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RIP Kenneth Grant, 1924-2011 a true Star

Trafficking with an "onslaught of compulsive weirdness"¹:

Kenneth Grant and the Magickal revival

Dave Evans

The British occultist G. Kenneth Grant (1924-) has been variously applauded **"It's hard to name another single living individual who has done more to shape contemporary western thinking with regard to Magic"**² - and slated, with his sanity doubted: **"a schoolboy gone berserk on brimstone aftershave"**³ - throughout his 50 year literary and magickal career. This article will briefly outline his early influences; literary output, examine some seeming factual and historical anomalies within his narrative and describe some of the broad influences that he has had on modern magic.

Grant had read very widely on occultism and Eastern philosophy by his early teens⁴, and had been using his own personal magical symbol inspired by a powerful dream vision, since 1939⁵. Since it was wartime, Grant volunteered for the army at 18, expecting to be **"sent to India where I had hopes of finding a guru"**⁶; which as Moore remarks, shows **"a grasp upon conventional worldly reality that was at best precarious"**⁷. However Grant developed an unspecified medical condition and was invalided out of the service aged 20.

Continuing his magical studies, Grant tried to meet the ageing magician Aleister Crowley by writing to Crowley's publishers, fruitlessly, as it turned out, as the address he took

from the flyleaf of a book was a decade out of date. When Grant discovered London's *Atlantis Bookshop* he tried to gain an audience with Crowley through *Atlantis*' proprietor, Michael Houghton, who knew Crowley. Houghton refused to help (privately writing that Grant was **"mentally unstable"**⁸). Grant considered it to be because Houghton did not want to **"incur evil karma"**⁹ from linking him to Crowley, but later modified this to a more pragmatic notion that **"Houghton had earmarked me for his own organization, *The Order of Hidden Masters*"**¹⁰ and was thus trying to divert him from Crowley's influence, despite the apparent paradox of Houghton selling Grant numerous expensive Crowley books in the meantime.

Grant wrote instead to the publishers' addresses in these newer Crowley books and eventually his mail was forwarded. Grant and Crowley later met in the autumn of 1944,¹¹ and after several amicable meetings and a further exchange of letters Grant offered to work for Crowley as secretary-cum-personal assistant, in return for magickal instruction in *lieu* of pay. Crowley agreed, and in the early spring of 1945 Grant moved into in a lodge cottage in the grounds of *Netherwood*, the boarding house in Sussex where Crowley was then resident.

Crowley had an ambivalent relationship with Houghton and warned Grant (far too late, as it transpired) **"don't let *Atlantis* know you know me"**¹². Grant busied himself working with and for Crowley for some months, dealing with Crowley's correspondence and daily needs, reading voraciously from Crowley's own library and magickal record, running errands to London, writing occult essays, performing rituals including ether-magnified magical path workings with Crowley¹³ and becoming a high initiate of Crowley's magical order, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, with Crowley writing in his diary: **"value of Grant. If I die or go to the USA, there must be a trained man to take care of the English OTO"**¹⁴.

However Grant left *Netherwood* in June 1945¹⁵, after only a few months with Crowley, due to familial pressure to take on a 'proper' job¹⁶. In the face of this problem the financially bankrupt Crowley, by then reliant on supporters' donations to survive was unable to canvas sufficient funds to make Grant's position salaried. Crowley later wrote to Grant's father **"I am very sorry to part with Kenneth...I feel ... that he is giving up his real future"**¹⁷.

However the hard taskmaster Crowley had criticised Grant's secretarial failings regularly: **"it's all very unsatisfactory. You *must* put a sock in it if you still want to work with me for the Order"** ¹⁸. Crowley also found Grant's verbosity and general flights of imagination **"a terrible defect in your outlook on life; you cannot be content with the simplicity of reality and fact; you have to go off into a pipe-dream"** ¹⁹. However after Grant had left his employ, Crowley moderated this, in a letter to another OTO member, David Curwen: **"I feel that I may have treated him too severely"** ²⁰.

Although Grant continued to correspond with, and support Crowley he never saw him again. Since much stock could be placed on Grant being a pupil of Crowley, it should be emphasised that their face-to-face association was not long, only a matter of months and thus although now regarded as an authority on Crowley he did not have a lengthy apprenticeship 'at the feet of the master', so to speak. Crowley died in 1947 and Grant attended his funeral.

In his *Ninth Arch*, published in 2003, Grant claims a biological relationship to Crowley: early in their relationship Aleister Crowley asked him **"it's a large clan, I know; but do you know Gregor Fergus Grant... my cousin?"** ²¹. In Grant's book where this remark is published, from 1991, Grant does not footnote this with any commentary at all, let alone in the affirmative, which seems odd when 12 years later he claimed ***distinct and long-term knowledge*** of such a familial relationship. Gregor Grant is mentioned several times in various of Crowley's own volumes which were either jointly or solely posthumously re-edited for publication by Kenneth Grant ²², but again no editor references are made there as to any familial link. It is indeed a large Clan: given the common nature of the surname Grant, any genealogical research to verify this claim would be pointless without considerable further information such as given names, birth dates and places.

This claimed link is through one Dr Phineas Marsh Black, a fictitious character in one of Grant's 'novels' (although confusingly the same novel is *dedicated to Phineas*) - both Grant's great-uncle ²³ and a cousin of Gregor Grant, which would provide a very distanced familial, if not specifically *genetic*, link from Kenneth Grant to Crowley. Dr Black was allegedly a competitor with Crowley to find a particular ancient magic book, *The Grimoire of Clan Grant* ²⁴, this being a record allegedly created over generations of the Grant Clan having magical traffic with otherworldly entities. Grant gives various

details of Black in *Against the Light*, including a lifespan (1854-1957) and names one of Blacks' publications, as a medical doctor, which book has to date been untraceable²⁵. This *Grimoire*, Phineas Marsh, Phineas Black or Phineas Marsh Black all fail to merit any mention in the index of Crowley's autobiography, *The Confessions*²⁶, which seems unusual given the 900-plus pages of very detailed autobiographical information given by Crowley therein, which covers often very brief and whimsical acquaintances and which would be expected to mention other prominent occultists with whom he had any significant dealings, especially given Crowley's often vicious wit in criticising others in his field.

