Sex Scene

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A mining expedition in the South American jungle: Edward MacKensie, jealous of his business partner’s lover and wanting to keep the expedition’s riches for himself, engineers an “accident” that kills the partner and his lover. Twenty years later, MacKensie is a rich and successful man, married with a teenage daughter. Despite (or perhaps because) of his wealth and success, MacKensie finds himself bored with life, in particular, his sex life. He pays the office boy and secretary to have sex in front of him, and then cruelly mocks them when they do not perform to his expectations. He searches for hookers who might better understand his peculiar “tastes,” which center on sadistic forms of torture and humiliation, and longs for the Victorian era for the fabled abandon of its sexual underground. “Now there was an era,” he laments to himself, “when a woman like Mrs. Berkeley would earn a thousand pounds for inventing a whipping horse on which a pretty girl could be postured in a thousand different lascivious ways for the lash.”1 After another humiliating failure with a prostitute, MacKensie meets the mysterious Carlos Sathanas, a worldly, rich sophisticate. Their conversation quickly turns to “unusual pleasures.” “To put it bluntly,” he tells MacKensie, “for all this talk about the new sexual freedom, I for one fail to perceive it except in the huge dissemination of titallitory books and magazines and movies, which are nothing more or less than pure psychic masturbation. They depict fantasies that are not in existence, but perhaps were in another century.”2 Sathanas confides that he is the founder and sole proprietor of “the Satan Club,” an organization devoted to fulfilling the most bizarre sexual desires of its secret, exclusive membership. MacKensie joins eagerly and soon finds himself participating in a series of increasingly exotic sexual scenarios.

Three weeks into his membership, MacKensie anticipates what promises to be the most provocative show yet, the one that will make him an official member of the Satan Club for life. Encouraged to partake of a very special mixture of Spanish fly—an hallucinatory blend discovered by Sathanas himself—a blindfolded MacKensie is escorted into a base-
ment and strapped into a strange device called “the chair of Tantalus,” guaranteed by Sathanas to enhance his sexual arousal to unprecedented heights. With the blindfold now removed, a curtain parts to reveal two nude women intertwined on a couch. Aroused to point of physical pain, MacKensie looks down to see there is a collar device attached to his penis making orgasm impossible: the chair of Tantalus! But his horror and despair are only beginning. As the effects of the Spanish fly begin to wane, he recognizes the two women on the couch as his wife and her recently hired personal masseuse. They mock him with contemptuous laughter as their sexual escapades become more intense. Worse yet, his teenage daughter now enters the tableau on all fours, eagerly mounted by the family dog! The agony of arousal and humiliation is overwhelming, and MacKensie begs for release. Calm and collected, Sathanas appears on stage to explain. He is in fact the business partner MacKensie left for dead twenty years ago in the jungle. Having been told of MacKensie’s murderous past and philandering ways, his family now hates him—utterly. All money and property have been transferred to the wife, who plans to divorce him and run away with the masseuse. His daughter no longer has any interest in men, only her beloved German Shepherd. His former partner’s revenge is complete. The show is over. Later, as the lights go up, MacKensie is alone but still strapped into the chair of Tantalus. He realizes the night’s spectacle has unfolded in the basement of his very own Long Island home—of which he is now dispossessed. Destroyed by material and erotic greed, he stares “unseeingly at that stage where all his life had collapsed about him.”

As a book trading in sexual fantasy, the very “psychic masturbation” so deplored in the text by Sathanas, *The Satan Club* is rather relentless in its emphasis on frustration, failure, and damnation. As one would expect from a “dirty book,” MacKensie’s saga links a number of extended and graphically rendered sexual interludes clearly crafted for the reader’s arousal. Yet the overall structure of the book, despite its “immoral” status as pornography, is strangely, even prudishly moral in its actual execution. We must assume until the very last page that Sathanas is in fact Satan himself, tempting MacKensie’s desire for ever more perverted sexual scenarios in order to take possession of his soul. In any case, MacKensie’s lust does lead to his “damnation,” broke and humiliated in Long Island if not actually burning in hell. Sexually adrift through most of the novel, MacKensie learns a powerful lesson about fantasy and desire, a lesson, in turn, that one would think might prove unsettling to the man who would seek out and buy a copy of *The Satan Club* for his own arousal. What exactly is the pleasure to be had in fol-
lowing the inexorable downward spiral of a man seeking to realize his own sexual fantasies? Moreover, what is gained by situating this prurient yet prudish narrative within the “satanic” conventions of temptation, trickery, and damnation?

The Satan Club serves as a reminder that of all the various avenues of morality policed by religion, none absorbs more mental and social energy than sexuality. Innumerable historians of religion, culture, and sexuality have discussed how civilization emerged (at least in part) from the social regulation of unfettered sexual expression, leading in the West to the eventual ascendancy of property relations, heteronormative monogamy, and reproductive futurism—as well as all of this social order’s attending “discontents.” Playing on these repressions, Lucifer’s role within modernity has focused most intently on tempting the chaste to overthrow their superego masters, profane their faith, and reclaim forbidden desires and practices, forsaking the stabilizing institution of monogamous reproductive marriage for the entropic energies of “unbridled” lust. In modern fiction, this template is at least as old as J. K. Huysmans’s scandalous account of fin de siècle Satanism, La Bas (1891).

Huysmans’s narrator, Durtal, a bored author interested in learning more about satanic sects said to be proliferating within the Catholic Church, infiltrates a Black Mass presided over by one Paris’s most respected priests. Like any good decadent, he assumes the rite will at least be diverting. Attending with his lover—the wife of a rival author—his bemusement turns to horror as the priest “wipes himself” with the Eucharist, women writhe in ecstasy on the floor, and the choirboys “give themselves” to the men. Escaping this “monstrous pandemonium of prostitutes and maniacs,” Durtal flees with his mistress (a possible succubus) to a seedy hotel, where he is then seduced (seemingly against his will) in a bed “strewn with fragments of hosts.” Satan makes no definitive appearance in La Bas—like much nineteenth-century fiction, Huysmans’s realism emphasizes the plausible horrors of clerical contamination over the gothic pyrotechnics of supernatural intervention—but the novel’s interlinking of power, profanity, sexual transgression, and shame remains central to the genre even today.

