

The ancient witchery of Persian and Egyptian art provides images for *Haxan's* prologue. German woodcuts and engravings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance show the growth of the occult in the popular mind. In his first episode, Christensen dramatizes age-old popular stereotypes: crones drop decaying corpse fingers, hopping toads, and snakes into a cauldron. Typically anticlerical and with a studied vengeance, *Haxan* suggests a recipe of "pigeon heart and cat shit" to seduce a corpulent monk. The witches peddling the potions are portrayed as shrewd business people selling the real thing and always getting top dollar.

In the film's most chilling episode, "The Annihilation by Inquisition of the Entire Family of Jasper Le Riem," Christensen sensationalizes the sex and sadism of a repressive Christianity on its circumstantially trapped victims. Long passages dwell on the salacious torture of helpless women. Christensen illustrates their confessions of Satanic commerce with enough eroticism, nudity, and horror to explain the early twentieth-century censorship of the film: naked women are smeared with oil to fly to sabbaths; crosses are trampled by cackling housewives who eat toads and unbaptized babies; women kneel to kiss Satan's hairy buttocks, then run to a neighbor's doorstep to squat and make water for a curse; finally, a kind of pre-Rosemary gives explicit dramatic birth to a Satanic baby. A young friar, sympathetic to a beautiful witch, is scourged by his superior. When the prior ceases whipping the naked young man, the young friar cries in masochistic ecstasy, "Oh brother, why have you stopped?"

The narration in *Haxan* sometimes rises to the screech of Maria Monk, who in 1836 wrote the best-selling and bogus confessional book *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as Exhibited in a Narrative of Her Sufferings during a Residence of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal*. Monk, escaping the convent to save her baby, told a tale of convents rife with witchcraft rituals, tunnels, and mass graves for babies born of nuns' liaisons with priests. Christensen, for all his over-the-top tabloidism, knows how to make an appealing pop-culture film. Yet in his artfulness, he seems not too far from Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel; or from British director Ken Russell's study of convent and cloister, *The Devils* (1971), based on Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun*; or from Alejandro Jodorowski, who in his 1971 film *El Topo* raised the whipping of one monk to four naked young monks, as he enlarged the theme of magic.

Haxan says, "Convents in the Middle Ages were hotbeds of flagellation and mortification. Raving mystical lunacy led to sacrilege and erotic

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of Ursuline nuns is possessed by eight demons; the other nuns follow her example, contracting themselves with minor demons; men die by the dozens as a result of these ladies' commerce.

No wonder monsters like *The Fly* (1958), *Konga* (1961), and *Reptilicus* (1962) think they "get the girl." Like seeks like. Folklore has long inferred the theory of "La Pucelle": that Joan of Arc and Robin's Maid Marian, and all the other mystical and magical women who traveled with men, were in fact altars of male covens. Robin Hood himself, woven through myth, is actually a merry prankster version of Satan. When guest-actor Anton LaVey explained his motivation as the Satanic Beast mounting Rosemary in *Rosemary's Baby*, he respun the Christian archetype of the Good Soul coupling in mystical union with Jesus. Prior to Polanski's frankness, personified "white middle-class female goodness" was continually being carried across sound stages by various "black masses" in *Curucu, Beast of the Amazon* (1956) or *Dinosaurus!* (1960). David O. Selznick's bestiality epic *King Kong* (1933) mined the deep psychological vein of race, phallic size, and blonde stereotype. King Kong, the protagonist, was the ultimate African symbol of sexual possession, who, although sympathetic, must die.

In the sex-guilt ethic, the attempt to lay blame for erotic feeling outside the self is as old as Adam accusing Eve. The running joke on the *Flip Wilson Show* (NBC, 1970–71) had the comedian repeatedly decked in drag, exclaiming in a pinched falsetto non sequitur, "The Devil made me buy this dress!" That, during the Watergate Scandal, became the national catchphrase joke for any wrongdoer who got caught: "The Devil made me do it." With similar disingenuous disavowal of personal culpability, the Middle Ages invented the female succubus to explain males' nocturnal emissions, and the male incubus to allay feminine guilt at erotic dreams. The secret tradition of the Western world has long regarded the frolic of intercourse as a horizontal Devil dance: good women merely submit to a necessary evil, and all men are beasts. In 1969, *Succubus*, a grind sexploitation flick, introduced to pop culture the forgotten medieval word of its title more on the strength of its sound than its meaning.

Psychologist Carl Jung often compared his theories of individual and collective memory to the movie medium. Film illustrated his archetypes because the camera is the machine most like the subconscious. Just so, filmmakers, like advertisers and witches, turn to psychology to package their product for maximum bounce.

In 1958, the producers of *My World Dies Screaming* used subliminal perception based on human physiology to increase the shock value of their

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film.¹⁵ To augment the horror, they interedited throughout the length of the movie the word *blood* so that it appeared on screen for only one-fiftieth of a second. The eye is accustomed to perceive whole motion at twenty-four sound frames per second on 16 millimeter film. Thus the queasy *blood* imposed over star Cathy O'Donnell's face could be perceived only subliminally, inducing a deeper, more unconscionable horror. Because terror in any audience's head is an immeasurable variable, another experimenter interedited the 1955 William Inge film *Picnic*, a romantic comedy, not with *blood* but with *Drink Coca-Cola* and *Hungry? Eat Popcorn* at 1/3000 of a second every five seconds. Confection sales, unlike terror, are measurable. With subliminal suggestion, Coke sales at the Fort Lee, New Jersey, theater rose 57.7 percent, and popcorn sales 18.1 percent. Producer Hal Roach Jr., planned similar occult subliminals for his film version of Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*, titled *The Innocents*. The presence of his ghosts was to be projected below the threshold of the viewer's conscious perception, much like William Castle's *13 Ghosts* (1960), for which movie-goers were given optional "ghost-viewing" glasses.

The occult has always been sensitive to human psychology. Spiritualists thrive on subliminal access to consciousness. Technology helps mediums and mind-reading mentalists update their settings from smoke and mirrors to soft subliminals created by film projectors, video, and audio run during the soft psychedelia of sittings. Catholic ritual, in particular, is so dripping with subliminal seduction of the psyche that other religions stand aghast. Reductive Protestantism removed art from its churches; Judaism forbids icons; and both sects have accused Roman Catholicism, which is the most magical of modern religions, of witchcraft. Even Walt Disney makes fun of the magic inherent in arcane Church Latin. His magician in *Cinderella* (1950), singing "Salagadoola mechika boola . . . It'll do magic, believe it or not," parodies the Gregorian chant of Roman Catholic plain-song in the singsong of "Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo." This is jokey satire in the same way that "hocus-pocus" mocks "Hoc est enim corpus meum," the essential line of transubstantiation in the Catholic mass.

These experiments illustrate how easily psychologist, artist, witch, and priest can plunder the human subconscious. The business secret of genuine as well as phony occultists is tweaking the hidden fears of their clients. Similarly, the horror film business projects on screen the repressed and subconscious anxieties deep within the viewer's self.

The screen monster most terrifying to an audience is, in the final analysis, the well-brought-out beast in itself.

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The Lord of the Flies was built dramatically on the premise of Satan worship. The last reel reveals the source of evil was not the pig head Beelzebub (*Beelzebub* translates to “Lord of the Flies”), but was rather the evil in the boys’ own selves. Again comes the unavoidable theme, and the horror-inducing existential twist, that the Devil rises from inside humans. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s little classic *Forbidden Planet* (1957), a camp retelling of William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, offered the ultimate horror to the Freudian mindscape: the amok monster, unbridled of superego, turned out to be the id of one of the space travelers. Sold to television, *Forbidden Planet* is sometimes titled *Id: The Creature from the Unknown*, a label that divulges the entire plot.