However a potential confounding factor might be that *this autobiography is a book edited by Kenneth Grant, and indexed by his wife Steffi Grant*, so there would have been ample opportunity to delete references to Black or the *Grimoire* if they wished to keep the matter secret for whatever purpose. However, neither does Phineas Marsh Black (or permutations thereof) nor the *Grant Grimoire* merit a mention in the indices of *seven* major biographies of Crowley²⁷ which predated publication of *The Ninth Arch*, and with which Kenneth Grant was *not* connected as editor. This would seem unusual if Phineas did indeed exist as an eminent occult researcher in contact with Crowley.

Perhaps more conclusively, none of the terms Phineas Black, Phineas Marsh Black or *The Grant Grimoire* appears in the index of any of Kenneth Grant's own books prior to 2003's *Ninth Arch*, which would seem unusual given the alleged vital importance of Phineas and the *Grimoire* throughout Grant's life.

Grant's life however did intersect with a very real and documented person after Crowley's death. There is not scope here to provide a full biographical background of Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), instead the reader is directed to Grant's own masterwork *Zos Speaks*²⁸. However, in brief, Spare was a much-feted artistic child prodigy, later a member of one of Crowley's magickal orders for a short time and the author of several books on art and magic, plus an arts magazine editor. Steffi Grant said she sought out Spare in 1949 and shortly afterwards introduced Kenneth to him²⁹. By that time Spare was living a fairly Spartan existence in South London, having published no books for decades and living in virtual obscurity, eking out a living as a jobbing artist, sometime art tutor and quietly practicing and developing his method of visual, symbolic (sigilic) magic that was extremely innovative.

There are many problems with the easy academic or magical interpretation of Spare, in that he was, by today's standards, probably dyslexic³⁰ and **“Spare just invented, amalgamated or altered words to suit his meaning”**³¹: examples include **“there is a word preention meaning ‘anticipated perception’ or I’ve imagined it!”**³², (he imagined it) and **“stectatorially”**³³.

To compound the problems of interpretation **“sometimes his spelling was very odd... Kenneth made a lot of tactful enquiries about the meaning”**³⁴ and he had **“cryptic handwriting”**³⁵. Either or both of these factors make Grant's minute, lengthy and often cabbalistic interpretations of Spare's writings *potentially* fraught with error; such as investing them with arcane esoteric meanings that are perhaps simply not there.

Elsewhere Grant's crucial misreading of a letter during his researches into Jack Parsons (an American occultist connected with Crowley) led to possibly similar problems³⁶.

Artist and Occultist Jan Fries believes that **“Spare's writings, and Grant's presentation of them, have been too cryptic for a mass audience. Numerous individuals and organisations have confused the basic simplicity of the method...”**³⁷ and Matt Lee sees Spare's works as perhaps **“artificially assimilated by Grant, to a particular, linear magical current, when they are more fluid than this should allow”**³⁸. Spare himself seems to have had some reservations about Grant's writings on occasion: **“I think you are a trifle ambiguous for the ordinary reader”**³⁹.

To further cloud the matter, Spare had recollections that **“cannot be fully trusted...due to vagaries of memory”**⁴⁰ for example his first book *Earth: Inferno* was privately printed as a run of 265 copies which took over a decade to find buyers for all copies, but he later recalled it as ‘500 that sold out immediately’⁴¹ This seems to have been a lifelong problem: he failed his formal art examinations as a youth because **“he could never remember technical terms for parts of the body”**⁴², and later in life he had problems reprising some of his unpublished textual works lost in the wartime bombing of his house, about which he lamented his **“loss of memory (from the bombing injuries and general shock) and lousy normal memory”**⁴³. Even almost at the end of Spare's life, after 6 years of dealing with his handwritten papers intended for a book, Grant was still having troubles transcribing the words into typed text: **“little of this last batch is intelligible to me”**⁴⁴.

Even when Grant was confident that he did understand Spare, he was on occasion wrong: in early 1955, when he had been working with Spare's writing for five years, he wrote to Spare with horror at his discovery that he had made a continual transcription error, misreading "**predicate**" (a word Spare used a lot) for "**predict**", thus substantially changing meaning⁴⁵. Spare's response that "**I get mixed up with 'per' and 'pre'**"⁴⁶ failed to make any sense of the matter, since *both* words begin with 'pre'.

Additionally, in many accounts of time spent with the Grants (and others) late in life there is a distinct feeling of Spare as an old man, almost exclusively inhabiting a bar-room environment, with the alcohol-based culture that implies ("**a relentless round**" of drinking as Steffi Grant recalled it⁴⁷, and this was despite the hedonistic Crowley's lifestyle warning to Kenneth about alcohol of a few years before "**Drink: at your age, the less the better**"⁴⁸). Perhaps Spare was toying with young and possibly over-earnest acolytes, seeing how far his raconteur's act would go before any tall tales were 'found out'. As he said to his dear friend Frank Letchford, as a general philosophy: "**if you are going to tell a lie, tell a big one for it is more likely to be believed!**"⁴⁹. There may not have been any particular malice implicit, it seemingly being done for his own plain amusement, perhaps to bring some interest to an immediately post-War austere lifestyle and/or simply providing entertainment which might justify the price of another drink. There was certainly stimulation to weave a good yarn: his narratives "**became more elaborate with Kenneth's unfailing encouragement... and the lateness of the hour, cosy pub, convivial company and the agreeable vapours of alcohol and tobacco**"⁵⁰, with Letchford believing that Spare often told "**white lies...to boost a flagging ego**"⁵¹. So far as the shade of the lies is concerned, Spare variously had told Letchford that during World War One he had once been stuck in a pile of corpses in 'no man's land' between the opposing armies' trenches, had contracted malaria in West Africa, and was aboard a troopship that was torpedoed. Much later Letchford checked Spare's war record and found all of these tales to be complete falsehoods⁵².