Published in 1970, The Satan Club stands at the threshold of the most recent wave of popular interest in Satanism, one that traces its beginnings to the social transformations of the 1960s, especially the baby boomer alignment of sexual, spiritual, and psychedelic politics attending the so-called hippie counterculture. By the end of the 1960s, “Satanism” assumed an increasingly public identity, traceable in large part to the efforts of Anton Szandor LaVey. Although neither a hippie nor a baby
boomer, this former carnie and crime-scene photographer exploited the countercultural currents of San Francisco when he founded the Church of Satan in 1966 (see figure 9.1). Fluent in the art of self-promotion, LaVey garnered international press in founding the church, including pieces in such journalistic mainstays as *Time*, *Life*, *Look*, and *McCall’s*. LaVey also appeared as a guest on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and as the devil himself in Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), a film that ushered in a decade-long wave of satanic fictions. *The Exorcist* (1973), *The Omen* (1976), and their various sequels further mined this vein, as did a made-for-TV movie asking the question: *Look What’s Happened to Rosemary’s Baby?* (1976). By the mid-1970s, Satan had become such big business that Alan Ladd Jr., then president of Fox’s film division, noted that “almost every movie company has five or six Devil movies in the works,” a sentiment echoed by Ned Tanen of MCA: “Devil movies” have “eclipsed the western in popularity all over the world.” The reason, for Tanen, was clear, a logic still invoked to explain any and all trends in moviemaking: “Devil movies play equally well in Japan, Ecuador, and Wisconsin,” he observed. A more “pop” Satan also became a
staple of the Christian-publishing industry in this period, most notoriously in the widely read screeds of Hal Lindsey, including *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and *Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* (1972). Long before the “Left Behind” series transformed the Book of Revelation into an epic soap opera, Lindsey scoured the headlines for signs of the antichrist’s arrival and the onset of the apocalypse. Flirtations between rock music and Satanism are well known in this period, from Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page’s purchase of Aleister “the Beast” Crowley’s Boleskine House to the coded imagery of the Rolling Stones’ album, *Goats Head Soup*. The devil was such a ubiquitous presence in the American popular culture of the 1970s that minister C. S. Lovett even penned a diet book in 1977 under the alarming title: *Help Lord—the Devil Wants Me Fat!* “When You’re Watching TV, the commercial break is one of the devil’s favorite moments,” warns Lovett. He then suggests a script for warding off Satan’s “food attacks”: “I know you’re trying to dominate me with food, Satan. So, in the name of Jesus Go . . . get off my back!”

Beneath this sheen of Hollywood “black horror,” devil rock, and mass-market Satanism, however, lurked another circle of hellish cultural production. Shadowing “mainstream” Satanism was a cycle of sexploitation films, pornographic magazines, and adult paperbacks that—like *The Satan Club*—centered not so much on the gravitas of demon possession, the antichrist, and the apocalypse, but on a more licentious engagement of sexual tourism and erotic experimentation. As the dark overlord of a larger interest in occult sexuality, Satan presided over a ludic proliferation of transgressive temptation and “forbidden” pleasures in adult media of the 1960s and 1970s. Explicit paperbacks of the era promoted Satanism as a nonstop orgy in such titles as *Infernal Affair* (1967), *Devil Sex* (1969), *Sex Slaves of the Black Mass* (1971), and *Satan, Demons, and Dildoes* (1974), to name only a few. At the grind house, exploitation movie titles also foregrounded the lure of satanic spectacle with such offerings as *The Lucifers* (1971), *Satanic Sexual Awareness* (1972), *Sons of Satan* (1973), *The Horny Devils* (1971, aka *Hotter Than Hell*), and the perhaps inevitable *Exorcist* knock-off: *Sexorcism Girl* (1975). In the increasingly targeted market for print pornography, magazines such as *Sexual Witchcraft* and *Bitchcraft* specialized in provocative images of occultists staging sexualized rituals (“Nudity in Witchcraft! The True Inside Story,” proclaims one banner headline). Even the infamous Ed Wood Jr. threw his hat into the occult-sex ring by appearing (most painfully) in the 1971 cheapie, *Necromania*.

Already a central figure in the West’s psychic economy of sexual prohibition (at least in its religious iterations), the devil’s historical relation
to God, religion, and faith made “occult sex” a fundamentally perverse genre, even when tales such as *The Satan Club* ultimately sided with “real-world” explanations over the supernatural. As the Christian embodiment of evil temptation, Satan promised access to any and all sensual pleasures—an invitation to lustful exploration that resonated within the postwar era’s ongoing disarticulation of sex, marriage, and reproduction. And yet, as a product of the *authority* of religious morality, this eroticized occult could not, by definition, escape the very moral order it sought to evade, undermine, or destroy. Satan (or a surrogate such as Sathanas) is both a saboteur of morality and its most *damning* enforcer, the ambassador of temptation and the executioner of guilt. Drawing his prey from their moral orbit by appealing to their most base and selfish of desires, Satan—in his supernatural, dialectic relation to God—ultimately reasserts the very repression that a bored MacKensie foolishly believes might be overcome. Such is the essence of “taboo” pleasure—a desire to violate convention and custom that ultimately reaffirms the authority of the law on which the taboo depends. This dynamic made satanic exploitation a doubly perverse genre—“perverse” in its appetites and its effects. Although such fare offered the lure of ever-more “exotic” sexual adventures, for both protagonist and audience, the horned ambassador of such indulgence demanded nothing less than the sexual adventurer’s eternal soul!

**The “Black Pope”**

As the author of *The Satanic Bible* and self-appointed spokesman of modern Satanism, LaVey frequently spoke to the press as the authority on Satanism’s history and future—a heritage LaVey often cast in terms of sexual indulgence. “The Satanic Age started in 1966,” LaVey explained. “That’s when God was proclaimed dead, the Sexual Freedom League came into prominence, and the hippies developed as a free sex culture.”

Within the sweeping social transformations of the postwar era, LaVey’s brand of Satanism contributed to a significant rewriting of the devil, one that cast Satan more as a dandy or libertine than the Lord of Darkness. This “urbane” Satan was largely a function of growing secularization and new strategies for organizing erotic and social life within the so-called sexual revolution. Hoping to compete with the growing popularity of Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy*, Stanley Publications introduced *Satan* magazine in 1957, billing it as “Devilish Entertainment for Men.” The magazine only survived for six issues, leading historian Bethan Benwell to speculate, “There were limits to how far the ‘playboy ethic’ could be pushed.
Perhaps . . . the magazine’s title and allusions flaunted the libertine ideal a little too brazenly.”11 Certainly, not everyone saw this new sexual “ethic” as progress—satanic or otherwise. “Increasing divorce and desertion and the growth of prenuptial and extramarital sex relations are signs of sex addiction somewhat similar to drug addiction,” accused Pitirim Sorokin in his book *The American Sex Revolution* (1956). It was a claim that has resonated with moral reformers to this very day.12 Responding to Sorokin, Edwin M. Schur commented in 1964 that many sociologists of the era believed “there really may not have been any startling change in sexual behavior in the very recent years.”13 Schur located perceptions of a sexual revolution more in an ongoing redefinition of the socioeconomic relationship between the individual and the family, pushing this “revolution” back even further in time by citing Walter Lipmann’s observation in 1929 that once “chaperonage became impossible and the fear of pregnancy was all but eliminated, the entire conventional sex ethic was shattered.”14 Whether sexual practices were actually changing across the 1950s and 1960s was less important than the widely held perception that more people were having more sex in more “liberated” scenarios. This sense that individual desire, expressed in sexuality and selfishness had eclipsed familial and social responsibility and would remain a core moral debate of the twentieth century, creating the conditions not only for LaVey’s Satanism, but also the Moynihan Report, Thomas Wolfe’s “The Me Decade,” and Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism*.