If any film externalizes the horror of the self acknowledging its own secret mutations, it is Tod Browning’s long neglected *Freaks* (1932). Based on the novel *Spurs* by Tod Robbins, *Freaks* is unique in film history. European critics have praised it for the same reasons American distributors have kept it at the bottom half of double bills in grind houses “where your feet stick to the floor and rats run across your shoes.” The 1962 Cannes Film Festival Repertory balanced matters somewhat by selecting the thirty-year-old *Freaks* to represent the essential horror film. By the 1970s, the Browning revival of *Freaks* was in full swing.

Mexican director Alejandro Jodorowsky, while he was casting his mystical cult epic *El Topo*, stated that he was emboldened by *Freaks* as much as he was by *Viva la Muerte*, the 1970 film by Fernando Arrabal that began the “panic movement” in cinema that coincided with the first generation of Satanic panic films, *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973). In New York, Lincoln Center’s spring 1970 film festival featured Browning’s *The Unknown* (1927) with Lon Chaney Sr. and Joan Crawford. By the end of 1970, Browning’s *Freaks* was commercially rereleased with Victor Halperin’s *White Zombie* (1932). Because Southern Baptists were the first onward-marching soldiers opposing rock-and-roll, rock groups inevitably reacted by hailing religion’s foes, Satanism and the occult. They chose for themselves from cult horror movies rebellious band names like Black Sabbath and White Zombie, the latter with its album *Sexorcisto: Devil Music Volume One*.

The difference between *Freaks* (art *changes* its audience) and 1957’s *I Was a Teen-age Werewolf* (entertainment *diddles* its audience) is one of essence and surface. The essential horror film goes, like a vampire, for the jugular of the subconscious soul. The superficial fright movie cleverly exploits shock so that kids on a movie date have excuse to grab hold of each other.

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The art of horror films is, well, almost seamlessly existential: the terror conjured (often by being offscreen) is real because it references the endgames of the human condition, like the fact that everyone in the theater will die, horribly slowly, or worse, horribly suddenly, killed before their time. The drive-in fright feature, from advertising to projection, is constructed with its scares onscreen like a ride through a haunted house: no one takes it seriously, and, like a magician's act, it easily falls into comedy and camp because the monster/villain/killer—for instance, King Kong—often becomes the hero the audience identifies with and cheers for. Because of the sexual revolution, horror movies have mated with soft-core porn and have changed the plot from the creation of monsters who eat cities to the trope of the “young woman in sexual peril trapped in her house.” The master producer of horror films, Roger Corman, has revealed some of the secret erotic psychology of horror: “In a movie, a house is always a woman's body.”

Browning's *Freaks* is the essence of Sartrean existential horror, because everyone in the audience secretly fears their own inner freak, which they hope no one else will notice. Browning, his career shaped by controversial film pioneer D. W. Griffith, earned his aesthetic reputation as “the Edgar Allan Poe of the cinema.” His canon includes *The Unholy Three* (1925), *Mark of the Vampire* (1935), and *The Devil Doll* (1936). Never fashionable as camp, and certainly not exploitative, Browning, like Poe and Sartre, took everyday appearances and dealt with the realities that lay beneath. Browning began in the genuine folk world of circus and vaudeville, but matured up and out of the jolly theatrics of the sideshow in the same trajectory that Anton LaVey, on his way to founding the Church of Satan, was a lion tamer in the circus. LaVey, with his exquisite sense of pop culture, gathered funds to found his church by appearing on San Francisco's North Beach strip of adult clubs with an act he produced and billed as “Anton LaVey and His Topless Witches' Sabbath”—which was as far from serious as Richard Feiherr von Krafft-Ebing is from John Kander and Fred Ebb.

Many occultists claim that psychiatrists spend much time curing patients by talking them out of belief in their very real paranatural experiences. Occultists nevertheless fully appreciate artful films like *Rosemary's Baby* and *Freaks*, because they know that the artist, more than anyone else, can popularize paranormal experience. *Rosemary's Baby* did for the witchcraft industry what *Hair* did for astrology. Similarly, *Freaks* changed attitudes.

Apropos *Freaks*, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) wrote in his Catholic theology texts that “grace builds on nature. The more perfect the body, the more grace is bestowed by God.” This very high-school pecking-order

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notion flips to a Platonic fascism: the less perfect the body, the less the access to grace. Point man Aquinas wrote *Summa Theologica* (written 1265–74), in which he modernized Catholic doctrine by appropriating Aristotle the way that Catholic ritual appropriated white magic. Aquinas, the greatest mind the Catholic Church ever produced—and then did not kill—also wrote *Summa contra Gentiles*, a work directed against Islamic philosophy infiltrating European culture. Aquinas’s principle of a healthy soul in a healthy body seems, by comparison, less cruel than born-again Protestants selecting themselves as perfect and saved simply because they themselves say so. Witches, of course, celebrate everybody else—the sick, the deformed, the weird, the queer, the dark skinned, the outsiders—which accounts for witchcraft’s strong appeal among teens alienated in high schools; among the young who are estranged from mainstream American politics, religion, and culture; and among homosexual noncitizens in a heterosexual culture in which penetration, breeding, and conception are the basic ritual of human measure.

Out of this body fascism, wherein only the beautiful people of the platonic ideal are full of grace, the Middle Ages condemned congenital deformity. Imperfection was a sign that the person was conceived from Satan’s bad seed, which caused the deformity. Looking at this “body fascism” through a glass darkly, witches spin the right-wing Thomas Aquinas leftward. Witches teach that physical abnormality is a natural asset to occult powers. For reasons of dwarfs, bearded ladies, and strong-men contortionists, *Freaks* has become a coven classic on campuses. For the same reasons, audiences squirm when watching the movie *The Bad Seed* (1956), about a very mechanically nice little girl who, disguised in blonde pigtailed twisted too tight, is the Devil’s spawn.

In his *Satanic Bible*, Anton LaVey, who appreciated blonde Hollywood beauties like Marilyn Monroe and Tuesday Weld, wrote that looks mean a great deal where magic is concerned. A striking appearance, from the beautiful to the offbeat, is a great aid to bewitchment if a person knows how to enhance for enchantment. In his “Letters from the Devil” column in *The National Insider*, LaVey stated once stated, “If your ears are pointed, you are wise in taking pride in them, rather than feeling embarrassment, as that in itself is a very magical attitude. Whatever you do, don’t attempt to cover or conceal them. In fact you might even consider shaving your head to emphasize them!”

This “physical language of magic,” particularly the “language of eyes,” speaks in oral storytelling and written fiction. Characters are often described

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as “having a cast in their eye” inferring they possess if not the evil eye, at least an outsider’s vision. Serial author Charles Dickens used this short-hand phrase, which his mass audience immediately recognized as meaningful. In *Pickwick Papers* Dickens characterizes the essence of his elfin Nathaniel Pipkin as “. . . a homeless . . . being, with a turned-up nose . . . rather turned-in legs, a cast in his eye, and a halt in his gait.” In his ghost story, *The Haunted House*, Dickens summed up the minister in one stroke: “The officiating minister had a cast in his eye.” Other popular writers citing the “cast in the eye” as a character-revealing physicality wherein the external body part referred to exposes the interior person are George Eliot in *Silas Marner* (1861), Mark Twain in *Saint Joan of Arc* (1904), and Enid Bagnold in *The Happy Foreigner* (1920). Popular woman’s writer Bagnold (1889–1981) was a morphine visionary and the author of the novel *National Velvet* (1935), which as a 1944 movie made Elizabeth Taylor, with her unique violet eyes, a child star.