Yet despite all the public bar verbosity, Spare said he found "**pleasure in destroying words... reducing a concept to its most simple verbal form**"⁵³. Grant, by comparison, does the opposite in his general writing, making almost an art-form of complexity and learned ideas, an example being "**This symbolism, although apparently complex, is simple, as may be seen by equating it with the well-known Buddhist formula: First there IS (i.e. *Malkuth*)- Form (i.e. presence of Object). Then there is NOT (i.e.**

***Kether* – Void (i.e. presence of Subject). Then there IS (i.e. *Ain*)- Neither Form nor Void, but absence of the presence of both Object and Subject (i.e. the Absolute Absence, or Void).**”⁵⁴ Crowley had also apparently earlier twice rebuked him for verbosity and other related faults in his use of language: “**I wanted an answer, not a sermon!**”⁵⁵, and “**you must learn to be systematic & accurate and unambiguous**”⁵⁶.

Perhaps this is learned behaviour: Grant’s mentor Crowley was not shy of codifying and making matters obscure: “**The verses of... several... of the Holy Books of Thelema are numbered from nought (the *ain*⁵⁷ or zero) instead of from one**”⁵⁸ so that a verse numbered four is *sometimes but not always* actually the fifth; for example. Then later, when Aleister Crowley might refer back, perhaps to ‘the fourth verse’ of that piece of writing, one is often not sure which verse he means.

As well as being a very creative performer with his anecdotes, the financially-straitened Spare was “**streetwise**” with his money, with an eye for a bargain and likely sources of income well before he met Grant⁵⁹, and he was not averse to subtly pitting Grant against other potential buyers in order to manifest quicker sales of his artworks⁶⁰. He also became aware that very cheap bric-a-brac items (such as pseudo-ethnic carvings) that he purchased from flea markets as content or background for the scenes of his pictures then became very saleable in themselves once the picture was completed, for being ‘one of his models’. Although dyslexics sometimes also have genuine cognitive problems with numbering, Spare also *deliberately* and fraudulently mis-dated some artworks for sale; two contemporary and just-completed sketches were signed and dated many years apart to suit the intended buyer who was keen to acquire ‘Spare originals from different artistic periods’ in one fell swoop and at a seemingly favourable price⁶¹.

There is also plausible speculation that Spare’s ‘Zen-like’ detachment from material life in middle-age, so lauded by some of his *post-mortem* admirers as a sign of his holiness and magickal commitment to a higher plane, may have instead been a necessary and expedient withdrawal from artistic society and the up-market art publication scene. This is believed by Naylor to be due to rumours of extensive plagiarism and fraud (which appear now to be accurate), which may have prevented many other artists and editors from ever risking their reputations by working with him again on any publication projects. Naylor believes that this also casts doubt on the veracity of Spare’s claimed ‘psychic automatic’ drawings, and mentions that some of his illustrations as an official

war artist (during and just after World War One) were banned since some scenes he depicted were either highly inaccurate or completely fake ⁶². In any case, Spare's subsequent choice of home, in poverty-stricken South London was from **“force of circumstances, lack of cash”** and a wish not to be disturbed ⁶³ rather than any ‘class-conscious’ act or spiritual retreat from Bohemian ‘arty’ London.

One particular aspect of ‘Spare’s world according to Grant’ is found severely lacking under scrutiny; Spare’s relationship with a ‘Mrs Patterson’, who supposedly taught him a hereditary form of witchcraft, but about whom no independent information can be found. In 1975 Grant wrote that Spare **“was extremely reticent about Mrs. Paterson. All that I was able to elicit from him during the eight years of friendship was that she was very old when he met her and that she claimed descent from a line of Salem (New England) witches that Cotton Mather had failed to eradicate”** ⁶⁴. Despite this apparent dearth of information, in subsequent books Grant has written a considerable amount about Mrs Patterson, investing her with particular magical abilities and heritage in great detail, which in light of his comment does not seem to have come from Spare (and Patterson was an old woman in Spare’s early life, so would have been long dead by the time Grant first met Spare). In addition, the veracity of those tried at Salem in the 17th Century being any kind of ‘witches’ - in the modern understanding of the word as someone with ‘real magical powers’ - has been largely discredited.

In a challenging article, Cantu demonstrates how this initially scant information on Patterson has been drip-fed over several decades by Grant, often when convenient to him, as confirmatory ‘evidence’ of his own published magickal theories, and that very little independent information about Patterson survives ⁶⁵. Often when writers quote Spare **“by his own account...(of) Mrs Patterson”** ⁶⁶ they are actually reliant on the accuracy and honesty of Grant’s account of something Spare may or may not have said, either in exactly the words given, *or at all*. Equally, much of the seemingly Grant-corroborative information from Spare’s old friend and financier Frank Letchford is corroborative simply because it derives from Grant’s accounts, rather than being a confirmatory remark heard direct from Spare ⁶⁷, since Letchford wrote only that **“Austin mentioned the woman in vague terms to myself”** ⁶⁸. Letchford was an avid reader and was certainly aware of Grant’s later writings about Spare in general ⁶⁹. It seems unusual that Mrs. Patterson, who was *supposedly, according to Grant*, so very influential in Spare’s life

would not have been a major topic of conversation between Spare and such a dear friend as Letchford, given the latter's interest in spiritual matters.