Promoting the Church of Satan in 1966, LaVey frequently invoked the libertine connotations already attached to such satanic sophistication, even as he attempted to distance his new religion from mere hedonism. Sex might lure converts to the church, but LaVey’s ambitions for his “religion” were more about philosophical empowerment than licentious abandon. In truth, LaVey’s Satanism had little to do with Satan. Although he was never reticent to appear in the trappings of Christianity’s satanic dramaturgy—donning capes, horns, and pentagrams for the camera—LaVey took great pains to divorce his version of Satanism from any actual biblical entity, his devil having more in common with Zarathustra and Ayn Rand than Lucifer the fallen angel. Although aspiring to provide a new philosophy of the mind, LaVey’s background in carnie ballyhoo made him more than willing to hustle some flesh in publicizing the church. An early promotional event involved LaVey booking a San Francisco nightclub to stage an eroticized witches’ Sabbath, a theatrical piece concluding with then stripper and soon-to-be Manson murderer Susan Atkins emerging nude from a coffin.15 Ever the showman, LaVey sparked another round of national press by per-
forming a satanic wedding ceremony in 1967, complete with a nude red-head serving as the altar. “The altar shouldn’t be a cold unyielding slab of sterile stone,” reasoned LaVey, but “a symbol of enthusiastic lust and indulgence.” He also cultivated a public relationship with sex symbol Jayne Mansfield, leading to the rumors of her conversion to Satanism, amplified in the wake of her untimely and gruesome death in a car accident in the summer of 1967. Yet despite the salacious aspects of the early church (“Phase One . . . the nudie stuff,” LaVey would later call it), LaVey also made several attempts to deemphasize the sexual abandon seemingly promised by the “religion,” no doubt to defend against the many “sex criminals” who apparently contacted him just prior to their release from prison in hopes of joining the congregation. Many potential converts, he reported, were disappointed to discover there were no “orgies” in the ceremonies; indeed, LaVey appears to have had only contempt for the type of orgiastic ritual imagined by Huysmans and, according to LaVey, allegedly still practiced in the “amateur” Satanist congregations of Los Angeles (presided over, according to LaVey, by “dirty old men”). The church made no judgment about the morality of any sexual pursuit, advocating “the practice of any type of sexual activity which satisfy man’s individual needs, be it promiscuous heterosexuality, strict faithfulness to a wife or lover, homo-sexuality, or even fetishism,” in short, “telling each man or woman to do what comes naturally and not to worry about it.” Those looking to affirm their sexual appetites, whatever they might be, were welcome at the church; those actually looking to have sex were not. “There are some beautiful women that belong to the Church,” claimed LaVey, “but they don’t have to come here to get laid. They could go down to any San Francisco bar and get picked up.”

Building on fantasies of libertine conquest and masculine sophistication, LaVey was savvy enough to recognize that one growth market would be sexual empowerment for women. Toward that end, he published *The Compleat Witch* in 1971, a manual teaching women how to seduce or otherwise manipulate men through witchcraft. Writing at the high-water mark of second-wave feminism, LaVey’s advice is strangely prescient of Camille Paglia and other postfeminist provocateurs. “Any bitter and disgruntled female can rally against men, burning up her creative and manipulative energy in the process,” he writes. “She will find the energies she expends in her quixotic cause would be put to more rewarding use, were she to profit by her womanliness by manipulating the men she holds in contempt, while enjoying the ones she finds stimulating.” No doubt such advice was appealing to women hoping to find a strategy for sexual success, and male readers fantasizing that they
themselves might become the prey of such “sexual witchcraft.” LaVey’s practical advice for the aspiring witch included such tactics as positive visualization (“Extra Sensory Projection”), “indecent exposure” (showing as much flesh as legally possible—a “power” denied to men, notes LaVey), and not “scrubbing away your natural odors of seduction” (including keeping a swatch of dried menstrual blood in an amulet). As this is a book about witchcraft, LaVey includes some thoughts on the art of “divination,” but even here his comments are more in line with the art of the con than the art of the occult. A woman willing to follow LaVey’s sartorial and psychic program was promised an enhanced sense of personal power over the weak-minded male of the species, the book combining a rather conservative view of feminine seduction with a sexual will to power. Here LaVey put an occult spin on Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl*, another book notorious for allegedly empowering women by cultivating their essentialized wiles. Indeed, Dodd and Mead’s print campaign for *The Compleat Witch* dubbed it a study of “hex and the single girl,” suggesting the publisher saw the book more as a “relationship” title than a primer in black magic.20

LaVey may have had his own detailed ideas about the philosophy of his religion and great ambitions for the future of Satanism, but he ultimately had little control over how the satanic 1960s and 1970s would play in the popular imagination; indeed, much of LaVey’s time as Satanism’s “official” spokesman appears to have been consumed in distancing his church from the atrocities of Satan-linked killers such as Charles Manson, “Nightstalker” Richard Ramirez, and dozens of cat-killing teenage boys in the Midwest—not to mention the general religious competition offered by the Process, the Raelians, the People’s Temple, and California’s other proliferating sects, cults, and “kooks.”21 Satan may have just been a convenient symbol for LaVey, but Lucifer’s very real presence in the lives of those hoping to either invoke or avoid him made it difficult for LaVey’s more “magical” form of Randian Objectivism to gain traction. Moreover, by building his church’s public facade, not on rock or sand but on images of a devilish libido and fantasies of a guilt-free eroticism, LaVey’s brand of Satanism could not help but be linked to the era’s larger transformations in sexuality, especially among those already intrigued or repulsed by the highly visible growth of various “countercultures” of the 1960s. As a “hot” new scenario promising unlimited sexual action and erotic power, LaVey’s bid to resurrect self-interested materialism became more naughty than Nietzschean, emerging as a prominent subgenre in the era’s developing and increasingly brazen pornography industry.
Comfortable Deviance