Roddy McDowell was the longtime friend of Elizabeth Taylor and star of *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), *Lord Love a Duck* (1966), in which he played the Devil, and *Planet of the Apes* (1968). He was at first rejected as a child actor because, according to casting agents, he had a cast in his eye, which was homophobic code that Roddy—who also became famous as a photographer—used his eyes the way gay men roll their eyes to signify secret knowledge, condescension, and irony. People are quite ready to believe that any anomaly undoing the balance of two eyes is evidence of the evil eye. In every world culture, anthropologists have measured faces and have found universally that the more balanced the facial features the more beautiful or handsome that face is considered in every family, tribe, society, and race.

The official distributor’s press release for Tod Browning’s *Freaks* reads,

Prior to World War II nearly every carnival and circus had its collection of human monsters or freaks—persons deformed in birth or horribly maimed—who were proudly exhibited to the public for a price. Browning assembled the most famous of these performers from all parts of the world and employed them in a story of intrigue in the circus. In its plot, a beautiful “normal” aerialist (Olga Baclanova) learns one of the midgets (Harry Earles) has inherited a fortune. She contrives to marry him, planning to kill him. In one of the many memorable scenes, almost surrealistic in quality, the midget’s fellow performers, unaware of the aerialist’s intentions, organize a wedding celebration wherein they offer a macabre toast and honorary position to her

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with an orgiastic chant of “We accept you . . . we accept you . . . gooble gobble . . . one of us.” Later, both the midget and his friends discover the poisoning attempt and, in hair-raising climax, the freaks set upon the aerialist and maim her.

The maiming scene in the *Freaks* epilogue, where the freaks turn the “normal” woman into a freak, has been called the most horrible scene in film history.

Freakiness, as the happy hippie freaks and Jesus freaks demonstrated, may be relative, and every minority group takes pride in its essential difference from the norm: black pride, gay pride. Anton LaVey teaches, “Everything is attitude.” *Freaks* in 1932 paved the way for Hollywood in 1939 to film an analog of *Freaks*, *The Wizard of Oz*. In Frank Baum’s story of white witches, wicked witches, and wizards, the magical Munchkin “freaks” accept the perfect outsider Dorothy (Judy Garland), but they do not maim her. From *Freaks* to *Oz* is a major jump in pop culture—from the genre of *horror* to the genre of *musical comedy*. What a double feature at the midnight picture show! When Judy Garland accepted the leprechaun Munchkins, she could hardly have known that life would imitate art. Her identification with the outsiders was magnetic. For the rest of her career, Judy Garland’s core audience was homosexual men who understood the code of the suffering warble in her nevertheless invincible voice. What witchery lies in the timing that five days after Judy Garland died on June 22, 1969, New York City’s Stonewall Riots, started by shape-shifting drag-queen freaks, broke out near midnight on June 27–28, 1969, beginning the gay liberation movement?

CUT TO

TV

Significantly, *The Wizard of Oz* has become an annual classic on television, where sorcery reigns. So rich is *The Wizard of Oz* that pop-culture lore insists that the rock band Pink Floyd’s concept album *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), if started the moment the MGM lion roars the third time, creates an eerie alternative soundtrack that reveals mystic secrets buried in the film. Nielson ratings chart the immense popularity of occult programs: the domestic comedy of *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *The Flying Nun*, *My Favorite Martian*, *Topper*, *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, and *The Nanny and the Professor*; the Saturday morning *Archie* cartoon show with

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its character, Sabrina, the teenage witch; the gothic stylizations of *The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*, and the actress Vampira; the playful animism of *My Mother, the Car*, and the “lycanthropy” of the talking horse *Mr. Ed*; and the supernatural turns of *One Step Beyond* and *The Twilight Zone*.

I Dream of Jeannie is pop-culture product from ancient Islamic demonology that came to Europe and then America *via* medieval Spain. The grimoire spell books of the time teach how a master can conjure and control the little service-demon called a *jinn* (a *genie*.) In Chicago, the Pontifex Maximus of the Sabaeans, the pagan white witch Frederic de Arechaga, pointed out that Ray Bolger’s classic scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* is more occult than parents might first believe. The scarecrow in the Old Religion of pre-Christian times was stuffed with straw as a symbol of fertility. “In a sense, it still is, because it is placed in a field to scare off birds and keep them from eating the crops. In this way,” Arechaga noted, “it remains a symbol to preserve growth.”¹⁶

The Wizard of Oz fixed the popular stereotype of the good witch and the bad witch. Billie Burke is barely remembered as the good witch Glynda; but no one forgets Margaret Hamilton as the wicked witch of the west. Happy to be recognized as an actress, Miss Hamilton wished she were not remembered only for her iconic role in *The Wizard of Oz*. “It was a lovely picture,” she once said, “but I was injured, you know. Not only did I become typed. I broke my ankle. All my disappearances in that cloud of smoke happened because I was dropped through a trap door—pointed hat, broom and all.” If Margaret Hamilton could have trademarked her image, Hallmark cards, Disney Studios, and other crone caricaturists could have made her a rich woman.

More overt than the subtle *Wizard of Oz*, the NBC occult soap opera *Dark Shadows* operated five days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, for a total of 1,225 episodes (1966–71). Partly a computer creation, *Dark Shadows* mixed staple soap-opera sudser with popular witchcraft. ABC’s evening soap opera, *Peyton Place* (1964–69), introduced to prime time Mia Farrow (who became Satan’s mother in *Rosemary’s Baby*), as well as the soap cadences of the afternoon: intrafamily tension followed by prolonged critical illness leading to accidental or homicidal death followed by prolonged courtroom drama causing rearrangement of identities, spouses, and heirs to build new intrafamily tensions, illnesses, suicides, murders, and trials. *Dark Shadows* used these staples, but the plot was bounced off the wall of the supernatural.

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With existences in “parallel time,” no one need stay permanently dead and the villain need not be human. *Shadow’s* lovable vampire Barnabas Collins, in fact, became so popular that Barnabas-actor Jonathan Frid guested at the 1969 White House Halloween party hosted by Tricia Nixon-Cox, who transformed the north portico of the White House into a giant jack-o-lantern guarded by a cauldron and two witches. Inside the Great Ballroom, the Devil played a trumpet and the ghouls danced the night away. This historical fact shows the levity regarding witchcraft that existed in American pop culture prior to hysterical press coverage of the Manson Family. Times have so changed that one can only imagine the horror this Nixonian nonseparation of Satan and state must cause the born-again right wing that has since so demonized Halloween.

Vampire Frid once explained the success of *Dark Shadows*: “Fascination with evil is the whole thing. College kids and matrons are the main ones. People want to meet me for weeks and then they run in utter horror. I haven’t studied the occult, but the fascination and repulsion attraction is, I think, rather obvious.” Frid, during the interview, gladly and easily slipped in his vampire denture. “A show is a success in this business when it’s imitated. ABC copied us with *Strange Paradise* for a while. We on *Dark Shadows* have used every classic horror theme. We’re the worst plagiarists going. We’ve stolen Mary Shelley and Henry James. In fact, I base the whole thing on *Macbeth*. Personally, my interest comes from the old Universal Studios’ horror pictures. It’s hard to top Maria Ouspenskaya’s unforgettable line, ‘You bent up the pentagram, young man.’ I think the writing and special effects on *Shadows* are about the best in the image business.”