Grant has said that Spare said very little about Patterson, however there is a lot of ill-provenanced detail about her in Grant's books. If Grant's remark is *not* true then there is an alternative possibility, that Spare was spinning a special yarn to Grant that was particularly tailored to Grant's occult interests. This is not without precedent. To others **“Austin liked to believe (without much foundation) that he was descended from an illegitimate son born to Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton... objects belonging to the Admiral were sold by Spare when he was in financial stress (a fairly frequent state)”**⁷⁰. This seems to be both a flight of fancy and a useful way to earn money from the credulous by profitably recycling various 'naval' artifacts that Spare probably picked up cheaply from London bric-a-brac shops. Given Grant's overwhelming occult fascination, what better way to keep him interested than to claim to have had a powerful witch-figure as a childhood mentor, a character perhaps nominally based on a local fortune-teller recalled from Spare's youth, but whose magical attributes and abilities were considerably 'beefed-up' in the repetitive re-telling?

Perhaps equally surprising, given that they were two such close and contemporary associates of Spare, Grant and Frank Letchford first met at a hospital; only shortly before the seriously ill and by then mostly unconscious Spare died in 1956, so there was never scope for a 3-way confirmatory conversation about Patterson, magic or anything else⁷¹. Whatever the source, this gradual accretion of 'facts' onto the name of Mrs. Patterson reached such a point that Grant's emerging and expanding mythos of 'Patterson the great witch' was taken up by others who created a probably spurious link between her to an extant coven of modern witches, and this 'news' was breathlessly ushered back into Grant's writings as independent supporting evidence of his own beliefs about Patterson the Witch⁷², when it may instead merely be an evolving and distorted 'Chinese Whisper' that had finally returned to its progenitor, or at least, publisher. Since Grant and Letchford, two of Spare's closest confidantes, have both written on occasion that Spare didn't speak much about Mrs. Patterson, then if these comments are both true the main source of 'information' about her seems to be Grant himself, who never met her. An alternative is that Grant was prey to Spare's possibly bar-room fuelled elaborate recreation of Patterson and that much of his subsequent mythologising of her, by

repeating some tall stories of Spare's, and incorporating these into his own system has distorted his own magical writings considerably.

In any case some kind of recognisable witchcraft element to Spare's work may be totally spurious: **“since the publication ...of *Zos Speaks!* the fallacy of subsuming Spare the magician within some 'tradition' becomes clear; look at the texts - where is the witchcraft, exactly? Even the text of (Spare's book) '*Witches' Sabbath*' refers explicitly to '*Ehr*' ... *Lao Tzu*, the Taoist sage”**⁷³.

Letchford, a mystically-interested writer, bibliophile and appreciator of art rather than outright practicing occultist, gave a different, somewhat more rounded view of Spare than others, being **“especially keen to communicate his (Spare's) humanism, often lost on somberly-garbed seekers after sigillic mysteries”**⁷⁴, similarly Semple's book *Zos Kia* attempted to **“reconcile the rather austere yet joyful... mystical philosophy we find in *The Book of Pleasure* with the image of the skulduggerous sorcerer which emerges in the works of Kenneth Grant.”**⁷⁵. This view has considerable plausibility, since Spare did not know what the *Qliphoth* was in 1955⁷⁶, this being a technical Cabbalistic term, and one *absolutely central* to the dark magickal work that Grant was engaged in with his *Typhonian OTO* in the same year and onwards to the present. Such a knowledge gap for a member of Grant's Order would perhaps be of the same magnitude to a practicing Christian not knowing anything about Judas.

An additional temporal problem with Grant's adoption of Spare as another magickal mentor is his claim to have co-founded the magickal group the *Zos Kia Cultus* with Spare, based on Spare's methods, in 1948⁷⁷, when Grant's own published correspondence indicates he did not actually meet Spare until 1949⁷⁸.

The final thing to remember about Grant's work with Spare is that it was *never finished*, Spare had been variably in poor health for some years, but was taken very suddenly seriously ill and died in a very short space of time, so his remaining notes were only partial at the time of his death⁷⁹, and Grant has had the metaphorical task of reconstructing a jigsaw without benefit of a full picture as a guideline. This might explain why he took nearly 20 years to produce his first major book about Spare and over 40 years to produce the second.

All of these factors imply that the enigmatic Spare was cryptically hard to understand, often a sharp businessman under the guise of a mystic (and probably *vice-versa*) and suffered several problems with his memory. He was shrewd to the point of creating some very tall tales, often within an alcohol-fuelled culture, and Grant's work with him was unfinished, yet considerably 'varnished' (and perhaps manipulated to fit a *Typhonian* Magickal schema which might have been inappropriate) so far as accuracy, selectivity and honesty of reporting when it was published. Thus without denying their magical veracity, any all-encompassing view of both Grant's and Spare's works must include these considerations as a major *caveat*.

Perhaps oddly, despite Grant's major role and truly Herculean effort in preserving and then promoting Austin Spare materials and methods; and the efficacy with which he regards them in his own practice, his magickal order the *Typhonian OTO* do not currently formally incorporate any Austin Spare techniques into their teachings or ritual work ⁸⁰.

Publications “these aren't just books *about* Magick; these books *are* Magick” ⁸¹

After Crowley and then Spare had died, Grant began in earnest on his major writing work. He had exclusive access to Spare's unpublished written works, having been bequeathed them in Spare's will, and his remit to use Crowley's unpublished and published archive was all but unchecked since Grant worked directly with Crowley's literary executors on editing and re-producing several of the Beast's major books. He also wrote his own pieces for publication, and apart from miscellaneous articles and essays this currently extends to over a dozen, usually hefty books. Bogdan sees him as **“perhaps (the) most original and prolific English author of the post-modern occultist genre”** ⁸².

Grant's occult publications are as follows: *The Carfax Monographs*, a limited print run of only sets of 100 illustrated articles published in a series of ten installments between 1959 and 1963. These were reprinted in one slim volume as *Hidden Lore* in 1989.

The Magical Revival (1972, reprinted 1991) was Grant's first mainstream occult book to be published in an appreciable number of copies, and was the first volume of the nine *Typhonian Trilogies*. As well as the historical slant to the title and content, *Magical Revival* can also be seen as a manifesto for the future of magick, encouraging interested parties to become involved.

Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God followed in 1973 (reprinted 1992), being volume 2 of the *Typhonian Trilogies*. It deals with the sex-magickal system of Crowley (much of it previously unpublished), Tantra and some of the methods within the *Typhonian OTO*.

Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare (1975) was a ground-breaking collection of the art and writings of Spare, the result of almost 20 years' work by Grant. It was not a rapid or high selling title initially, being remaindered⁸³ before becoming a very sought-after volume, with scarce copies later consistently selling on the second-hand market for very many times the original cover price. A long-awaited 2003 reprint of the work seemed destined for the same *kudos* only weeks after publication.

Cults of the Shadow (1975, reprinted 1994), was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 3. The First trilogy ended with Grant providing details of, and his theories of the linkages between Left-Hand path magical cults (both those currently in existence, and historical) and his own practices. These included Crowley and Spare's work, Voodoo cults and Eastern Tantric groups.

Nightside of Eden (1977, reprinted 1994) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 4: Part One of the book discusses various dense magickal formulae in Grant's (by now usual) complex and gnomic manner, including detailed cabbalistic exegesis. Part Two details the numerous branches of *The Tunnels Of Set*, a dark and dangerous magickal realm explored by Grant using the formulae examined in Part One. Reaction was mixed, and polarized; readers either hated it, Suster deriding him as **"ignorant... perverted ... *Tunnels of Set* ? Sewers of shit... those who accept Grant's statements ... are eating his used lavatory paper"**⁸⁴, or loved him: believing that in general Grant in the 1970s was **"practically alone in offering new contributions to the literature of magick"**⁸⁵.

Outside the Circles of Time (1980) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 5; covering similar materials as before, with the addition of a discussion of 'Ufology' with relation to occultism, some autobiographical information, and a great deal about insectoid symbolism, which prompted one critic to highlight a plausible belief held in some quarters that as well as him being actually insane, there are errors of fact: Grant **"went totally loopy... it's biologically incorrect some of the things he says about honey bees"**⁸⁶. The same critic who lauded him for his huge contribution during the 1970s

wrote “**while he gets high marks for originality, his manner of exegesis is difficult for the beginner, and his later books are progressively bizarre**”⁸⁷. Another, anonymous, reviewer remarks, “**while parts are inaccurate in the strict historical sense, it remains a valuable source**”⁸⁸.

Grant then either lost or had completed his publication contract with Muller and no new material by him appeared in book form for eleven years, until 1991’s *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, a thin and rather expensive volume of diary entries, correspondence, photographs and general memoirs of Grant’s short time with Crowley. His new publisher, *Skoob*, reissued several of his previous volumes in the early 1990s, and *The Trilogies* resumed with *Hecate’s Fountain* in 1992 (*Typhonian Trilogies* volume 6). In this book Grant gives many anecdotes of the workings of the New Isis Lodge, with the preliminary comment that: “**It would seem that almost all successful magick manifests as a ricochet, a sidekick to group ceremonies... or to isolated magickal workings. I call this peculiarity a tangential tantrum**”⁸⁹. He then devotes much of the book to the various magickal accidents, including insanity and many deaths, believed to be directly as a consequence of ritual work, that his group encountered. On occasion these deaths were due to seemingly very bizarre circumstances, with evoked alien entities being culpable. Quite how these deaths, illnesses and injuries can be viewed as successes is debatable. Before an extremely hostile review of the book draws to a close, Suster castigated the body count and injury list as being the results of “**crass magical incompetence**”, for which he says Grant seems almost proud⁹⁰.

Outer Gateways (1994) continued the *Typhonian Trilogies*, being volume 7. Part One of the book covers Grant’s theories regarding the older pre-history of *Typhonian* traditions from around the world, with relation to Crowley, Spare and the works of HP Lovecraft and the book concludes with the entire text of, and a lengthy analysis of a clairvoyantly-received text, *The Wisdom of S’lba*.

Against the Light: A Nightside Narrative (1997) is a novel, involving one ‘Kenneth Grant’ as a character. There is a major emergent academic problem that is highlighted at this point in reading any of Grant’s *supposedly* fictional work as pure fiction, since elsewhere he makes comments about this book being both “**quasi-autobiographical**”⁹¹ and a “**magical biography**”⁹². This implies strongly that many of the events in the ‘novel’ actually happened, although Grant does not specify which events come under this

heading. With this book Grant changed publishers again to *Starfire*, the *Typhonian OTO's* own imprint, where he remains, apart from the following for *Fulgur Ltd*, a specialist publisher on Austin Spare matters.

Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare (co-authored with Steffi Grant, 1998), was a weighty and presumably comprehensive collection of 7 years' worth of chronological diary entries and correspondence (from 1949 to Spare's death in 1956), photographs, illustrations and Grant's reconstruction of Spare's magical techniques and philosophical aphorisms.

Beyond the Mauve Zone (1999) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 8. The Mauve Zone is a magickal realm which Grant claims to have explored, and believes to be a place accessed by all manner of mystics, mages and artists over the ages; many of which he discusses in detail. He does this by now familiar blend of cabbalistic permutations and with repetitive reference to 'the usual suspects', Spare, Lovecraft and Crowley; plus some contemporary occultists from around the world who had contacted him in previous years to compare notes.

Snakewand and the Darker Strain (2000) was two stories in one volume, describing African sorceries, voodoo and the like. It is not clear whether any elements of these stories are partly autobiographical.

The Ninth Arch (2003) was *Typhonian Trilogies* volume 9, and final volume in the three trilogies. It comprises more of Grant's continued convoluted cabbalistic interpretations and musings on Crowley, Spare, Lovecraft *et al* and then a lengthy verse-by-verse analysis of some more material, called the *Book of the Spider*, received by mediumistic methods from the era of the New Isis magickal group; similar to the format of *The Wisdom of S'lba* in *Outer Gateways* (above).

