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The Devil Notebooks

Laurence A. Rickels

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Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Goethe's *Faust*. Aaron Spelling's *Satan's School for Girls?* Laurence A. Rickels scours the canon and pop culture in this all-encompassing study on the Devil. Continuing the work he began in his influential book *The Vampire Lectures*, Rickels returns with his trademark wit and encyclopedic knowledge to go mano a mano with the Prince of Darkness himself.

Revealing our astonishing obsession with Satan in his many forms, Rickels guides us on an entertaining and enlightening journey down the darkest corridors that film, music, folklore, theater, and literature have ever offered. "The Devil represents the father," Rickels writes in the opening pages, setting the stage to challenge foundational interpretations of Freudian psychology. The Devil presents not the usual fantasy of immortality, he explains, but instead provides victims with a paternal origin. Until their preordained deadline is reached, the Devil's pitch goes, people will enjoy the pleasure of uninterrupted "quality time" without the threat of random death. Rickels terms it "Dad certainty": you know where you came from and you know where you are going. Despite the grim outlook, Rickels keeps the proceedings amusing, with extravagant wordplay and buoyant prose.

A stunning cultural and psychological analysis, *The Devil Notebooks* shows how the prince of occult has been used—throughout history and across cultures—to represent people's primal fear of authority and humanity's universal suffering. Sharing this cultural moment with the idea of evil being bandied about in our political discourse, the supposed satanic influence of pop music on our children, and a wildly popular book series on the end of the world, *The Devil Notebooks* is a sweeping and timely work that sheds light on the source of human fear and dread in the world.

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