Johnny Carson, on NBC’s *Tonight Show*, repeatedly featured the mystic shtick of his “Carnak the Magnificent.” Carnak, channeled out of vaudeville, was a cartoony Persian guru who held sealed envelopes to his oversized turban, pronounced the answer (“Zazu Pitts”), then opened the envelope to reveal the question (“What do you find in Zazu prunes?”). To the moaning audience Carnak cursed, “May the fairy-god-camel leave a hump under your pillow.” Nevertheless, despite the spoofing, Carson often showcased the serious occult (Jeane Dixon) and questioned his more pop-culture guests about their own occult practices. NBC, with an eye to policy, vetoed Carson’s wish to feature a séance on his show Halloween night, 1969, two months after the Manson Family murders.

NBC quickly corrected its hypersensitivity and followed its audience’s taste for the occult during its last hour of prime-time telecasting in 1969. On that New Year’s Eve, the weekly series, *Then Came Bronson*, based on

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occult imagery, closed the 1960s with Thomas Drake's teleplay, *Sybil*. The Bronson character was played by gay favorite Michael Parks, who had been a peek-a-boo Adam when he and his penis starred in John Huston's epic film *The Bible* (1966). Bronson was not Brando in *The Wild One*: Parks played Bronson as a sensitive motorcyclist loner who magically solved people's problems each episode. In the opening credits, he was identified as the tarot deck's Knight of Cups, announced his sign as Taurus, and painted the All-Seeing Eye in a triangle on his cycle tank. The *Sybil* episode featured "supernatural" cinematography as old as silent film: distortion angles and shots through candle flames; standard "supernatural" dialogue: "Demons we summon you!" "Make a choice, Sybil, the living or the dead!"

NBC cashed in on the occult to capture the Nielsen families, yet the network soothed its sponsors. Bronson's final sermon protested a bit too much: "I believe very much in the spirit. I believe it continues, but I don't believe it's connected to magic, or conjuring, or prediction. I believe a spirit breathes in man. An undiscovered country causes man to run there to cure his ills, to avoid the problems in the one he's part of. I believe you're surrendering *your* responsibility for *your* reactions."

CUT TO

Consumers and Advertising

The media of popular culture exist to capture consumers' dollars. In the dark night of the soul on late-night radio, offbeat stations broadcast occult programs at midnight the same way that talk-radio stations broadcast religious programming in the afternoon. No different than radio preachers selling Protestant books between their gab, the seductive female radio host who bills herself as "Big Witch" broadcasts regularly to peddle her "How to Form a Coven" pamphlet, mailed from her post office box. Even "America's past-time," baseball, telecast from among its billboards and endorsements, has—among all its superstitions of spitting and lucky charms—Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs hanging on the Philadelphia Phillies dugout in Connie Mack Stadium. The combination of baseball and Satanism played for sexy laughs in *Damn Yankees* was immediately understood by fans of this most superstitious sport: never stepping on the white lines, not wearing the number thirteen, and sometimes showering in uniform to wash out the gremlins. The occult is a multimillion-dollar-a-year business. It not only sells itself; it pushes, through media advertising, everything from Ben Gay to Hunt's Manwich Sandwich.

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How can witchery prevent exploitation in the merchandising of popular culture? It can't. The marketplace rules. Witchcraft is accustomed to appropriation, particularly by procrustean corporate advertising, which co-opts everything. In the 1960s, when environmentalists suddenly rose up after reading Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Madison Avenue jumped to spin the semantics. Ecologists had claimed many products glorified by Madison Avenue were pollutants. The surprised agencies immediately began co-opting the ecologists' very words to pitch that their products "pollute *less* than our competitors' products."

In a similar fashion, student revolutionaries marching on Washington in the summer of 1970 were called "bums" by the Republican administration. Spinning the Richard Nixon–Spiro Agnew semantics, the students carried prideful signs: "We're all bums on strike for peace." They took their cue from 1960s hippies who had also reversed the semantics of the slur *freak* and turned it to optimistic synonym for *enthusiast* (as in "acid freak," "rock freak," "peace freak," and "freak freak"). Advertising loves co-opting the occult. Casper the Friendly Ghost's friend Wendy the Witch endorsed Pepsi-Cola, and a cute little Devil himself touted Orange Julius as "a devilishly good drink." The 1970 television season saw seventeen Roman-collared clergymen postured with teacups in a rectory drawing room. They had each shaved successively with the same blade, proving that the shaving product advertised would give at least seventeen shaves to a blade. After all, would a room full of clergymen lie? Not any more than the preceding season's Dracula knock-off, "Count von Throat Pain," who told the whole truth about his agency's throat-lozenge account.

Literary mystic T. S. Eliot wrote that "the greatest treason is to do the right thing for the wrong reason." Had astrologers warned him, he might have prevented, after his death, Andrew Lloyd Webber's use of his poetry to create the anthropomorphic—if not downright "lycanthropic"—musical *Cats*. Cats come into magic via Egypt, a kingdom steeped in ancient magic, which also gave name to the Gypsies. While most genuine witches shy away from the limelight, witchcraft as a concept is often eager to sell itself for motives of money, propaganda, and proselytizing. Witchery is not always the unwilling victim of the big sell, no matter that its "right thing" is often subverted by adventurers within the occult as much as by abusers from outside. Witchcraft, in short, has been willfully merchandised into a business by witches as well as by the average Christian bookstore, which at tidy Christian prices sells antiwitch supplies such as holy water, crucifixes, and books "revealing all" about witchcraft. Virtually every village in America

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has a “religious book store.” Occult supply stores in those same villages are more hidden, usually behind the counters of health-food stores, crystal jewelry shops, beauty shops, and women’s tiny bookshops and tea rooms.

Walk into a botanica in any major American city and leave behind the perceived sense and sensibility of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Christian culture. This leads deep into the voodoo world of the 1960 hit movie, *Macumba Love*. This is a noncampy world of spirit. The primary colors rise invocative out of “primitive” cultures. The sensual smells are pure head trip. Folk poets Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, in the song “Scarborough Fair,” hailed the powers of “parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme.” That song has been appropriated by Wiccans, who sing it as a hymn of white magic. Botanicas add cinchona bark, hasp, Devil’s shoestring root, Canadian snake root, buckeyes, waahoo bark, Irish rowan berries to ward off bad magic, and graveyard dust. For uncrossing voodoo spells, for financial success, aphrodisiacs, and black artistry, a botanica is the *in-gredient* shop.

Because belief in good spirits predicates a belief in evil spirits as well, orthodox religion should not be surprised to see the traditional picture of the “Sacred Heart of Jesus” on aerosol cans marked, “Blessed Spray, Matthew 2:11. Contains Genuine Frankincense and Myrrh Oil. Caution: Contents under Pressure.” Nor should the fainthearted be shocked to see the Sacred Heart itself beating in a pulsating plastic sculpture lit from within, or bloody statues of saints who died rapturous deaths of sex and violence like Jesus himself hanging on a crucifix of bones and chicken feathers. In botanicas, “Saint Anthony” candles in quart-size vigil glasses promise to “find lost people and lost things.” Next to them stand candles of “Saint Christopher, Patron of Journeys,” in a row of multicolored vigil lights painted up for each astrological sign, and next to them, the “Death unto My Enemy” vigil lamps deliciously “guaranteed to burn.” The great American philosopher Peggy Lee, who summed up existentialism in her song, “Is That All There Is?” also summed up the theology of witchcraft in her “Fever! (What a Lovely Way to Burn).”

Witch Elisa in the Bronx devotes the enterprising length of her bathtub to the burning of *chango* candles that are wax *fith-fath* figures of men or women whom she wishes harm. To neighbors who have curse-or-bless candles and no place to burn them, Elisa rents tub space at a dollar a week per candle. For that fee she tends up to a hundred candles and adds reinforcing curses and prayers of her own. How is her tub different from the banks of votive candles lit by millions of believers, and burning night and day in every Catholic church in the world?

