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| 1. Record Nr.           | UNINA9910785639103321   |
| Autore                  | Lord Evelyn   |
| Titolo                  | The Hellfire Clubs // Evelyn Lord   |
| Pubbl/distr/stampa      | New Haven, CT : , : Yale University Press, , [2010]<br>©2010  |
| ISBN                    | 0-300-17710-0   |
| Descrizione fisica      | 1 online resource (250 p.)  |
| Disciplina              | 366.094109033   |
| Soggetti                | Secret societies - History - 18th century - Great Britain<br>Great Britain Social life and customs 18th century   |
| Lingua di pubblicazione | Inglese   |
| Formato                 | Materiale a stampa  |
| Livello bibliografico   | Monografia  |
| Note generali           | Description based upon print version of record.   |
| Nota di contenuto       | Front matter -- Contents -- Acknowledgements -- List of Illustrations<br>-- The Hell-Fire Clubs Time Line -- Introduction -- 1. Prelude to the<br>Fires of Hell -- 2. Gentlemen's Clubs, Journalistic Hacks, the Mohocks<br>and Change -- 3. The Hell-Fire Clubs -- 4. Interlude Abroad: The<br>Grand Tour, Dilettanti and Divans -- 5. The Medmenham Friars -- 6.<br>Essay on Woman: The Friars Exposed -- 7. Public Men and Private Vices<br>-- 8. Scotland and the Fires of Hell -- 9. Beefsteaks, Demoniacs,<br>Dalkey and Colonial America -- Conclusion -- Notes -- Bibliography --<br>Index  |
| Sommario/riassunto      | The Hell-Fire Clubs scandalized eighteenth-century English society.<br>Rumors of their orgies, recruitment of prostitutes, extensive libraries of<br>erotica, extreme rituals, and initiation ceremonies circulated widely at<br>the time, only to become more sensational as generations passed. This<br>thoroughly researched book sets aside the exaggerated gossip about<br>the secret Hell-Fire Clubs and brings to light the first accurate portrait<br>of their membership (including John Wilkes, the Chancellor of the<br>Exchequer, and the Prince of Wales), beliefs, activities, and the reasons<br>for their proliferation, first in the British Isles and later in America,<br>possibly under the auspices of Benjamin Franklin. Hell-Fire Clubs<br>operated under a variety of titles, but all attracted similar members-<br>mainly upper-class men with abundant leisure and the desire to shock<br>society. The book explores the social and economic context in which |

the clubs emerged and flourished; their various phases, which first involved violence as an assertion of masculinity, then religious blasphemy, and later sexual indulgence; and the countermovement that eventually suppressed them. Uncovering the facts behind the Hell-Fire legends, this book also opens a window on the rich contradictions of the Enlightenment period.

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