



The Devil and the River

R.J. Ellory

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When Sheriff John Gaines is called to the riverside, it is to supervise the recovery of the body of a teenage girl. The corpse is perfectly preserved, she could have died yesterday. But the locals of Whytesburg are in for a shock. For Nancy Denton, missing for two decades, has come back to them from the cold embrace of the riverbank.

The Devil and the River Details

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Author : R.J. Ellory

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From Reader Review The Devil and the River for online ebook

Beau says

Love anything written by this man, another cracking read. Fell a bit in love with John Gaines

Kendall says

A teenage girl is found brutally murdered half submerged in mud by the river. Sheriff John Gaines starts looking into missing persons reports since she cannot be recognized. What a shocker to find out that this girl has actually been missing for 20 years! But, it looks like it's been only days. How can that be?!

As he begins his investigation, Sheriff John Gaines finds there is so many lies and secrets that have been buried.

I have to say I was not that impressed with this mystery. I feel like it was something that I could have bypassed and another thriller to put on top of the pile. I don't like history in my novels at all and I feel like more then half of this book was about the Sheriff's time in the jungles of Vietnam. This was just too much and don't understand how this was part of the story. I wish the author would have just focused on the missing girl aspect.

I felt the book was very long and some of the sentences I felt kept running on and on? Again, I feel like I've been seeing a pattern in thriller/mysteries lately with being too LONG. The story can be quiet good without it dragging on! :(In this case also, I feel like the author focusing so much on Sheriff Gaines previous experience in the Vietnam jungle took away from the actual plot. This was a bummer.

This feel short for me and overall 2 stars on this one.

Thank you to Netgalley and Overlook Press for granting my wish and providing an advanced arc in exchange for my honest thoughts.

Publication date: 3/6/18

Published to GR/Amazon: 3/17/18.

Kelly says

Een aanrader voor de thrillerfan, die nét iets meer wilt!

“Het kwaad en de rivier” - RJ Ellory

??????????

Wat

Was

Dat? ?

Wauw! Fantastisch, angstaanjagend boek! 447 pagina's vol spanning, bedroefdheid, verwarring, intriges,

familieperikelen en de dood... ?

Op de cover staat: "Schitterend en angstaanjagend. Een meesterwerk. - Michael Connelly"
#helemaaljuistdat! ?

Het begint met 1 moord, 20 jaar geleden... Je kan je niet voorstellen wat daarna allemaal gebeurd bij de zoektocht naar de dader(s). ?

Fantastisch! En opnieuw een super verrassend einde! ?

Krist says

Waar ik vroeger dacht dat ieder boek van deze geweldige schrijver beter en beter werd, moet ik, sinds zijn laatste 3 geschreven boeken, mijn mening bijstellen. 'De helden van NY' vond ik maar net ok, en ook deze 'Het kwaad en de rivier' kan me maar matig bekoren. Te lang uitgesponnen, teveel voor de hand liggende flashbacks naar Vietnam, en een einde en liefdeshistorie die je al van 200 bladzijden voor het einde ziet aankomen. R.J.Ellory blijft wel een schrijver die je zeker es moet gelezen hebben (mijn aanraders: 'Een inktzwart hart' en 'Bekraste zielen')

Bookreporter.com Historical Fiction says

Let's get the bad news about THE DEVIL AND THE RIVER out of the way before we get to the good news. Ellory, who is an unheralded master of thriller and mystery fiction, gets in his own way too much and too often here.

One of Elmore Leonard's rules of writing was to edit out everything that reads like writing. If Ellory had followed that rule in his latest effort, it would be about a hundred pages shorter. It's not that those pages are poorly written. In some instances, they contain some of his finest and most haunting prose. It's just that Ellory sometimes tends to veer off of his story's carefully constructed road and into a wondrous and beautiful ditch before getting the wheels back on the macadam. As a result, the reader is tempted, at various points, to grab the wheel and set the story back on course. That said, Ellory eventually gets to where he is going, and to marked and chilling effect.