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The botanica, long a staple of Hispanic culture, crossed over during the hippie 1960s to mainstream popular culture. George Agee, who operates a Detroit boutique/botanica says, “The hippies are able to feel unfavorable vibrations, and they must seek some power to offset them.” Anton LaVey has observed that middle-class people are tired of invoking a God who does not hear them. They prefer a more providential Satan who does hear them, and actually intervenes. To contact God or Satan, or any of the saints and angels and spirits in between, seekers need candles, incense, and mojoes. Classified ads offer plenty of guidance:

Call Prophet Smith. This God-sent man can help. No case beyond help. Are you troubled or unlucky?

Reverend Dr. Anthony Burns. Witchcraft, spells, evil annoyances removed. By appointment only.

What is your trouble? Love-crossed condition? Advisor for home, marriage, or success.

For the people who consult the advertisements of this spiritualist subculture, the botanica serves as a convenient drugstore. A reader named “Edgar,” who calls himself “the dean of the Chicago botanica owners,” sent a Cuban family back to their spiritualist because the quantity of laxative recommended had not been specified. Botanica owners, to a person, tend to be close-mouthed. The “House of Candles and Talismans” on Stanton Street in New York City caters largely to Puerto Ricans. The Irishman who manages the store knows his Catholicism from obeah. (*Obeah*, often invoked by Tennessee Williams in plays such as 1957’s *Orpheus Descending*, is necromancy, conjuration of good or evil spirits and magic—the same rituals Anglo-Saxons do when they sleep on wedding cake, knock on wood, or throw spilled salt.) Yet making his distinction, this Irish-named botanica manager will answer no questions, tired as he is of curious tourists and wary as he is of police, reporters, and his widening Anglo-Saxon clientele. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration likewise watchdogs botanica wholesalers, like Oracle Laboratories in New York, as well as the Prayer Candle Company and the Universal Botanic, both of Brooklyn. Wholesaler and retailer alike carefully note on much of their packaging in as small letters as possible: “Sold as a curio.”

Botanica shelves seem to be stocked by two main product lines: “So-Called” and “Alleged.” In the “So-Called” line there is “So-Called Holy Oil Double Strength with Alleged Lucky Roots,” “So-Called Essence of

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Murder” (Universal Botanic), and “Alleged Dove’s Blood Oil.” For suburbanites too sophisticated for the friendly Hispanic botanica, “Genuine Dream Oil Fortune-Teller Spray” can be mail ordered.

International Imports of Prescott, Arizona, offers from P.O. Box 2505 their twenty-fifth anniversary mail-order catalog. The list contains thousands of occult book titles, herbs, and oils (four dollars for four ounces, and up), opium pipes, red satin Satan’s capes and Devil’s hats (all-rubber pates with horns and pointed ears), crystal balls, imported straw voodoo dolls (red for love, black for hate, green for money, yellow to counter evil, and pink for success; each includes voodoo pins to stick in the doll), stereo recordings of the actual Anton LaVey and of the impersonated Marquis de Sade, tarot cards, “psychedelic” black lights, an *Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, as well as peace symbols, slave chokers, and Saint Christopher medals. International Imports notes, “All items are sold *as curios only*. We do not guarantee nor imply any supernatural qualities attributed to any of our products.” A coiled snake on the catalog cover spits: “Warning! This book is dangerous—to ignore.”

With all the finesse of a Coco Chanel, Los Angeles Witch Rita Norling advertises her white-magic aromatherapy with a high-fashion brochure: “Rita Norling has conjured up a remarkable new bath oil . . . astrologically formulated . . . The Rita Norling Mystique . . . Step into the Magic Circle of Rita Norling’s world.” In a voice accented somewhere east of Zsa Zsa Gabor, Rita says, “One of the main reasons I got into this business was because there were so many swindlers dealing through the mail. I always give the customer exactly what he wants.” (Rita Norling, interview with the author). Some of what Rita’s customers want are bone of black cat, heart of swallow, bat’s heart, hog’s heart (all wrapped in plastic baggies), petrulli root, oils, and candles. She caters primarily to the matron trade, who would faint in a botanica.

Botanicas of one kind or another are everywhere, including hundreds of over-the-top religious art and curio shops outside the four major Virgin Mary shrines at Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, Guadalupe in Mexico, and Knock in Ireland. In the United States, mainstream shoppers flock to botanica boutiques that are West Side Puerto Rican, or African American, or universal hippie, or gay sex shops selling very insertable priapic sculptures, oils, and aromas such as amyl (butyl) nitrite, which by lowering the body’s blood pressure causes out-of-body experiences that feel like flying. A botanica is a business built on dreams and fears. Because the

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First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects witchcraft in its many forms as a religion, the only monitor of the brisk trade in “snake oil” is through consumer protection by the Food and Drug Administration as well as the Better Business Bureau. Neither can do anything about the efficacy of products “sold as a novelty only.”

Whether it be “Alleged Aerosol of Love” or “Zodiac Charm Bath,” the fact is that most of the herbs, charms, aromas, lotions, and potions are shipped to all major American cities from Louisiana, which as culture, location, and port is the point of entry for occult goods from all around the world, particularly the Caribbean with its gris-gris, Macumba, and Santeria. Gris-gris, pronounced “gree-gree,” are amulets, bangles, and charms worn to conjure luck and conquer enemies. Macumba is a Brazilian trance cult of possession with human transformation into jaguars rather than werewolves. Santeria is one of the many combo religions of the African-Cuban diaspora combining evangelical Catholicism and even more evangelical blood sacrifice traced back to the Aztecs. Even in jurisdictions with antique laws against the occult, the bunko police try to keep the dealers on their guard. Because the occult is defined as an alternative religion, often tied to review-proof ethnicity, what separates the legal from the illegal is a shadow.

Cities, with problems more pressing than occult practitioners, allow the botanicas, the palm readers, and the mystic healers to keep their doors and post office boxes open as “doctors,” “reverends,” “fathers,” “daddies,” “mothers,” “prophets,” “madams,” and “bishops.” These counselors are small-business people who collect five to five hundred dollars for their services. Who dares say that their skills emerge from the blind faith of clients clutching at last straws? What is the difference between voodoo, the power of positive thinking, and the miraculous cures caused by the Virgin Mary at her many shrines worldwide, including her house of curative waters in Ephesus, Turkey, venerated by Muslims and decorated with Arabic quotations from the Koran about the Catholic Virgin? The mainstream success of a Jeane Dixon or of a Peter Hurkos, the spiritualist who unmasked the Boston Strangler and almost revealed the Manson Family, causes even the skeptic to begin to suspend disbelief. Popular medium John Edward—whose clients gladly join a three-year waiting list for a reading—has carried the psychic torch to the twenty-first century with books such as *Crossing Over* (2001); CDs, *Developing Your Own Psychic Powers* (2000); and television, particularly his show, *Crossing Over with John Edward*.

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Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are absolute dogma. The occult is relative ambiguity.

Buy “garlic amulets with prayer sheets” for gambling success and to fend off evil spirits. Buy “Black Cat Jinx Remover” and “Chinese Floor Wash” to keep evil out of the house. Buy black candles to affect enemies; blue candles for healing; red candles for seducing; white candles for contacting spirits. Buy a gold needle to stick in an enemy’s black candle. Buy *The Master Book of Candle Burning*, by Henri Gamache (1942), which has sold nearly two hundred thousand copies. Buy imported seed necklaces from Haiti. Buy in a botanica; buy in a Wiccan boutique; or buy by mail. The magic word is *buy*.