As with so much sexploitation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the era’s satanic and otherwise “occult” sex stories—The Satan Club and others—motivated their graphic erotic content through a premise that promised copious sexual spectacle at the “deviant” margins of society—participating in what Eric Schaefer has called exploitation’s “expansion of the acceptable sphere of desire.” Schaefer argues that as sexploitation moved from the purportedly “educational” nudie/nature films of the early 1960s to more explicit content at the threshold of hardcore’s arrival in the early 1970s, the industry increasingly incorporated themes of shock, adventure, and curiosity into its product and advertising, promising patrons “they would see and understand more about various ‘forbidden’ sexual practices.” This convention was also prominent in publishing. In the wake of a number of challenges to censorship restrictions in the late 1950s and early 1960s, new publishing houses emerged to offer multiple softcore titles on a monthly basis, opening the era of the adult bookstore. The industry’s move toward “kinkies,” “roughies,” and “weirdies”—both on film and in print—grew in part from the need to differentiate product in an increasingly crowded field of sexploitation releases. This move toward the erotic margins and the “forbidden” also speaks to transformations in a larger sexual imaginary. Even if sexual practices changed little in the 1950s and 1960s, qualitatively or quantitatively, the promise of expanding sexual horizons proliferated within the realm of cultural fantasy and its attending industries. Some people somewhere else seemed to be having more sex—be they international playboys, single girls at the office, shaggy bohemians living in the Village, or satanic witches living in San Francisco; all of them appeared to be united in the project of reclaiming a more vibrant sexuality un fettered by prevailing social institutions.

This symbolic expansion of the perceived sexual field actually began in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, not just in Playboy and its imitators, but also in a series of “nightstand” paperbacks detailing new sexual opportunities thought to be flourishing in the nation’s growing suburbs. In this case, the “deviant” margins of society, not unlike the Communists, flourished even within the nation’s revered social institutions of home and middle-class marriage. Most often, these novels focused on rapacious young wives left home alone all day by their ambitious “rat-racing” husbands, making the women easy prey for various rogue males wandering the suburban landscape. Others depicted the ritual of “wife-swapping” as a trend quickly sweeping a sexually jaded country-
club set. The titles alone provide a tidy index of the sexual restlessness simmering within the era’s domestic containment: *Suburban Sin Club* (1959), *Discontented Wives* (1961), *The Friendship Club* (1963), *The Bored Young Wives* (1964), *Commuting Wife* (1964), *The Wife Traders* (1965), *Weekday Widows* (1966), *Suburban Sin* (1968). Such fiction presented a novel change in pornographic strategy. Although the smut industry had traditionally located sexual spectacle among “professionals” (stripers, models, nudists) and within conventionally eroticized locations (burlesque stages, nature or nudist camps), these novels suggested that available sexual partners might be waiting just beyond the front door of the American split-level. As Schaefer argues, exploitation’s development in the 1960s crafted a mise-en-scène in which “seemingly mundane settings” came to be “eroticized in some way: photographer’s studios, motel rooms, suburban homes, college campuses, hippie pads.” The eroticization of these locations, each metonymic of a certain community, allowed for a fluidity between these spaces and helped create the impression of a growing “sexual underground” flourishing beneath the surfaces of “normal” American life.

As the ultimate “underground,” satanic exploitation presented perhaps the most aggressive hybridization of these two trends, combining an emphasis on subterranean sexuality with a fascination for increasingly “adventurous,” thus taboo, forms of sexual behavior. If “commuter widows” and “swap clubs” suggested the placid suburbs were in fact laboratories for adultery and open marriages, occult sex suggested that even more “deviant” and “far out” sexual practices lurked in the community for those willing to dig deeper. In this respect, occult exploitation cast its erotic spectacle as the most secret, “shocking,” and “forbidden” of all—a sexuality that was, in its pure hedonism, libertine experimentalism, and profane transgression, as far removed as possible from the reproductive functions of the married monogamy that had so long served as the symbolic center of American sexuality. Serving as a gateway to “far out” fornication, Satanism quickly became aligned with the more visible promotion of “free love” within the “hippie” subculture, another space of danger and desire prominent in the middle-class imagination. Although Satanism and hippiedom had little use for one another in the real world (LaVey’s church was for the elite professional, not the unwashed “Deadhead” living in the Haight), they nevertheless appeared to many as overlapping communities, geographically (with San Francisco as the epicenter of both movements) and ideologically (as two prongs in a shared assault on traditional values). For exploitation merchants, meanwhile, associating occultism with the hippie ethos further expanded the prom-
ise and justification for presenting shocking, forbidden, and otherwise unusual sexual content. Each “subculture” brought a unique element to this mix. Whereas satanic sexploitation promised an erotic “R&D” in which the greater the experimental “perversion,” the greater the pleasure, the hippie face of sexploitation frequently centered on the attractions of a more promiscuous generation—one willing to engage in sex without all the “hang-ups” that come with Western morality. For those who have only participated in “traditional sex,” notes the author of Psychedelia Sexualis, “it will take a great effort not to be shocked by what he reads upon these pages. Remember though that innovations are always shocking. We have long hailed the great scientists and composers and so forth of history,” he continues, “but in the most important area of our lives, sex, we have paid very little heed to the heroes and heroines.”

The “adults only” novel Commune Cult exemplifies this meshing of sexual, occult, and psychedelic Otherness, a deviance that, like the suburban swapping that preceded it, could hide in plain sight in society. The book follows the exploits of a seventeen-year-old runaway as she seeks admittance to an occult organization that “liked their sex and liked their drugs—and had almost perfect license to combine them.”

As with LaVey’s Satanic Bible, followers of this commune’s mysterious “Dr. Janus” consult “The Book of Shadows,” a text imagined by Commune Cult’s anonymous author as an index of spiritual promiscuity in the Age of Aquarius, containing “old Zen Buddhist Rites,” “American Indian Rites,” “a little from the Bible,” a section from “the Book of Chairman Mao,” and “recipes for everything from LSD brownies to Hashish Hash.” Like so many adult paperbacks of the era (and the emerging hardcore cinema), Commune Cult stages this young initiate’s quest as a series of increasingly “exotic” sexual unions, proceeding from “straight sex” with a recruiter in Greenwich Village, to sex with a warlock sporting a “flayed penis,” to sex on acid, to equine bestiality, to a final hallucinatory consummation with Dr. Janus, complete with a ceremonial circle, incense, and, for good satanic measure, a goat tied to a stake. Significantly, this quest for some form of transcendent sex takes place, not in a distant land or secret location, but in the everyday world of American life. For most of the novel, the heroine’s sexual instruction proceeds under the supervision of an occultist couple who have “the standard white frame house with a mortgage, two sons of grammar school age, a cat and a couple of dogs—hardly a hint of anything unusual.” In the end, the police rescue the young woman from the cult, but she vows to escape her parents and return for more sexual exploration as soon as possible. “They have a lovely world!” she concludes.
Consciously removing themselves from the terrain of middle-class values (if not necessarily middle-class privilege), Satanists and hippies presented a more complicated terrain for sexploitation patrons in negotiating the desires and dangers attending the countercultural promise of absolute sexual liberation. The hippie call for “free love,” for example, involved promoting a sexual liberty believed to exist beyond the founding economies of money and morality underpinning the Capitalist institution of marriage—“free” in practice and “free” in cost. For men and women married in the postwar years or earlier who were witnessing the emergence of a more openly sexual generation, removing sex from these larger institutions was no doubt both alluring and frightening.\(^{31}\) Satanists, meanwhile, promoted a more philosophical, thus more terrifying, form of moral freedom, a creed best encapsulated in Aleister Crowley’s pronouncement: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.”\(^{32}\) Absolute freedom—be it posed as existential epiphany or simply a chance to tryst with the milkman—carries with it the threat of destroying all that came before it, irrevocably shattering the symbolic (or at least marital) order that had anchored life within “the Establishment.”