Gamaliel and Dance, Doll, Dance! (2003) was his most recent product, and another example of Grant's 'fiction', being two supposedly fictional stories in one volume, one tale of a vampire and one about a Tantric sexual group. Again, it is not clear whether any elements of these stories are partly autobiographical.

Despite this wealth of titles, and his editorial work on Crowley re-issues, publishing life has not been all plain sailing for Grant, however. After often slow sales in the earlier years and some temporary remaindering of titles in bookshops Grant's works are now all much sought-after and of considerable resale/collector value, and one of his staunchest critics concedes that all of Grant's books are **“graced by artwork of the utmost distinction”**⁹³ and beautifully presented, a lesson learned probably from Crowley's consummately high publication standards⁹⁴. The mere thought of a *paperback* mass-market standard Kenneth Grant volume would be anathema.

Despite the several lengthy gaps between books (and in some cases between publishers) this amounts to a considerable and detailed *corpus*. Some of these gaps are perhaps explained by major preparatory work before the publication dates of his edited editions of works by Aleister Crowley, and Grant's own *Zos Speaks* was the result of four decades' work. Bogdan believes that **“the works of Kenneth Grant... can be seen as a modern ‘*lesemysterium*’ - a mystery one experiences while reading the books”**⁹⁵ which provides a **“consciousness-jerking shift”**, according to Phil Hine⁹⁶. Grant himself simply summarised his books as primarily to **“prepare people for encounters with unfamiliar states of consciousness... extra-, sub-, and ultra-terrestrial encounters”**⁹⁷, (whatever those distinctions actually *mean*) although one critic sees those states of consciousness induced as being more mundane, and painful: **“one might suspect that he is employed by the makers of headache relieving medications”**⁹⁸.

The Magical System: “Mercury rules the sphere of mental magick; his image is the dog and the ape, both notorious masturbators”⁹⁹

Although Grant states explicitly that his magick is a system of ceremonial and ritual magick that primarily relates to psychosexual mysteries¹⁰⁰, for the most part little specific unequivocal detail is given, and certainly no actual full instructions of how to perform these rituals. Although in some instances it may be impossible to describe, **“because the formula may not be communicated in dualistic language, but only in the depths of the dream itself”**¹⁰¹, primarily his books are at most only partially, and often obliquely descriptive of the work done, rather than a set of prescriptive instructions, with the main focus of his description being on the underlying theory and experienced effects.

Fact versus fiction: “knowledge that appears to have been channeled rather than researched”¹⁰²

Grant has written a considerable quantity, and in a seemingly impressive and learned fashion, but there has been doubt cast on the verifiable content: **“Grant...has a knack for creating glammers, weaving mystique for specific ends.”**¹⁰³ Colin Wilson was captivated, but read Grant’s books **“without believing more than one word in ten”**¹⁰⁴. Grant is also an avid proponent of referring to documents that the reader simply cannot access themselves, such as ‘secret grimoires’ (usually un-named) or restricted papers that are only circulated within the exclusive membership of small magickal groups, themselves often un-named¹⁰⁵. While on first appearance this may be seen as helpful in offering the reader a small taste of literature inside a magickal order, it raises the doubt as to whether this is just not some kind of magical one-upmanship, and relies totally on trust in the reader as to whether such documents, and groups, really exist.

Given Grant’s track record for veracity, this stance is perhaps asking too much of the reader’s credulity: he has been criticised, mildly, for being not strictly accurate historically in one book. (*Outside the Circles of Time*, see above). This sentiment may be hardened, and extended to his entire output, as simple errors of fact are common, for example Grant, writing of Aleister Crowley and Victor Neuberg’s dark magickal adventures in 1909 with Enochian entities, describes these as being the same magical arenas **“partially explored two centuries earlier by Dee and Kelley”**¹⁰⁶. This places Dee’s life dates to the 1700s, which is wrong by approximately one hundred years (John Dee, 1527- 1609¹⁰⁷). This seems a slipshod factual mistake for Grant to have made, especially in the light of Grant’s seemingly expert knowledge of *Necronomical* matters and him presumably knowing something about Dee, the latter’s *Liber Loagaeth*¹⁰⁸ being a real historical book, to which the *Necronomicon*, if it existed at all, may have had similar content.

Grant’s use of references to support his ideas is also not a strictly academic exercise, since he gives equal weight to a mix of citations from learned history, anthropology and physical science disciplines, quotes from fictional authors such as Sax Rohmer (1893-1959)¹⁰⁹ and HP Lovecraft, ancient historical manuscripts from the British Museum¹¹⁰, The actor Bela Lugosi (1882-1956)¹¹¹, the occult symbolism which he sees within Salvador Dali’s¹¹² (1904-1989) artwork, the supposed magickal voodoo rhythms within

the music of Count Basie (1904-1984)¹¹³, a considerable number of linguistic puns and wordplay¹¹⁴, the early vampire film *Nosferatu*¹¹⁵, and perhaps most bizarrely a cat called Tibbles¹¹⁶, from whose name he makes some important cabbalistic links to HP Lovecraft, Crowley and Madame Blavatsky.

Suster sees it as laughable that Grant “**casually assumes... as facts... (that) Atlantis and Lemuria existed**”¹¹⁷, when in the continued absence of credible archaeological records they are still regarded as mythology in most academic quarters. Grant also regularly uses the works of the ‘Reverend’ Montague Summers (1880-1948) as an authoritative source, however Summers is now largely seen as someone who fairly indiscriminately collected and published (with a missionary slant) a great deal of ‘information’ about the Satanic evil which he believed to be manifest in largely folkloric sources. It also appears that he was not a ‘real’ Priest in any conventional terms and so despite giving a public face of being a devout devil- and witch-hunting clergyman, who would have been more at home in the 16th than the 20th Century, it appears that Summers’ works are at best to be treated with caution¹¹⁸. Just as Grant seems almost fixated on seeing significant cabbalistic links in every cat and every piece of horror fiction, Summers was just as insistent that malefic witches lurked behind every hedgerow and Satan crouched in every shadow.