Botanica marketing has made a triumphant entrance into commercial popular culture. In 1970s television advertising, Miles Laboratories, amid lightning and thunder, suggested that Mr. Hyde, who “wasn’t feeling himself,” drink Alka Seltzer to change back to good old Dr. Jekyll. The TV genre of the wizardry sell surfaced first in the 1960s with “Wanda the Witch” shilling Hidden Magic Hairspray. Wanda was quickly joined by the Ajax White Knight, the Man from Glad, white doves (Dove dish-washing detergent) and white tornado omens (Ajax liquid cleaner), and the disembodied Ultra-Brite Toothpaste kiss mystically bussed to a young man’s cheek.

In television ad lore, eating bread topped with Imperial margarine magically puts a crown on the bread-eater’s head. Hertz lowers clients into their rented cars via an invisible magic carpet. Keebler Cookies are made by elves who front themselves with factories “because people believe in factories, not elves.” Popular personalities like Ruth Buzzi of *Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In* costume themselves in witchcraft drag to pitch mainstream products. Chicago’s Marshall Field department store sells antiques spiritedly in *The New Yorker*: “Of other voices, other rooms, in antiques brought together now in grand design for more than a shade of their former selves. A spirited and splendid collection. . . . The rarest of 18th-century craft in an entity of past, present, And future? . . . At Field’s in Chicago. . . . Our new Trend House has everything but ghosts.”

Playtex, with its “Living Gloves,” has a strangle-hold trademark on the shape-shifting “Living Bra,” which is a sexy animism akin to the hair of Medusa. Cannon towels’ TV spot features an invisible girl wrapped in a shapely terry cloth towel sarong, with the voice-over saying, “When a girl can’t be seen, it’s important what she be seen in. Available at your favorite

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haunts, to liven your spirits.” Vaudeville comedian Bert Lahr, dressed in a red union suit playing the Devil, tempts for Frito-Lay Potato Chips. His Devil-with-chips subway poster appears in the film *Dutchman* (1966), written by beat poet LeRoi Jones, now Amiri Baraka. Cashing in on his *Frankenstein* image, Boris Karloff, in a mad-doctor laboratory, recommends, “A-1 Sauce: Experiment with it!”

Bigelow Carpets has conducted the largest national astrology promotion. Carpet stylist Barbara Curtis travels nationwide to Bigelow dealerships to conduct “Astrology Carpet Clinics” that forecast carpeting color and pile according to the natal signs of the customers who line up in droves for the seminar. Full-page Strega liqueur ads picture the black-hooded face of a seductive neowitch, with the copy, “Every woman needs a little unfair advantage. If you have your eye on the future, serve him Strega, the spirit with a past. Explain that this ambrosial liquid was created centuries ago in Italy by the beautiful witches of Benevento. Whisper the legend of Strega—that when two people share the golden spirit, they are united by the Love that Lasts Forever. Will the legend work its magic?—Supernaturally! But don’t share it with just anyone—forever is a long, long time. Strega, 80 Proof.” A similar siren skills for the spirits of Lang’s 8 Scotch Whiskey, claiming, “My name is Nadine. Call me collect. Learn what the Zodiac says about your future. If you’re planning an affair for a hundred people or just two, tell me your birth date, and I’ll tell you what your horoscope promises. And remember, any affair is more successful when you serve Lang’s 8 Premium Scotch. Give my brand a try, and call me collect in Los Angeles at (213) 787-2840.”

To figure out who reads a magazine or who watches a TV show, look at the advertising. Ads reflect the audience demographic. Daytime TV sells to women wanting “miracle cleaning” products for the house, and seductive botanicals like “vanishing creme,” “Black Magic Shampoo,” “Hidden Magic Hair Spray,” and “aromatherapy bath-oil beads.” The wizardry sell is a constant theme, because the consumer wants things to change, and magic promises to effect the change. Glidden Paints advises, “When your house begins to haunt you, use Latex Spred Paint.” Madison Avenue commercially confirms American belief in the occult.

With such confirmation, Western Culture has come full circle. Deuteronomy gave the ancient rules for witch-testing. Modern witches are no longer tested. Popular witches endorse every kind of marvelous, magical, and fascinating product.

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THE SELLING OF THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

CUT TO

*The Newsstand**MAD Magazine cover: Rosemia's Boo-Boo*

Everyone is talking about the recent movie that has shocked the nation. (Not THIS nation . . . Upper Slobovia!) We're referring to the picture that has suspense, witchcraft, sorcery, religious fantasy, and most important of all—a couple of shots of naked ladies . . . all of the elements necessary for good “Box Office” today . . . mainly, bad taste! This picture obviously was intended to offend people . . . you're sure to be offended by our *MAD* version of *Rosemia's Boo-Boo*.

MORT DRUCKER AND ARNIE KOGEN, *MAD Magazine*, January 1969

Long before *Rosemary's Baby* became a popular book and movie, publishers from *Summis Desiderantes* on knew that the occult was a cash register. *The Old Farmers Almanac* has been making a profit out of white magic since 1792. Some of its imitators are successfully into their own second hundred years. *The Moon-Sign Book*, one of the more recent (not yet a century), sells steadily by defining “dates for breeding and setting eggs” and making “astro-guidance for romance, homemaking, farm and garden, fishing and hunting.” Such agrarian panaceas sell next to the sexually desperate *How to Find Your Mate through Astrology: The Bachelor Girl's Practical Guide to Locating, Landing, and Loving Her Man*. While Bachelor Girl is interviewing, she might purchase the *Zodiac Sign-In Book*, advertised as “fun at parties, birthdays, and seances.” By the time she lands her fish she will likely need *Your Baby's First Horoscope*. And the baby may need *You Were Born on a Rotten Day*. Occult titles hide in plain sight in the “self-help” section in stores afraid of having an out “occult” section.

Nothing, however, is financially less risky than the risqué. Sex always sells. Witchcraft has always been the code word for sex. The porno occult has come out from under the gloriously funky counters of the late, lamented 42nd Street porn shops documented (and causing latter-day nostalgia) in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Taxi Driver* (1976), and *Cruising* (1980). In the way that water always seeks its own level, occult erotica has flowed out to clean, well-lit suburban drugstores and supermarkets. At magazine and book racks where *Fate* magazine once stood alone with innocent articles about UFOs, customers take to the coded occult genres like Rosemary stroking her baby. Barry Cuff's *Damned Spot* (1969) is frank porno witchery. Wilson Tucker's *The Warlock* (1967) reveals what everyone “always knew”: that

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the CIA is into the occult. Heinrich Graat's *Revenge of Increase Sewall* (1969) could easily trade promo blurbs about an evil-shadow-overhanging-a-town's-unspeakable-rites with Elizabeth Davis' *Suffer a Witch to Die* (1969). The popularity of 1970s occult novels, such as Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), is porno-Gothic enough to frizzle the hair of Nancy Drew. What essayist Erica Jong did for sex with the platonic ideal of the "zipless fuck" in *Fear of Flying* (1973), she did for women and sex in her provocative *Witches* (1981).

Joseph R. Rosenberger's *The Demon Lovers: A Psychosexual Study of Witchcraft and Demonology* (1969) is as porno pop as it is pop scholarly. Rosenberger alternates historical documentary with erotic "sociological" reportage. Rosenberger cannot be lightly dismissed. If he writes non-fiction, he reports too well the dark side of suburban demonology; and if what he writes is fiction, he sells too well to be dismissed. He represents the new diverse scholarship that must be considered by critics of both witchcraft or popular culture.