Assuming most consumers of psychedelic and satanic sexploitation were not hippies or Satanists (who, presumably, were too busy having sex and worshipping Satan), the industry’s mining of these more transgressive fronts in the sexual revolution required a complex set of conventions to motivate, display, and then ultimately constrain these amoral fantasies of complete sexual liberation. A central challenge for sexploitation and pornography of the era, one addressed in most punitive form in *The Satan Club*, was how to stage these seemingly new, tantalizing, and “forbidden” sexual spectacles without completely dismantling the hierarchies of heteronormative, middle-class, and middle-aged power that had incubated the “sexual revolution” in the first place. How could a desire to see sexual experimentalism be acknowledged—maybe even celebrated in a certain pluralistic spirit—without wholly dissolving the moral agency, social legitimacy, and personal responsibility of the spectator?

In this respect, *Commune Cult’s* decidedly unrepentant heroine—de Sade’s Juliette as acid freak—is something of an anomaly. In a society that typically frowns (at least putatively) on nonheteronormative, non-monogamous sexuality, such absolute dedication to sexual, social, spiritual, and pharmaceutical experimentation most often ended in disaster, drawing the forbidden spectacle back to a comforting moral center. By the 1960s mandatory retribution for deviant behavior on screen, once policed in Hollywood by the Production Code and on the exploitation
circuit by the “square-up,” had become increasingly weak. Yet even with the much-heralded death of the PCA—or more generally, a basic sense of “decency” in American society—the reassertion of a “moral center” remained a fixture even in the most explicit wings of the sexploitation industry. Given the slow death of censorship, the persistence of such moral reaffirmation speaks to the structural need in these fictions to accommodate the sexual tourist spying on these “deviant” fringes of society. MacKensie’s fate in *The Satan Club*, for example, is secured from the very first page: he is a murderer. The brutally sadistic sexual scenarios that follow, many of them involving incest and rape, thus appear to issue from his immoral character and not the reader’s own prurient interest. Indeed Sathanas, as Satan’s surrogate, somewhat ironically becomes the agent of moral justice, the seemingly supernatural tempter transformed, in a stunning last-minute reversal, into the victim who warrants the enacting of extreme justice and retribution. Rather than remain simply an index of sadistic perversions, the novel becomes, in a perfunctory yet crucial final turn, the document of murderous deviance justly punished. MacKensie’s “tastes” and transgressions remain comfortably distant from those of the reader. The reader, in turn, can also see what MacKensie cannot: his impending doom.

One reason MacKensie walks blindly into his own personal theater of sexual damnation is that he is high on some form of hallucinogenic “Spanish fly,” not acid, but acidlike. The drug famously made its screen debut in William Castle’s *The Tingler* in 1959. Given its association with hallucinations and subjective distortion (in the black-and-white *Tingler*, acid allows Vincent Price—and the viewer—to briefly see in color), the drug became a prominent narrative and stylistic device in films, exploitative and otherwise, but appearing especially frequently in satanic smut, psychedelic sexploitation, and their various hybrids. Beyond the famous acid titles such as *The Trip* (1967) and *Psych-Out* (1968), LSD also figures in lesser-known films of the era such as Sam Katzman’s *The Love-Ins* (1967), Herschel Gordon Lewis’s *Something Weird* (1967), and even Otto Preminger’s recently resurgent oddity of 1968, *Skidoo* (featuring the spectacle of Jackie Gleason on acid). By the late 1960s, “Hippie-acid sex” had itself become a prominent subgenre of sexploitation in such titles as *Alice in Acidland* (1969), *Mantis in Lace* (1968), and *The Acid-Eaters* (1968). In many respects, Satan and LSD serve a similar structural function in sexploitation narratives. Both are agents—one occult and one chemical—for dissolving self and responsibility in order to motivate a “sex beyond sex,” accelerants for promiscuity and perversity that bid their respective (and often mutual) followers to engage in ever more esoteric
and otherwise “altered” sexual practices. “I want more than this,” says one acid-tripping young informant for *Psychedelia Sexualis* after a night of group sex, “Isn’t there something real wild I can do?” Sure, responds her friend, “take more acid and chase it with an aphrodisiac.”33 Much as acid was thought to “expand the mind,” then, it also figured within the world of sexploitation as a means to expand the sensual array and thus achieve some form of sexual innovation or even cosmic eroticism. If alcohol, the traditional lubricant of scandalous intercourse, merely lowered inhibitions to conventional sex, acid inspired one to reimagine the sexual universe in its entirety—as did Satan’s orgiastic call for a sex that destroyed all previous boundaries and identities.

This expansion of the mind and the erotic was not without risk. If the sexual and drug undergrounds, by definition, threatened to implode the normative social landscape above, then the revolutionary freedoms promised by satanic psychedelia—cult sex on acid—ultimately demanded some form of confrontation with an absolute moral horizon, a line at which these freedoms, perhaps laudable in moderation, simply went too far.34 Most often, satanic psychedelia’s wanton pursuit of altered consciousness, occult power, and expanded sensuality resulted in the erotic, spiritual, or psychotropic adventurer going too “far out” and “losing control,” leading either to repentance, self-destruction, or violent retribution. Staged to deliver provocative spectacle, such titles ultimately equated unchecked experimentation with a dangerous dissolution of self, thereby reaffirming the necessity and imperatives of the spectator’s social order. Consider, for example, the familiar convention of the acid “freak-out,” most often staged as a threshold event (and in film, a stylistic set-piece) at which this ever-escalating quest for individual “freedom” (sexual and otherwise) breaks down into asocial terror. Anthony Yewker’s paperback *Acid Party* (1969) is typical: a group of LSD revelers engage in trippy sex—only to have one of the group freak-out and commit murder. As so often happens in this genre, no one can remember who the guilty party is—including the murderer! Distrust stalks the survivors (though there are still ample opportunities for sex) until the guilty party is revealed and arrested.35 There is in this familiar sequence, one might argue, a reversal of Freud’s general theory of sexuality. Acid returns one to a type of polymorphic perversity, an unstrained and multisensual eroticism that negates both subject and object and so threatens a full retreat into pre-Oedipal psychosis. As so many antidrug films of the era emphasized, LSD mimics the symptoms of a psychotic fit. Acid promised a temporary encounter with the oceanic, but in that surrender to the “oneness” of the universe, it ultimately destroyed the
crucial foundations of ego necessary for sex and society to continue. A “community” bound together by acid alone cannot cohere—a point made most forcibly in the 1970 gorefest, *I Drink Your Blood*. Here Satan-worshipping hippies unwittingly infected with rabies make things worse by dropping acid, which quickly proves the accelerant for a night of gruesome attacks and mutilations. To drop acid is to court social alienation unto death (with or without rabies)—thus the genre’s emphasis not only on acid’s psychotic dissolution of the subject, but also on the later repression, the “blacking out” that further erased the subject from the terrain of social responsibility.

