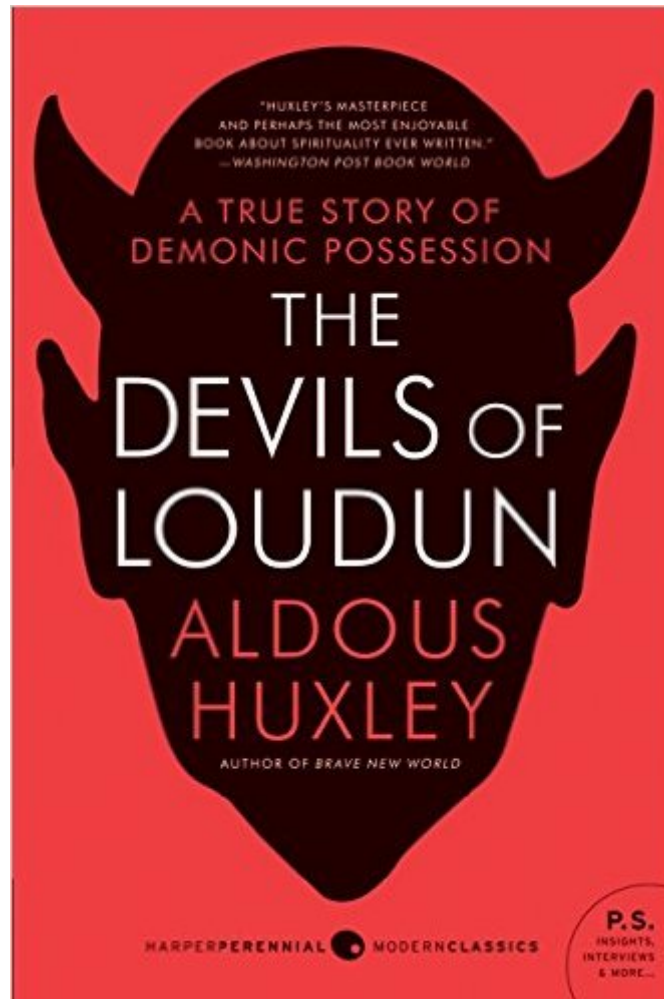


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The Devils Of Loudun



Synopsis

“HUXLEY’S MASTERPIECE AND PERHAPS THE MOST ENJOYABLE BOOK ABOUT SPIRITUALITY EVER WRITTEN.” — Washington Post Book World
Aldous Huxley’s “brilliant” (Los Angeles Times) and gripping account of one of the strangest occurrences in history, hailed as the “peak achievement of Huxley’s career” by the New York Times
In 1632 an entire convent in the small French village of Loudun was apparently possessed by the devil. After a sensational and celebrated trial, the convent’s charismatic priest Urban Grandier “accused of spiritually and sexually seducing the nuns in his charge” was convicted of being in league with Satan. Then he was burned at the stake for witchcraft.
A remarkable true story of religious and sexual obsession, *The Devils of Loudun* is considered by many to be Brave New World author Aldous Huxley’s nonfiction masterpiece.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the joys of reading is how one subject can lead to a serendipitous find. Having recently come across a brief reference to the early 17th century barking nuns of Loudun I went in search of a more detailed exploration. In Aldous Huxley’s book I found all that I sought and much more. Urbain Grandier, the local parson of Loudun, is a very naughty cleric who partakes much too much of the sensual world. One morsel happens to be the daughter of his best friend. She becomes pregnant with unhappy consequences for many people. Grandier manages in this way of behavior to alienate nearly every important Catholic in Loudun as well as make an enemy of Richelieu. When Grandier

spurns the local prioress, Sister Jeanne, she claims demonic possession at the hand of Grandier as do 2 of her nuns. Grandier may have been guilty of many sins, but demonic possession was not among them. Exorcists are brought in as much to destroy Grandier as to throw out the devils (7 specific ones inhabit Sister Jeanne alone). The exorcists produce devils in 14 more nuns. The public exorcisms provide great entertainment, reviving the local tourist industry, but eventually produce the trial of Grandier, who in due turn is burned at the stake. The story continues when the Jesuit Surin arrives to finally successfully exorcise Sister Jeanne's demons. Huxley's 1952 work explores the psychological aspects of demonic possession and exorcism, sometimes brilliantly against the backdrop of the madneses of his own time. Liberal rationalists had "fondly imagined" an end to persecutions of 'heretics'.

This is a very well researched historical account of hell in this world, by the author of the better known opus *Brave New World* and *The Doors of Perception of Heaven and Hell*. The historical situation of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits, the politics in France during the 17th Century, the downfall of the Huguenots, all constitute the fabric were the personal drama and martyrdom of father Urbain Grandier are sewn. **POLITICAL BACKGROUND:** Cardinal Richelieu is directing the policy of France, during the reign of Louis XIII. After Richelieu convinces the King that self-government of small provincial towns must end, the feudal nobility lose their independence by an edict calling for the destruction of their castles and walls, whilst the Huguenots are being crushed by force. One of these towns is Loudun, where the priest (a Jesuit) is Urbain Grandier, an intellectual priest of 35, that knows the meaning and consequences of the edict calling for the destruction of the fortified walls of Loudun. Consequently, when Laubardemont, an agent of the Cardinal Richelieu arrives in the town, he is confronted and stopped by Grandier. **GRANDIER'S VICES:** Father Grandier is strikingly handsome and a sensualist. His vows of celibacy have not prevented him from fathering a bastard child with the daughter of Trincant, the town magistrate, and performing an illegal marriage with Madeleine, a young lady with whom he has fallen in love. **THE ANGELICAL DEVIL:** The Convent of the Ursulines in Loudun is ruled by Sister Jeanne of the Angels, a young humped back nun, with a beautiful face. She develops an obsession with Grandier and has sensual visions which involve the young priest. When she hears about the illicit marriage, she gets mad and falsely accuses the priest of sorcery and lewdness.

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