Rosenberger's chapter on the Great Beast Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) recounts with delicious prurience Crowley's "Raising of the Devil" through ritual sodomy, fellatio, and sadism with his opium-head friend, Edward Allen Bennett. "As Crowley wrote years later, in his masterpiece, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, 'Satan appeared in the triangle, but only for a moment or so; yet he did appear, as a very beautiful boy with golden curls, a naked, handsome boy with a sexual organ that was shaped as a trident.' It was a terrible experience for Edward Allen, however. He screamed and fainted when he saw Satan."¹⁷

Like the Crowley-Bennett ménage à trois with Satan, the literature of demonology is often inverted, erotic, and sadomasochistic. Number 22 California statute 16603 defines the horror comic book as "Any book or booklet in which an account of the commission or attempted commission of the crime of arson, assault with caustic chemicals, assault with a deadly weapon, burglary, kidnapping, mayhem, murder, rape, robbery, theft, or voluntary manslaughter is set forth by means of a series of five or more drawings or photographs in sequence, which are accompanied by either narrative writing or words represented as spoken by a pictured character, whether such narrative words appear in balloons, captions on or immediately adjacent to the photograph or drawing."

If the legal definition of *horror* and *comic* mixes, then the lurid photos and print of the mass-circulated tabloids are the "fun" horror comics of the adult occult. In comparison to *Screw*, *Pacer*, *Tattler*, *Gay*, *Midnight*, and

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other pop-sex sheets, the *National Enquirer* is the granddaddy of junk journalism, which often means it has revealed embarrassing human truths polite people don't talk about. The *Enquirer* loves the occult, and so does its huge readership. Available in supermarket checkout lines everywhere, the *Enquirer* has the largest circulation of any weekly paper in America. Before the *Enquirer* "righted" itself with religion and Republican politics in 2000, a typical week's issue often carried four or five occult articles under teaser headlines like:

Movie Star Eddie Bracken's Occult Experience: Spirit Message from a Dead GI Leads Eddie Bracken to the Soldier's Grave

After 11 Years, Man Is Fired Because Handwriting Expert Says He Is Not Suited for the Job

Doctors Confirm that Woman Dying of an Incurable Disease Recovered Completely after Seeing Vision of Pope John XXIII

Witch Sybil Leek Says Horoscopes Can Help Men and Women Choose Right Careers

Tennessee Williams, writing in *Esquire*, August 1975, called the original-recipe *National Enquirer* "the finest journalistic review of the precise time we live in."¹⁸ In volume 44, number 42, the *Enquirer* editorialized how its staff created its content: "During his twenty-three years with the Newspaper Enterprise Association syndicate, Hollywood reporter, Dick Kleiner, has talked to hundreds of stage, screen, and TV personalities. Kleiner tabulated that seventy-five out of every one hundred actors have had psychic experiences and he tells of these dramatic experiences in his book, *ESP and the Stars*.

Even as one generation of actors descends to the next in the tabloids, some things never change. Michael Jackson made an autobiographical film titled *Ghost* that debuted (and mysteriously disappeared), Halloween 1996. The singer Sting and his wife, Trudy Styler, claim their home has a ghost, as does Dan Ackroyd, the star of *Ghostbusters*. Uma Thurman moved from her home because of ghosts. Nicholas Cage has seen a ghost in the attic of his uncle, Francis Ford Copplola. Keanu Reeves, star of *The Devil's Advocate*, saw ghosts as a child, and Paul McCartney has sensed the ghost of John Lennon.

The Enquirer has run millions of mystic classified ads:

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Fortune Telling Cards. Amazing Deck with Instructions. \$2.00. New York.

“Your Horoscope and Your Dreams,” Book of Deep Insight into Self, with Astrology. Louisiana.

Computerized Horoscope. Personalized, Fifteen Pages, Startling revelations. Love, Career, Forecast. Send \$5.00, Birth date, Birth time, Birth place, Sex. California.

Become an Ordained Minister, and Doctor of Divinity. Degrees issued immediately. Donation: \$5.00. Vermont.

Where Witches and Warlocks Abound! Write to The Psychic Club. Ohio.

Witchcraft! Genuine Herbs, Roots, Oils, etc. Free List. Instructions. California.

WITCHCRAFT LIVES! Hexcraft-magic-occult headquarters. Books, supplies, curios. Sorcerer’s Apprentice Manual: 25 cents.

Voodoo doll kit \$2.00. Cult Handbook illustrated, \$1.00. Arizona.

Every serious reader of the contemporary occult knows of the two famous books by Anton LaVey: his theoretical *Satanic Bible* and its practical companion volume, *Satanic Rituals*. In the age before LaVey reinvented Satanism for modern urban culture, Lewis de Claremont had written the two best books of ritual: *Legends of Incense, Herb, and Oil Magic* (1936), and *The Ancient’s Book of Magic Containing Secret Records of the Procedure and Practice of the Ancient Masters and Adepts* (1940). *Legends of Incense*, as a kind of list, details the materials needed for ritual, and *The Ancient’s Book*, as a workbook, details the form for mixing the materials, particularly those sold by its publisher, Oracle. Catharine Yronwode of the Lucky Mojo Curio Company has noted that *Legends of Incense* was “basically European and Medieval in orientation, but it has from the first been packaged for sale to hoodoo practitioners in the African-American community. It has proven consistently popular and has never gone out of print, despite the fact that in 1966 an important chapter [chapter 10] on seals and talismans was eliminated by the publisher.”¹⁹

Both Lewis de Claremont books are controversial. Fans feel the books give access to deep secrets. Critics argue the books are a mail-order sales gimmick. Could they be both? Pontifex Maximus Frederic de Arechaga, in interview at his Babylonian-style temple in Chicago, said that while de Claremont reveals some worthwhile information, the books are profanations

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of old Sabaeon texts which should themselves be published without de Claremont's mass-media dilutions. De Arechaga founded his Sabaeon religious order in Chicago in 1968 when he took over his mother's occult supply store, El Sabarum, on Sheffield Street. (Pontifex de Arechaga's original 1969 interview appears in the final chapter of this book.)

Despite controversy, for a novice needing a ritual primer, or a basic catechism, de Claremont's tidy manuals give access to otherwise inaccessible and out-of-print texts that, perhaps, the person writing under the name "de Claremont" might have learned in some thereafter lost oral tradition. Times change, and stories die out. Of course, Lewis de Claremont may have been a supremely talented creative writer expressing what his imagination told him. He would have fit the grimoire pattern of copying and recopying secret mysteries and rituals. Gerald Gardner, who claimed he inherited the *Book of Shadows* in fragments during his initiation in 1939, was also accused of being the author of his "found" book. Anton LaVey frankly authored his *Satanic Bible* out of many "found" texts which he made his own. Tracing solo authorship always reveals the same fact. The beating heart of nearly all secret, ancient literature—including the Bible—is the rhythm of a multitude of voices speaking in whispers under the roar of the world.

De Claremont, Gardner, and LaVey are three voices crying in the centuries-long wilderness caused by the occult holocaust of torture, murder, and book burning that has kept the hereditary craft of witchcraft, both white and black, oral and written, underground. Debunkers may declare de Claremont a fraud, Gardner a plagiarist, and LaVey a huckster; but the student of the occult will read these authors and glean from them as much of the hidden history of the occult as possible.

CUT TO

SNAPSHOT: Abbot's Magic Company, "Magic City," Colon, Michigan, 1970.

In Colon, Michigan, the local gas station attendant hops on his motorcycle. He roars past a bearded Amish man who leads his three barefoot boys across the cracked pavement of Blackstone Avenue. On the opposite curb, the boys' mother smiles at her family from under her plain bonnet. The sound of the cycle fades. The family regroups and enters the Magic City Hardware. Every day of the year, the 1000 residents of the village live

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quietly. But four days every August, Colon lights up to what it is: “The Magic Capital of the World.” Each summer’s end, nearly one thousand international magicians double Colon’s population for “Abbott’s Magic Get-Together.” The elementary school becomes a gigantic showroom, and the high school hosts “Four Gigantic Stage Shows” by professionals. Registration is \$20 per person.