No film presented the “freak-out/blackout” hazard in more elemental form than *Mantis in Lace* (1968; figure 9.2), in which a stripper named Lila lures men back to her apartment, drops acid, and then murders them while in a state of hallucinatory freak-out. In its brutally repetitive structure (strip, seduce, hallucinate, kill, repeat), *Mantis in Lace* rather elegantly condenses the hazards to be found in searching for so-called far out fornication for both the acidhead and the acid voyeur. In a perverse travesty of Laura Mulvey’s canonical work on the male gaze, the film stages (and ultimately punishes) all members of the central triangle

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**Fig. 9.2** In her acid-induced frenzy, exotic dancer Lila (Susan Stewart) alternately imagines one of her victims to be a cantaloupe and a piñata as she hacks away at him with a garden hoe in *Mantis in Lace* (1968).
of scopophilic relay central to Mulvey’s thesis: male patron of sexploitation goes to theater to see male patrons on-screen in a strip club looking at strippers; stripper takes man home, drops acid, and then kills him.36 Lila “the mantis” is arrested. Sexploitation patron returns home rethinking his desire to engage in actual contact with countercultural sexuality. In the end, sociosexual curiosity is indulged, but with the lesson that one should respect certain psychological, sociological, and pharmacological boundaries. There but for a tab of acid go I, one might say.

Tragically, those most likely to freak out and even die from LSD, often by imagining they could fly, were the young, innocent, naive, and stupid. Here appeals to the “generation gap” provided yet another means of insulating sexploitation viewers from the implications of their own spectatorship. Characters such as Dr. Janus appeared frequently in sexploitation of the 1960s—charismatic yet ultimately suspect older men who serve as spiritual, sexual, or pharmaceutical guides for their younger and more naive followers. Harvard professor turned LSD advocate Timothy Leary provided the most obvious template for this convention (Janus’s commune was, we are told rather legalistically, “like the Timothy Leary group, but with no connection to Leary at all. . . . But wild. And groovy.”). Figures such as LaVey and, later, Manson also helped inform the image of the predatory middle-aged Svengali exploiting the innocence of youth, preaching equality and collectivism while in fact solidifying their own fascistic psychosexual power.37 Such “cult leaders” provided the audience, and in particular middle-aged men, with a unique surrogate in the text—a figure who cultivates titillating access to teenage hippie chicks and yet, in the end, absorbs the spectator’s or reader’s punishment for indulging in transgenerational sexual exploitation.

As the title suggests, Janus’s “Commune Cult” is both a commune and a cult, mixing images of hippie collectivity with messianic authority, implying the two modes of political organization were one in the same, or at least codependent. So widespread was this convention that it became a popular thesis for explaining the countercultural unrest of the 1960s in its entirety, going well beyond the narrow purviews of adult fiction and sexploitation. For example, in Sam Katzman’s thinly veiled rendering of the Leary story, The Love-Ins (1967), an English professor resigns his post and ends up crashing with a group of hippie-students in Haight-Ashbury. An advocate of free love and LSD, the professor’s platitudeous philosophy of peace and harmony makes him a magnet for a new cult, called, conveniently enough, “the Cult.” In the end, the professor’s call for peace and love becomes little more than an opportunity for more power, fame, and sex with coeds. Anticipating the “important”
social commentary of its exploitation cousin, *Wild in the Streets* (1968), *The Love-Ins* ends with the professor martyred by an assassin’s bullet, suggesting that his “scam” will continue when a new figurehead emerges. The psychedelic Svengali even became a stock device on television, appearing in perhaps its most allegorical form on NBC’s *Star Trek*. In “The Way to Eden,” a brilliant scientist preaching a return to pretechnological utopia stops at nothing to take his idealistic young followers to the fabled plant of “Eden.” They succeed by hijacking the Enterprise, but in the end discover that the nectar in the planet’s otherwise luscious fruit and beautiful vegetation is in fact . . . acid! (not LSD, but actual acid). The fatal discovery is made by a young man named Adam. “His name was Adam,” notes Spock for anyone still too stupid to understand the rather ham-handed lesson by the episode’s forty-eighth minute.

Locating the perceived “problems” of hippiedom in the vanity, avarice, and “mind-games” of older men provided a convenient way of negotiating countercultural challenges to the older moral order. Peace and love are desirable *in theory*—as is, perhaps, a more enlightened approach to sexuality—but in practice, youthful idealism is an easy target for exploitation by older, wiser, and sleazier men. The “cult” leader, be he satanic or pharmaceutical, demonstrated just how easy the younger generation was to manipulate, or more to the point, seduce—no doubt an appealing fantasy to those “too old” or “too square” to actually dare contact with hippies and “free love.” Particularly inventive in negotiating these issues was Troy Conway’s adult paperback *The Big Freak-Out* (figure 9.3), one of a series of sexual adventures featuring undercover agent Rod “the Coxeman” Damon. Here a composite of Leary and LaVey known as “The Big Head” presides over a young congregation at the “Church of the Sacred Acid,” a “religion” dedicated (like the “Commune Cult”) to LSD and “LOVE, LOVE, LOVE.” Suspecting the Big Head is behind a plan to take over the U.S. government by spiking the Potomac with LSD, Damon “the Coxeman” is sent to infiltrate the sect. Following the Leary paradigm, both men are professors, and each takes full advantage of the era’s sexual and chemical revolutions.