THE DEVIL AND THE RIVER is set primarily in 1974 in the fictional southwest Mississippi town of Whytesburg, near the Louisiana border. John Gaines, newly returned from military service in Vietnam, finds himself appointed sheriff of Breed County. He gets his baptism by fire when the body of a young woman who has been missing for 20 years is discovered buried in a riverbank. The victim is 16-year-old Nancy Denton. While her body is almost perfectly preserved, it has been ritualistically desecrated in a particularly disturbing manner. Gaines is haunted by the discovery but is quickly able to locate a suspect who at first admits to the desecration but vehemently denies the murder. His newness on the job and rush to judgment results in a procedural error that threatens the potential prosecution of the suspect.

That is the least of Gaines' problems, though. The unearthing of Nancy's body sets off a chain reaction of murders, deaths and grisly discoveries that seem aimed at, or at least connected to, Gaines himself. The instigator of all of them appears to be the scion of a wealthy family who was friends with Nancy at the time

of her disappearance and has interjected himself into the investigation. His denial of any knowledge of what occurred in the past and present is delivered with an unspoken wink and nod that belie his verbal assertions. Gaines is determined to bring him down, but is haunted by his own experiences, including a lost love and his traumatic time in Vietnam. To discover what happened to Nancy, Gaines will have to uncover many other truths concerning not only what occurred all those years ago in a small Mississippi town but also those of his own past. He may not survive either endeavor.

THE DEVIL AND THE RIVER contains some of Ellory's best writing. While he may meander here and there from the fascinating and addicting story he has created, one is compelled to follow him and keep reading, simply to find out what happens next. And while I would not reflexively refer newcomers of Ellory's fiction to this book, those familiar with his work will find much to love here --- with a bit of reading fortitude.

Reviewed by Joe Hartlaub

John Herbert says

I'm totally biased towards the books of R J Ellory.

Each new book from him is like an event, one NEVER to be missed.

Yet again another intriguing tale - girl aged 16 goes missing in 1954, found dead on a riverbank 20 years later - found by sheriff John Gaines, a man suffering from post Vietnam hangup supreme.

Not only do you follow the sheriff's moves towards uncovering this and several other mysteries, you virtually live in his socks, as you suffer with him again and again the Vietnam stuff and the pain of the horrors unfolding in Whytesburg, Mississippi.

Yes, you could accuse Ellory of repeating the pain and suffering, as similar bits pop up throughout the book, but that's how real life is - stuff keeps returning in your head at various times. For me it solidifies the character in your mind, and you find yourself caring about sheriff Gaines as you follow in his footsteps.

The characters in the book are painted well...and I could go on for ever....
Just read it!!!!

Vera VB says

Terwijl het hier zowat de warmste dag van het jaar is, lees ik deze broeierige thriller van R.J. Ellory. Het verhaal speelt zich af in 1974 maar gaat verder terug in de tijd, zowat 20 jaar daarvoor en zowel de Koreaanse als de Vietnam oorlog komen erin voor omdat enkele van de hoofdrolspelers in de oorlog gediend hebben en daar al dan niet slecht of slechter uitgekomen zijn. Ik zeg bewust niet 'goed' want uit een oorlog kan je niet goed komen.

Aan de rivier wordt een meisje gevonden. Nadat ze is uitgegraven blijkt dat haar lichaam iets gruwelijks vertoont. De identificatie wordt snel gedaan, maar kan eigenlijk niet want het gaat om een meisje dat twintig jaar geleden verdween en het lichaam is bijna volledig intact en is dat van een meisje.

De hoofdrolspelers van de tijd van het meisje komen aan bod in het broeierige zuidoosten van de Verenigde Staten. Het is de tijd van zwaar racisme, van haat tegenover negers, van de Klan. Niet alleen het weer en het klimaat maakt het broeierig. Wanneer je oude beerput open trekt, kan het al eens gaan stinken en niet iedereen houdt van die stank. Hoe hoger in de hiërarchie, hoe meer men geneigd is dingen toe te dekken.

Linda Strong says

A teenage girl is found partially submerged in mud. She has been brutally murdered. Sheriff John Gaines immediately starts looking at any missing persons reports as no one recognizes her. Imagine his surprise when he learns that this girl went missing 20 years ago. She is perfectly preserved, looking as though it's only been days instead of years.

As he begins his investigation, he finds that there are decades of lies and secrets that need to be unearthed. The truth doesn't always set you free.

The crime portion of this book kept me turning pages. There were several suspects and I always appreciate a good who-dun-it. However, the first half of this book was more about the sheriff's time in the jungles of Vietnam. He saw things and did things many of us could never conceive of. While the author is a master of the English language, some of his sentences were longer than any letter I have ever written.

