad guys, and examples of when being rude is the better choice should be taught. That’s not to say that being rude is the best choice, but that there are times when it is merited...phone solicitors, for example.

The good guys did make some stupid moves: Rex drove me mad with his stupid decisions about Tanith at the inn. Duh. At the very least consult with the duke instead of falling asleep in the woods! Leaving Fleur unprotected makes me question their intelligence as well. Simon choosing to go against his friends despite the logic of their decision. And poor Richard, having to go a whole day without his drinks and meat...

Phew, these adventures make me so very appreciative of cell phones!

The Story

It must be truly important for Simon to miss the reunion dinner with the duke and Rex. And the duke is even more worried as Rex discovers. Since their friend is too important to them both, the men repair to Simon’s new house where they discover the depths to which he has sunk.

For Simon is the key to an evil ritual, and Mocata will never let him go. And the duke must convince his friends that magic is real.

It’ll be crazy chase scenes, mad escapes, kidnappings, stopping a Black Mass, and the fourth dimension

before it's over.

The Characters

The **Duke de Richleau**, a.k.a., Greyeyes, is an elderly French exile (due to his involvement in the 1890s Royalist rising), art connoisseur, and dilettante one can count on in all things. He has studied the Right Hand Path, White Magic. **Max** is the duke's man.

Simon Aron, a stoop-shouldered Jewish man with a very sudden interest in astronomy and gardening, is about to be baptized "Abraham". **Rex Van Wyn** is a wealthy young man who enjoys sports of all kinds. His father is a banker and runs The Chesapeake Banking and Trust Corporation. **Richard Eaton** has married the **Princess Marie Lou**, and they have a daughter, **Fleur**. They sold off the lesser stones of the Shulimoff treasure to provide the princess with an independent income. They currently reside at **Cardinals Folly** in the country. **Jim** is a gardener; **Malin** is their butler; and, they have a nurse for Fleur.

The **Assistant Commissioner** at the Metropolitan Police is a personal friend of the duke's. **Mister Clutterbuck** is ex-Scotland Yard who now works as a private investigator. **Mr. Jeremiah Wilkes** is a retired gentleman's gentleman who runs **The Pride of the Peacocks**, an inn near Cardinals Folly. **Mizka** is an old gypsy woman of Tanith's childhood. **Nebiros** is Mizka's black cat. **Retired Detective Verrier** identifies the duke. **Le Chef de la Sûreté Daudet** arrests the duke.

The hypnotist, **Canon Damien Mocata**, is a French-Irishman and a defrocked Catholic priest as well as a follower of the Left Hand Path, black magic. **Madame D'Urfé** (a nom-du-Diable of a notorious witch during the time of Louis XV) is a cigar-smoking, overly jeweled, old Frenchwoman. The psychic **Miss Tanith** (a name taken from the Moon Goddess of the Carthaginians) is an orphan with a death sentence. The **Chinaman**; the **Albino**; and, **Laurent Castelnau**, a French banker, are involved.

The Forbidden Territory is...

...fifth in the Duke de Richleau series series refers to an earlier adventure of the Duke de Richleau and crew.

Different levels of magic mastery include **Ipsissimus**, **Magus**, and **Magister Templi**. The **Red Book of Appin**. The **Talisman of Set** is the 14th part that Isis never found. It's also the goal for Mocata, for the fulfillment of his evil plans. A **Sabbat** is a gathering of those who practice witchcraft and other rites. The **Malagasy** is the **Goat of Mendes**, the black magic equivalent of the lamb of God.

The Title

The title is true enough as *The Devil Rides Out* with both Mocata and the Goat of Mendes traveling all over the place.

The Reading Bibliophile says

I got this book for 10 pence at a thrift shop in Belfast (yellow pages, cover wearing out) - I could not afford anything else, being in dire straits at the time -, I started reading it just for the sake of reading something and I loved it! The narrative is very good and I was quite frightened by the story's atmosphere. Living in Belfast at that time was somehow frightening as well.