Those above are areas in which Grant *may* perhaps have been aware of his historical errors, or the reliance on (academically) dubious source materials, however in a tale of a magical ritual in 1949, (first published in 1977) Grant makes a huge and knowing factual error in detailing the fates of various of those who took part. This was apparently an aborted group ritual which ‘short-circuited’, resulting in unfortunate consequences to the participants, including some mysterious deaths almost immediately afterwards and “**Gardner was himself not long in following suit**”¹¹⁹. Gerald Gardner died in 1964, and Grant must certainly be aware that he lived for at least five more years after the ritual in 1949, since the two men were in contact by letter at various points after the ritual and it was in 1954 that Grant claims to have personally introduced Gardner to Austin Spare¹²⁰. This would appear to be a knowing distortion of facts, with possibly the only matter in question being whether either of five or fifteen years later after 1949 constitutes ‘not long’ when writing in terms of a human lifespan.

I was able to proffer this question (among several others regarding his work) to Mr Grant by letter in 2002. Having outlined the problem with the physical death date I made the

suggestion that his talk of Gardner's death 'soon afterwards' was a symbolic comment, in that this was around the date when Gardner withdrew from the OTO arena and took on his role within the revival or recreation of the modern witchcraft movement, which could be seen as a 'death' so far as OTO-style magick was concerned. Mr Grant replied, citing the complexity of my questions as a whole (some of which were, I believed, simple yes-no matters) needing **"a book, no less, to meaningfully explicate the queries"** and invoked his understandable unwillingness to breach confidence to provide me with excerpts from **"confidential correspondence over the years, some of which would still leave questions incompletely explained"** ¹²¹. From this I concluded that Mr Grant did not mean a simple, physical death being involved, and the question was one or both of too difficult, or inappropriate, for me to examine further as I may be unequipped to recognise, let alone *understand* any answer that I might uncover. Perhaps the Gardner tale and other apparent bendings of historical data is an example of Starr's view that Grant **"recycles ideas and refits them to his real science of the universe, which is unconstrained by the limits of academic knowledge"** ¹²².

While Grant makes errors that can be highlighted with reference to history, his many other magical theories described in his books are supported by the results of ritual and trance experiment and detailed cabbalistic exegesis. Neither of these, although common and valid occult techniques, would be considered as valid *academic* methods of research, although accepting as historical fact that the practitioners *believed* in both the veracity of techniques and the results would be a valid approach.

Aside from Cabbalistic workings, Grant's more general tales of magical life are often rather lurid, seemingly without complete justification, and imply a tendency to exaggerate and-or make wild claims, aside from the 'many deaths after ritual' element discussed above. The artist and occultist Ithell Colquhoun said that Kenneth Grant **"makes the (Magical Order of the) Inner Light set-up sound more exciting than any impression of it which I received,"** ¹²³ and Suster said, in general that **"it is difficult to take Mr. Grant's claims seriously"** ¹²⁴. Grant himself tries to give some degree of clarification about the reality of his writings: **"by fantasy is here meant the fantastic or 'impossible'"** ¹²⁵, and, in more detail: **"terms such as vampirism, cannibalism, death, sleep etc., connote operations applicable not to terrestrial levels, but to alien dimensions ... confusion arises principally from an interpretation in mundane terms of concepts not relating to mundane dimensions. This leads certainly to ludicrous**

and sometimes dangerous results”¹²⁶, the former implies that much of it is outside the realm of earthly verification, and the latter point being that the effects of supposed fictionality in magic can be totally real to those who believe in it, and subsequent practical magical mistakes made can thus be dangerous, leading to one becoming a casualty, as Moore has so elegantly and beautifully named, in *Wizard of Oz*-esque terminology **“Yellow Brick Roadkill”**¹²⁷. Moore continues to provide useful analysis of Grant, seeing all of his books as being **“an apparent deliberate blurring of the line between describing Separate Reality and writing Magic Fiction, if there ever really was a line to blur”**¹²⁸.

Bertiaux, one of Grant’s magickal collaborators adds a further useful remark: **“there is the cosmic world of the imagination, and that is what we are talking about when we discuss our magical creations and discoveries... there is the world of archetypal images... which is ‘between’ the world of sense-perception and the world of the abstract essences of ideas in the mind of God”**¹²⁹, so in other words, very little of this material may happen ‘really, on earth, as written’, even if it is presented as such.

Regardless of the earthly reality aspect, it appears that among practitioners both the risks and rewards of such a magical approach are regarded as commensurately greater than other, ‘safer’ occult practices: Grant’s books **“despite, or possibly because of their forays into dementia, have more genuine occult power than works produced by more conventionally coherent authors”**¹³⁰. Although controversial in many ways within occultism, perhaps Grant’s most frowned-upon quality is his insistence on citing HP Lovecraft and other authors, these being nominally fictional writers, as presenting highly relevant occult ‘facts’, and his then performing rituals to contact Lovecraftian entities.

Grant’s accounts of various rituals are in many respects reminiscent of the unearthly referents sometimes described in early-modern accounts of the alleged Witches’ Sabbat. An important difference here is not one of content, but of context. Unlike many historical witch-trial transcripts, which were very often written by hostile, clerically-biased scribes, during (or closely following) intimidation or torture of the accused; and adhering to an ecclesiastical agenda of seeing the Devil ever-present in the world, Grant’s accounts are his own, freely written, albeit perhaps some time after the event in some cases, and *electively published* in a country where his activities are not outside the law.