I found the book overlong, and much too wordy for my taste. Character development is always important to a story, but there comes a point when it can actually take away from the story rather than increase one's interest.

Many thanks to the author / The Overlook Press / Edelweiss for the advance digital copy. Opinions expressed here are unbiased and entirely my own.

Bookreporter.com Mystery & Thriller says

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who has been missing for 20 years is discovered buried in a riverbank. The victim is 16-year-old Nancy Denton. While her body is almost perfectly preserved, it has been ritualistically desecrated in a particularly disturbing manner. Gaines is haunted by the discovery but is quickly able to locate a suspect who at first admits to the desecration but vehemently denies the murder. His newness on the job and rush to judgment results in a procedural error that threatens the potential prosecution of the suspect.

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Reviewed by Joe Hartlaub

Renske Hoogendorp says

I was very disappointed in this book.

Although I like it when characters come to life through their background story, the author dragged the Vietnam history of sheriff Gaines out way to long and often. Not only was it to much, it also felt like a broken record because the stories seemed like variations of the same thing: Vietnam was a terrible hell hole and people that were there have seen and lived horrible things.

Because hey kept going back to Vietnam, the story seemed to develop quite slowly. I found myself scanning pages instead of reading them! Also: I felt like the whole book kept pushing me in the direction of one suspect, while to me it was quite obvious that someone else would end up being the killer.

In the last 20 pages all the pieces miraculously fell in to place at high speed and yes: the killer was someone else, someone that only had a really small part in the story before. Even more: someone the author tried really hard to make look innocent.

Sorry, but this was the last book by this author that I will be reading for a long time...

Leah says

Lies and corruption...

A young girl disappeared from the small town of Whytesburg, Mississippi, 20 years ago - a runaway, or so it was thought. But now, in 1974, a fierce storm has disturbed the mud at the river and Nancy's perfectly preserved body has risen to the surface. Sheriff John Gaines is a man who has seen a lot of horrors in his life, mostly during his tour in Vietnam, but he's shocked to see that the girl's body has been horribly mutilated. Still fighting the demons of his own war memories, Gaines must now try to find a way to the truth through a labyrinth of lies and corruption. The discovery of Nancy's body seems to have brought the devil into Whytesburg and more deaths are on the way...

There's a good story at the heart of this novel and Ellory's writing is always skilful enough to hold the readers attention. But there are some real problems with this book. It reads at times like a draft rather than a finished novel. For most of the first half we are constantly dragged back to Gaines' war experiences which, while relevant in explaining his character, don't move the plot forward at all and are overlong and repetitive. Continuity errors abound - for example, at one point Gaines tells retired attorney Nate Ross about a possible source of information, clearly forgetting that it was Nate who gave him this information four chapters earlier. At another point, a character tells Gaines she has just found out something that she, the same character, had already told him several chapters earlier. These are just a couple of examples of what was a recurring problem throughout the book.

And lazy devices for building tension - Gaines is stunned three-quarters of the way through to discover the reason for the mutilation of Nancy's body. However, he had the man who did it in custody much earlier in the book and, despite knowing and discussing with him the fact that he did it, it never occurred to Gaines to ask him why - clearly so that we could have the big revelation at a later point; though the reason had seemed pretty obvious from fairly early on anyway. Gaines' method of detection, in fact, seems to be to decide that someone did it and then later, for no particular reason, change his mind and decide that no, actually it was someone else. This goes on throughout until, pretty much by coincidence, he apparently fastens on the right perpetrator at the end - an end that is somewhat anti-climactic, I fear.

I thought Ellory's last book, *A Dark And Broken Heart*, was the best thriller of 2012 and this was one of the books I was most eager to read this year. So I'm afraid this has to count as one of the biggest disappointments of 2013. That doesn't mean it's the worst book I've read this year - far from it. Despite the plotting problems, Ellory's writing and strong characterisation make this a very readable story. But the sloppiness of the plotting combined with the frequent repetitiveness prevented this from developing anything like the darkness, depth or tension of some of his previous books.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

Mike says

On a summer evening in 1954, a sixteen-year-old girl named Nancy Denton walked into the woods near her home in Whytesburg, Mississippi. Twenty years later, on July 24th, 1974, a heavy rainstorm caused the riverbank to crumble revealing Nancy's almost perfectly preserved body... so begins *The Devil and the River* by R. J. Ellory.