Conway pits the two men against one another as contrasting models of mature masculine professionalism, competency, and potency. The Big Head, we learn, studied “experimental psychology” at Penn and then served in Korea, but was mysteriously discharged (probably under less than “honorable” circumstances). In the early 1960s, the Big Head “was on the faculty of no fewer than six different universities” in five years, “each of lower academic standing than its predecessor.” This descent into
academic oblivion complementing four divorces over the same period, suggests that the Big Head’s professional and matrimonial difficulties stemmed from the same cause—sex with students. He is, then, a military, professional, and marital failure—lacking in just about every conventional measure of masculine success. Damon, on the other hand, is a respected sociologist, successful in landing large government grants to research the sexual practices of various subcultures—research that naturally requires him to act as a participant-observer. So accomplished is Damon that the government routinely employs him as a counterspy to infiltrate diverse communities, or as the cover of The Big Freak-Out promises: “Rod bangs into action to save the government from being destroyed by LSD.” To underscore this contrast in masculine models, the
Big Head, despite his endless talk of “LOVE, LOVE, LOVE,” is completely impotent. Damon, on the other hand, boasts a most peculiar form of priapism, one that makes him eternally erect and yet also endlessly orgasmic.

Like The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (and its sexploitation echo: The Man from O.R.G.Y.), The Big Freak-Out operates in the realm of parody and farce. Still, Conway’s archly drawn portraits of the impotent Acid-King and the sturdy Coxeman elucidate the complex modes of identification at work within this genre. Building on the already prominent image of the middle-aged wolf among young hippie sheep, the tale promotes a sexual-political economy that demonizes the ambition of one professor while lionizing the prowess of another. The Big Head, in short, is a fraud and a failure—unsuccessful in any endeavor until acid and age gave him an advantage and power over youth (even if, alas, his impotence prevents him from practicing what he preaches). Damon, on the other hand, enjoys the power and prestige of a post-Kinsey sex researcher, succeeding professionally and contributing to a more enlightened sexuality by turning his priapism into a valuable research tool—literally: he “bangs” hippies in the interest of science and in the service of nation, giving him (and the reader) unproblematic access to “free love” while the Big Head’s fraudulent scams deflect and absorb the sleazier implications of sexualizing the generation gap.

Before Damon embarks on his mission, his government sponsor issues him several tabs of “LSP,” said to be a close chemical cousin of LSD. This “new” hallucinogen offers the additional benefits of making the “trips” shorter in duration, more cognitively lucid, and more intense sexually—qualities that Damon can better integrate into his professional mission of pleasure (he is given the pills so that he might better “fit in” and then ply his hallucinating sexual conquests for information). The drug LSP is obviously a fabrication, and seemingly an unnecessary one. Why the substitution? No doubt the author, like so many others in the psychedelic age, wanted to exploit the potentially positive qualities of LSD while excluding its more negative pharmaceutical and ideological impact. Thus, LSD as a real drug championed by the scummy Big Head is potentially dangerous (leading not only to individual “freak-outs,” but the “Big Freak-out” of the title that threatens the government). The imaginary LSP, on the other hand, delivers the same “benefits” but under tighter and thus more desirable control. As the exemplar of appropriate masculine power and sexuality, the Coxeman simply cannot afford to cross the freak-out threshold and all that it implies—sexually, politically, ideologically.
Submit to Me

If the freak-out served as acid fiction’s primary device for exploring the tantalizing yet terrifying boundary between personal freedom and social disintegration—a vanishing point where the quest for individual liberty and self-enlightenment crossed over into anarchistic psychosis—occult sexploitation took a somewhat different, though no less damning, approach to staging and then constraining sexual experimentation. As LaVey so often reminded the public, Satanism was a religion of power and will, witchcraft a practice of spells and curses. Accordingly, occult sexploitation most typically involved perverse scenarios of sexual domination, either in mind or body (or both), of unwitting subjects placed under occult control. As a pornographic plot device, such control has advantages. Once under this invisible influence, otherwise “straight” subjects could be compelled into group sex, fetishism, bestiality, and homosexuality. Most often, invoking the supernatural for sexual thrills ended in the sexual explorer’s final and ultimate subjugation to an occult overload. Unlike the acid freak-out, however, which typically played as a serious danger (due to the reality of “bad trips” acknowledged even among LSD enthusiasts), occult enslavement could be handled as either a terrifying threat (more often in horror proper) or as a type of playful parable. Doris Wishman’s Indecent Desires (1968), for example, employs a type of sexual “voodoo” for laughs—a young woman unwittingly put under the control of a creep who finds some type of magical Barbie doll in a trash can. In The Acid-Eaters (1968), the eponymous cast arrives at their cultish alter—a gigantic cube of LSD in the desert—only to find themselves trapped in hell and menaced by Satan (or at least a man in a rented devil costume brandishing a pitchfork—with sugar cubes on its prongs, no less). In Wanda the Sadistic Hypnotist (1969; figure 9.4), finally, Wanda uses her occult powers of hypnotism to compel those around her to perform various forms of sexual theater, transforming an Avon lady into a burlesque stripper and a lesbian into a heteronymphomaniac. Hypnotism—as a “drug-free” form of altered consciousness (with its own tradition of occult and sexual associations going back to its founder, Franz Mesmer)—provided another popular way of staging illicit eroticism, “latent” sexual desires given expression by the power of the hypnotist’s external will. For good measure, Wanda ends with an elaborate LSD orgy and the strangely reflexive turn in which Wanda herself ensnares a movie patron attending a screening of . . . Wanda the Sadistic Hypnotist. Having been lured into a life of depravity, these characters are in various ways threatened with some form of enslavement—
humorous, perhaps, but enslavement nonetheless. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a more pronounced master/slave relationship than Satan and his minions, the occultist and his or her cult. The Black Mass, in particular, is replete with sadomasochistic props and icons, especially as imagined by the many filmmakers who have consistently staged this ritual as unfolding in a kind of S/M dungeon.40

Whether played straight or for laughs, both the acid freak-out and occult enslavement speak to a changing historical relationship between self, sexuality, and responsibility, a triangular relationship thought by many in the 1960s and 1970s to be in a state of crisis. As emblems of a counter culture, acid and Satan each promised rewards for removing oneself from Established society, either by expanding consciousness or increasing one’s personal potential for domination. In that “trip” elsewhere, however, both agents also threatened a final horizon, a threshold that if crossed might forever remove one from the human community. Linked as strategies for first motivating exotic spectacle but then ultimately constraining a wholly open play of fantasy, LSD and Satan

Fig. 9.4 Wanda the Sadistic Hypnotist (1969) was one of many “adult” films in the late 1960s and early 1970s to use varying combinations of acid and “witchcraft” as a logic for staging exoticized erotic displays.
differed greatly in the ultimate implications of their danger. Often exploited by cultist elders, responsible adults who should know better, the “acid casualty” stumbles in the perhaps noble quest to see beyond, to transcend the mundane materiality of the world. Some psychedelic enthusiasts even claimed that the drug allowed them to see the face of God. The acid freak-out, however, ultimately disintegrated this explorer’s will and ego, removing him or her from the social world by “blowing the mind”—permanently. The cautionary lesson here is not unlike the myth of Icarus, a warning to take care in exploring higher sensual and metaphysical knowledge lest one crash back down to earth. Occult enslavement, on the other hand, presents a more fearsome punishment for a more wicked transgression. Self-absorbed, self-interested, and self-indulgent, the Satanists willingly sell their souls, not for transcendental enlightenment, but for the most base and selfish of pleasures and powers. Worse yet, they do so of their own free will. “I would do anything for a good piece of ass,” says a randy housewife in The Lucifers, “even sell my soul to the Devil.” Her wish, of course, comes true immediately.