Colon got magic by association. Outside of town, on Sturgeon Lake, is the island where the famous Blackstone the Magician (1855–1965, born Henry Boughton in Chicago) built his first summer retreat, “the one that burned to the ground.” Millie Bouton (changed from *Boughton*), the wife of Blackstone’s brother and stage double Pete, still lives in Colon. But the grand times are gone. Sally Banks, the wife of Blackstone’s stage manager, is now Colon’s Avon Lady.

Businesses like “The Magic Carpet Bar” and “The Magic Pocket Pool Hall” anchor the two blocks of Main Street where true showbiz lives. The town theme is everywhere, but the town’s essence stands behind a new supermarket in two black buildings painted with white skeletons and ghosts. This is the Abbott Manufacturing Company, the world’s largest manufacturer of quality magic.

Abbott is its own perfect museum of the popular culture of commercial magic. It was founded in 1927 by Australian magician Percy Abbott, who came to Michigan one summer to visit Blackstone. Abbott’s memoir is *A Lifetime in Magic*. Owner Recil Bordner claims a mailing list of ten thousand names. *The Wall Street Journal* lists Abbott’s annual take at \$200,000.

The genteel Bordner, who resembles actor James Stewart, readily admits to the commercialism of demand and supply. “We’re in show business,” he says. “We manufacture what our customers want. In 1966 we built the magic illusions for the touring skating show *Holiday on Ice*. Our shops were clogged for months. Several of the illusions were so big we had to assemble them in the streets.”

His Abbott Publishing Company prints undated titles like *A Magician Goes to Church: A Guide to Gospel Magic*, by Jim Dracup of the Fellowship of Christian Magicians, and *Lessons in Scripture: Magic Trick Patter*, by the Reverend Donald Bodley.

Of fundamentalist Bible magicians like Andre Cole, who is sponsored by the business entity Crusade for Christ, Bordner says, “Many of them are excellent illusionists. Their magic makes the Bible miracles quite graphic for youngsters. So they’re very popular with churches throughout the country.

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I personally think they're defeating their purpose trying to duplicate scriptural miracles. If a man can do the same miracle as God, God must seem a little less. But if they want it, we'll supply it. If they write a book, we'll publish it. I don't think it's best, but I'm not my brothers' censor."

Bordner, in fact, distributes many monthly periodicals of magic like *Genii: The Conjurers' Magazine* from Los Angeles, and *The New Pentagram* from Peter Warlock in Britain.

The Abbott showroom is a fascinating study in nostalgic carnival color. A stage jammed with floor models emphasizes the vaudeville-show atmosphere. Red and black paint enliven the exhibits. Mandarins, rabbits, and genies decorate illusions like "The Girl-without-a-Middle Cabinet" (\$650), and Andre Cole's "Chinese Chopper" for the head and wrists (\$95). Levitation illusions range from \$77.50 to \$1500. Magic wands cost \$2 to \$6. Crystal balls—glass from England, plastic from the USA—cost from \$7.50 to \$20.

"Never leave your crystal ball in your auto," Bordner warns. "Several of our magicians' finest tricks have been sending their cars up in flames. They catch the sun, you know."

The Abbott catalog likewise cautions, "Be very careful in selecting merchandise. . . . A valuable part of every magical effect is its secret. Once you have learned the secret, we cannot exchange or refund money on tricks or books unless there is a flaw in materials or workmanship."

"When we ship internationally—even to our one Russian who deals through West Germany," Bordner says, "we declare only half the list value because half the price is for the sharing of the secret, and they can't tax that intangible."

Bordner points with pride to a magician's table. "I cut the stencil for that design," he says. "You saw it in the Tony Curtis film *Houdini* [1953]. Paramount Studios borrowed quite a lot of equipment from us for that movie."

In the Abbott cellar, Arturo, a prized craftsman among Bordner's twenty employees, explains, "Hollywood paid me to use both my name and my straitjacket escape for *Eternally Yours*. That was around 1939 with Loretta Young as the wife of magician David Niven."

The books as well as the "restraint-and-torture" equipment of guillotines and such in the main showroom could be perverted to a bondage fetishist's delight—particularly the setups, but not the solutions, of a manual called *Escapes: Secret Workings for Handcuffs, Ropes, Boxes, Bags, Chains, Padlocks, Strait Jackets, Wrist Stocks*. On the cover is a rather alarming fetish-like photo of a uniformed cop handcuffing a boy in swimming

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briefs preparatory to the youngster's underwater live burial and suspense-filled escape.

Bordner realizes his products can be appropriated to anyone's fancy or fantasy. He has, in fact, received requests for botanica ingredients as well as farmers' requests to remove curses from oat crops. One woman caller, a self-identified witch, left disgruntled that Bordner supplied materials for popular stage magic, but not natural magic. Bordner muses that while he carries tarot cards, his doves—alive and cooing at six dollars a pair—are for the stage, not the stew.

In point of fact, hard-core occultists amuse the Abbott firm, which goes no farther into dogma than stage magic. At least, that's what Bordner says founder Percy Abbott said; but where there's smoke, there's usually a trick, and behind it a trickster.

The Abbott Manufacturing Company has a monthly magazine, *The New Tops*, which at \$7 a year does not lack a sense of humor. In its news items, *The New Tops* was happy to see the media-savvy witch Louise Huebner stump the TV panel, who could not guess her occupation on the television show *What's My Line*, May 4, 1970.

The ceiling of the Abbott showroom is plastered with a fortune in original posters of the magicians Thurston and Harry Houdini, as well as of the circuses of Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey.

A portrait of Percy Abbott hangs glowering on the wall, with Satan looking over his shoulder.

"It's melodramatic, isn't it?" Bordner says. "Some say he had the Devil in him. He and Blackstone were both very temperamental."

Over Bordner's head, an old and peeling poster reads:

GEM THEATER: CASSOPOLIS MICHIGAN
10 PM SHOW TIME
The Spirit of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
presents
SAX—ONA
in his Sensational Spiritualistic Seance
and GHOST SHOW
No Children Admitted
Ladies Must Have a Male Escort
Doctor and Nurse in Attendance

In a nearby showcase stands a magician's gag sign. It reads: "Applause, Please."

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THE SELLING OF THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

CUT TO

Inner and Outer Space, Apollo 13

Because the occult seems to answer questions in areas of human experience where the only real answers are increasingly intelligent questions, consumers will use, wear, read, and view anything to open the mysteries locked within themselves.

“Houston, we have a problem.”

The Marathon Oil Company’s *Apollo 13* drinking glass commemorated more than that damaged moonship’s desperately shaky return to Earth in 1970.

It proved humans will buy amulets, crucifixes, and filling-station glassware to exorcise their innermost fears. Owning the popular “*Apollo 13* Safe Return” glass was like owning some kind of team chalice for a magic toast. “If the astronauts made it, so can we.”

The news knew.

Everyone knew.

The very return of the ill-fated moonship, astrologically named *Aquarius*, was a miracle.

Numerologists had warned the National Aeronautics and Space Administration not to launch *Apollo 13* on Wednesday, April 11, at 13 hours and 13 minutes (Houston time), carrying the 12th, 13th, and 14th men to the moon, because the spaceship would be traveling on Friday the 13th, the date the explosion actually occurred.

What of this numerological coincidence?

Titanic was launched in 1911, on April 1—April Fool’s Day.