The main focus of the story (at least in the first half) is Sheriff John Gaines, something of an outsider, trying to piece together what happened long ago. Trying to separate fact from fiction, legend from truth. Becoming more and more convinced that his investigation is turning into "a Southern f**king melodrama...that would

put Tennessee Williams to shame.”

A battle hardened veteran of the Viet Nam War, Sheriff Gaines has seen some things, disturbing things, things he can't forget no matter how hard he tries, but nothing has prepared him for the discovery of the body of young Nancy Denton. Even after twenty years there are obvious signs of a brutal murder with ritualistic overtones.

In this small community not far from New Orleans where belief in the mystical, the unexplained, and the occult are strong the locals whisper of voodoo... grisgris ceremonies... sacrifices. There are some, the true believers, who feel “the devil has come to Whytesburg, Mississippi to collect a long owed debt.

About every fourth or fifth chapter of the book is told in the first person narrative from the point of view of Nancy's best friend, Maryanne Benedict, grown now and recounting the events of the summer that Nancy disappeared.

Sheriff John Gaines suffers from what we would today call PTSD. The initial focus of the investigation centers on a WWII veteran who has suffered even more than the sheriff from trauma experienced both during the war and since his return to civilian life. The author does a fine job of getting into the mindset of these men, painting a vivid “word picture” of their experiences and the resulting effects. The problem is that it becomes extremely redundant, redundant to the point of boredom. It's as if the writer is trying to drive home the point with a sledge hammer. How many times must we be reminded of “the nine circles of hell that was Viet Nam”?

At heart this is basically a good mystery novel.

The first half, which I almost gave up on and quit several times, is written in an almost stream of consciousness kind of way that gets downright mind numbing at times. Then...

Somewhere around the halfway point the story just comes alive. The characters - the same characters who have been there all along - suddenly become more real, people you can actually care about rather than just cardboard figures being moved about as needed. This novel is really like two books, the first half and the second half are so different it's almost as if there were two completely different writers at work. I have to wonder if the author intended it that way, as a way of showing how these long damaged people living colorless lives were somehow brought back to life by the horrible circumstances they are forced to confront. I don't really know.

I firmly believe that there is a five star book somewhere within these existing pages if a sharp eyed editor could get at it with an eye towards streamlining the overall story. If you manage to slog through the first half of this book you won't regret it, and if you give up on the book before you get there I wouldn't blame you a bit.

***Thanks to NetGalley, the author, and the publisher for allowing me the opportunity to read and review this title.

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Eloquent Writing: "The Devil and the River" by R. J. Ellory

First something about Ellory's writing style. Ellory is a master at describing everything in very visual terms. To me it's what gives identity to the writer's voice, ie, it's what distinguishes their writing. How can we achieve this visual style? For starters by using physical references; they're the main elements that pull me into a Story because it allows me to be immersed in it three dimensionally.

If a character is scratching his bum, how does he view the setting sun? Does the night fog linger over the grass look like a nympha's breath on a sea of rubies? Forget about inserting visual aids into the narrative. It's not about that. Having a visual writing narrative means the writer is capable of writing seamless prose, ie, it's embedded into the writing so that I'm not aware it's there in the first place. It's all about making what's already there richer.

Let me give an example (entirely fictitious in case you're wondering...):

"Here, Logen, have a Mars Bar," Thelfi said.

"Sorry. No can do. I'm currently scratching my bum and crotch at the same time and consequently I don't have a free hand at the moment. Besides, I haven't washed my hands lately, so maybe I shouldn't eat it," said Logen Ninefingers sadly.

You can read the rest of this review elsewhere.

Lectrice Hérétique says

Voici le dernier-né de l'un de mes chouchous, qu'on ne présente plus, Ellory faisant partie de mon panthéon d'auteurs personnel.

John Gaines, un ancien du Viet-nam reconverti en shérif, tente d'élucider le meurtre d'une adolescente survenu vingt ans plus tôt. Le corps, récemment retrouvé dans la vase, semble ne pas avoir souffert du temps et de la décomposition. Gaines, qui a côtoyé la mort et l'horreur de près, et encore hanté par ses souvenirs de guerre, mettra un point d'honneur à résoudre ce mystère vieux de vingt ans. Intrigue, personnages, relations complexes, rebondissements, tout contribue à faire des Neuf cercles un excellent roman, le problème des classes sociales, du secret, des amours adolescentes, de l'attente, du regret, tout est magnifiquement traité. Néanmoins, j'ai trouvé ce roman nettement moins bon que tous les précédents.