No doubt moral conservatives could cite such low humor as evidence of just how toothless Satan has become in the era of secularization, little more than a prankster at a cocktail party symbolizing a universal desire to get laid. The humor here, however, might also serve as a clue as to just how profoundly serious “occult enslavement” actually is. Behind this rather ridiculous “joke,” so widely circulated in Western culture, is perhaps nothing less than the essence of religion itself. Even in its most comic renderings, occult sexploitation presents a quite literal and direct call to return to the demonic mysteries that preceded the ethical foundations of the Western subject, to return once again to a Dionysian realm that violates the lines between the human, the animal, and the divine (a call echoed in the frequent obsession with bestiality on the part of satanic sexploitation, a perversion dating back to the days when the Greek gods would have sex with anyone or anything!). Having made a bargain for the woman in search of “a piece of ass,” the Satan of The Lucifers next offers a night of sex to an impotent man. “Render up your eternal soul to me. Is it a deal?” asks the devil. “Yeah. What the fuck. Why not?” responds the man. Again, the exchange is funny because it must be: the stakes of occult sex, if confronted directly, are simply too high to risk, even acknowledge. Christianity is a zero-sum game. Accepting Satan’s offer, or even requesting an audience with him, can only lead to disaster. If he actually appears at your invocation, grants your wish, you are now in league with Satan, complicit in his power; if he does not,
there remains the lingering anxiety that even the request, though unanswered, may itself have led to eternal damnation. This is a damnation before the *eyes of God*—whose all-powerful gaze penetrates every atom of Creation—a gaze, moreover, that extends beyond the characters in a film or book to the reader himself. Curled up on your couch with a paperback, locked in your car at the drive-in, or slumping down in the last row of a grimy grind house, there is no escaping His omnipotent vision, the universal eye of the numinous. Here Satan stands apart from the usual menagerie of movie “monsters”: the vampires, Frankenstein’s, werewolves, zombies, aliens, and psychotics that have become the staples of popular horror (and at times, pornography as well). Those creatures emerged either from now quaint European folklore or a fearful topicality that eventually wanes in its sensationalist impact. Lucifer, on the other hand, is underwritten by faith and a belief in things unseen, both sublime and terrible. To “accept” him, to invoke him in achieving worldly power (even if only to get laid for a night), is to accept the entire mythology that produced him in the first place, and by so doing, knowingly relegating oneself to inevitable damnation. Satanic sex thus offers the promise of absolute liberation in return for absolute subjugation, ripping up an internalized social and moral contract and replacing it with one signed in blood, ultimately reaffirming the Law of man, God, and the unconscious. That temptation and unlawful pleasure remain so alluring necessitates the comedy, a disavowal of one’s complete subservience to both the explicit codes of “normality” and the internal guilt of religious inculcation. Put simply, only a masochist would join “the Satan Club”—a metaphysical masochist hoping to invoke the pain and humiliation of absolute, eternal abjection. Behind the humor, there lurks within occult exploitation a haunting suspicion that satanic sex is indeed the most “far out” of all the sexual undergrounds—so underground, in fact, that it leads all the way down to hell.

**Notes**

I would like to thank David Gurney for his research assistance.

5. A lapsed Catholic and vocal atheist, Huysman returned to the church most devoutly shortly after writing *La Bas*. 
9. Earlier in his career, Wood had also written the script, such that it was, for the occult-burlesque film *Orgy of the Dead* (1965), in which dead strippers seal their fate in either heaven or hell by appeasing the TV psychic Criswell with their erotic dancing.
20. In a wonderful historical accident, the print ad for LaVey’s book (subtitled, in a nod to de Sade, *What to Do When Virtue Fails*) appeared in the *New York Times* adjacent to an ad for an etiquette book by the editors of *Seventeen* magazine (“Wherever she goes she will be “in the know” proclaims their ad), demonstrating, if nothing else, that there has never been a shortage of books telling young women how to behave, be it in the pursuit of “virtue” or “vice.” See ad art and copy, *New York Times*, February 7, 1971, 33.
24. Elaine Tyler May discusses the links posited between Communists and secret


29. Commune Cult, 34.

30. Commune Cult, 60. A very similar “induction” plot can be found in Sexual Satanic Awareness (1972), a hardcore feature directed by Ray Dennis Steckler. Although best known for his “camp” titles such as Wild Guitar (1962) and The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies!!? (1964), Steckler went on to direct and star in a series of occult exploitation pictures, including Sinthia: The Devil’s Doll (1970), Sacrilege (1971), and Sexorcist Devil (1974).

31. Hollywood had begun exploring these ambivalences in a number of high-profile sex farces of the early 1960s. Boys’ Night Out (1962) is particularly emblematic.

32. In using this phrase, Crowley built on the eighteenth-century British tradition of “Hellfire Clubs,” which in turn took their inspiration from François Rabelais’s Abby of Thélème in Gargantua.

33. Sexuality, asserts the study’s author (purportedly a young sociologist who submitted this material as a dissertation “far too hot for his college”), depends on a dynamic of habit and individual personality. “This is why new things are constantly being thought up . . . by the psychedelics all over the country. Individual personalities have individual imaginations and they come up with individual variations and sexual themes.” See Giles, Psychedelia Sexualis, 54–55.


38. Most notorious was the death by defenestration of Art Linkletter’s daughter, Diane, on October 6, 1969, an event memorialized by John Waters and Divine in their early short subject, The Diane Linkletter Story (1969).

39. Such a scheme also provides the central plot of The Love Cult (1966).

40. Consciously or not, pornographers of the era exploited the occult’s general foundations in the psychic mechanisms of sadomasochism, making the black
leather bustier—accessorized with whips and chains—the costume of choice in photo spreads of sexual witchcraft, a form of feminine magic that most often seems to have centered on disciplining men kept under restraint. Playing on this fantasy, LaVey opens *The Compleat Witch* with a *Cosmo*-like “Test of the Thirteen Factors,” asking potential witches such diagnostic questions as “Is black your favorite color? Have you ever been considered ‘cheap?’ Do you often wear undergarments that are black in color or of a flashy nature?” LaVey, *The Compleat Witch*, 1–2.