Les digressions post-traumatiques de Gaines, son passé de soldat, les flash-back existentiels, personnellement, tout cela a failli avoir raison de ma patience. Beaucoup de répétitions inutiles m'ont semblé alourdir un rythme déjà laborieux. Mais bon, Ellory, quoi !

Donc j'ai poursuivi, vaillamment, attendant que l'histoire démarre. Et elle démarre, à un tiers du livre, voire plus. On entre enfin dans le vif du sujet, des personnages essentiels apparaissent, l'intrigue prend une nouvelle tournure, Gaines commence à obtenir des bribes de réponses, mais tout autant de nouvelles questions. L'histoire des protagonistes est complexe, et c'est avec vingt ans de retard que Gaines s'immisce dans la vie d'un groupe d'adolescents, cherchant à comprendre leurs relations, leurs affinités. L'ennui du premier gros tiers est oublié, Ellory est de retour ! Et pourtant, si tout semble bien mené jusqu'à la fin, j'ai tout de même trouvé que les ultimes rebondissements étaient un poil too much, un chouïa trop tiré par les poils du nez, mais alors un tout petit peu, hein, à peine plus qu'un téléfilm de M6. Oui, non, vraiment, la chose part un peu en cacahuète sur la fin, après la torpeur du premier tiers, c'est un revirement de trop pour le final. Donc dans l'ensemble, un Ellory qui m'a ennuyée, passionnée, et "perplexifiée". Dans l'ordre.

Mieke Schepens says

Een intrigerende cover en een titel die duidelijk wordt tijdens het lezen.

Op het voorblad staat heel toepasselijk:

'Wat in het verleden ligt, is de proloog' ~ William Shakespeare, The Tempest.

Ellory weet als Brits auteur op onnavolgbare wijze een sfeertje neer te zetten met een paar goed gekozen woorden.

Je waant je in het diepe zuiden van de U.S.A.

'En de regen stroomde, en de regen was zwart en hield niet op.'

Ook:

'We dansten op het veld, we lachten zoals we altijd hebben gelachen en toen liep Nancy naar de bomen aan het eind van Five Mile Road en is nooit meer gezien.'

Op een bepaald gedeelte in het verhaal, denk je als lezer dat je het wel weet! Je kent de dader!

Dat is niet het geval blijkt al snel daarna.

Sheriff Gaines wil alles alleen oplossen. Is dat wel zo slim? Ineens liggen alle mogelijkheden weer open, maar één persoon blijft in het gezichtsveld van Gaines.

Dan is er toch een onverwachte dader, dit had ik niet verwacht. Helemaal op het verkeerde been gezet.

Alweer! Prachtig gedaan.

Een prachtige zin vond ik:

'Niemand had genoeg om hem gegeven om uit te zoeken waar hij was.'

Deze gedachte nadat Gaines het plaatje helemaal helder heeft.

Het verhaal begint en eindigt met oorlog. In dit geval de oorlog zoals John Gaines er mee te maken heeft gehad.

Mooi om nog een andere verhaallijn te ontdekken in het boek. Het zijn maar een paar hoofdstukken, maar het geeft goed weer hoe een en ander door deze persoon beleefd wordt.

De verhaallijn van Gaines begint op 24 juli 1974 en eindigt op 12 augustus 1974. In deze korte periode gebeurt zo enorm veel. Veel in het leven van de andere karakters, maar ook in het leven van Sheriff Gaines:

'Op een dag zal hij, misschien, de dingen zien zoals ze zijn... een cirkel, een wiel, iets zonder begin of einde... zoals de slang die zijn eigen staart opeet en tenslotte onherroepelijk verdwijnt.'

Bij deze goed gekozen woorden in het verhaal, die ook weer betrekking hebben op een passage in het boek, slaakte ik een diepe zucht en keek weer op!

Ik geloof niet, dat ik ooit sneller een boek uitgelezen heb. Graag gelezen!

Ik heb enorm genoten van dit boek en waardeer het met 5/5 sterren.