To an extent, modern academics looking into occultism, when examining such claims are in a similar interpretative position to the early-modern judiciary: Ginzburg discusses the legal problems inherent with trying witches who claimed to have been to the witches Sabbat (especially when they make a seemingly impossible, or magical claim, such as having *flown* there, for example) and perhaps consorted with the Devil. A major consideration in Law at the time being whether this act had been physical, or imaginal, but Ginzburg concludes, **“even if the sabbat had been a purely mental phenomenon (and this cannot be proved) its importance for the historian would not be diminished”**¹³¹. In the same way, Grant’s accounts of ritual are important, whether they ‘really’ happened ‘on earth’ or as now seems more likely, on some ‘astral plane’ since the imagery has since been written, printed and circulated, thus entering the consciousness of a great many occultists, who will themselves have developed their own ideas as to what plane of existence such events occurred on. Gaskill remarks on the academic problems inherent in exploring **“alternative and contrasting definitions of what too often we confidently call ‘the truth’”**¹³² and the manner in which cultural boundaries and memes often determine truth, at least as much as perception and historical record within that cultural group is concerned. Grant himself remarked, **“I am very exact in matters of occultism and would not make any statement I could not substantiate either historically or magically”**¹³³, which appears to give equal weight to *either* discipline, and thus either view of what is ‘real’, and implies that the two disciplines are not mutually conducive.

In any case, such magical writing satisfies needs that are **“are not necessarily the same to ... believers and to observers (particularly historians)”**¹³⁴. Whether it ‘happened’ or not in the materialist, earthly, historically-supportable sense becomes almost immaterial to the effects on the readers, and in any case, as Heelas points out, **“the academic study of religion *must remain neutral* in regard to ultimate truth”**¹³⁵ such as this.

Conclusions: “no-one could doubt that Kenneth Grant is one hell of a meanass occultist”¹³⁶

Despite a tendency to write profusely while revealing little of his actual methods, Grant has consistently excited considerable interest among occult writers and practitioners,

however two Crowley biographers (Colin Wilson and Roger Hutchinson¹³⁷) inexcusably fail to mention Grant *at all*. However Wilson has subsequently written, briefly, about Grant and says that he was aware of him 20 years before the Crowley biography was published¹³⁸, while other Crowley biographers (Booth for example¹³⁹) only mention him in passing, as a *post mortem* editor of Crowley's works. Perhaps surprisingly, there has as yet been no published biography (or autobiography) of Grant. This may relate to him being apparently **“obsessively secretive about his personal life, refusing to release biographical details ... (he) prefers to live the life of a scholar and recluse”**¹⁴⁰. A rare published interview provides a rather stilted glance at the man, being it was conducted by an anonymous interviewer, for a magazine friendly to Grant (being run by his publisher at the time) and only gives what appears to be a truncated discussion¹⁴¹.

Grant's output, while not monstrous in terms of sheer page count accrued over more than 50 years, seems to be scattered widely- books, monographs, translations of his work into several languages, art exhibition catalogues, some very sale-enhancing 'guest introductions' to the books of lesser-known writers, encyclopaedia entries and journal articles; many of which are no longer obtainable, such as a series of pieces on Eastern thought in journals published in India in the early 1950s¹⁴². In the late 1960s he wrote some populist magazine articles including calls for magickal discipline and will in the use of drugs, not as hippy 'kicks'¹⁴³ and promoted the magical use of Tantric sex¹⁴⁴. As with many magicians, his work has inspired a distinctly novel Tarot Deck¹⁴⁵.

Grant has an advantage over many writers on occultism in that as well as being a pupil of Crowley and Spare he has continued access to a great deal of unpublished materials from those prominent occultists, being literary executor of the latter and closely involved with the executors of the former¹⁴⁶.

Gerald Suster summarises Grant's writing as, **“mystified, one tries to read ... concluding that if he wishes to conceal, he should keep silent; and if he wishes to reveal, he should learn how to write”**¹⁴⁷, however Starr exhorts hard work from the reader as a prerequisite: **“if we don't apply ourselves to understand his work, we have only ourselves to blame if we cannot perceive his vision”**¹⁴⁸, which again implies a Darwinian approach to the readership. Understanding Grant is far from simple, however it appears that the necessary work to comprehend is worthwhile for occultists: **“Grant's images impart a wisdom or an experience not found in more easily accessible**

models” ¹⁴⁹, and his writings are of **“inestimable value”** and **“transaemonic”** ¹⁵⁰, the latter comment meaning that they are of use and appeal to a wide range of occultists who might otherwise have major ‘doctrinal differences’ in their reading matter. A convenient, if crude, metaphor might be that ‘if Crowley was a Pope, then Grant was his Cardinal, and yet Grant’s published works have been appreciated by Protestants, Mormons, Muslims and Jews’.

Grant’s apparent command of a broad range of magickal methods and fine use of language seems to goad his critics to either attempt to emulate his wordiness, or failing that to descend to base crudities; for example his later books are seen by Moore as **“an information soup, an overwhelming and hallucinatory bouillon of arcane fact, mystic speculation and apparent outright fantasy”** ¹⁵¹, while the late Gerald Suster simply called some of it ‘shit’, as mentioned above. Dave Lee perhaps provides a middle view: **“Grant explores the refuse left behind by the Great Man of solar religion. Whilst such a pastime is not to every magician’s taste, the importance of this work is that it adds to our conception of totality”** ¹⁵². Another reasoned view comes from Sennitt, who attacks some criticism of Grant which is **“misplaced; he has been accused of everything from over-glamourising the occult to being anti-evolutionary”** ¹⁵³.

Grant is **“as fascinating and ultimately mystifying as a giant squid in a cocktail dress”** ¹⁵⁴, a troubling enigma, the last surviving writer and practitioner to have known and worked with Britain’s 20th Century’s ‘great triumvirate’ of influential occultists: Aleister Crowley, Austin Spare and Gerald Gardner (and being the secretary and/or archivist of the former two). His place in occult history would be assured, simply for that, regardless of the *caveats* discussed above such as the numerous potential and actual problems inherent in Grant’s interpretation of the works of the enigmatic, dyslexic, slippery, multi-faceted and absent-minded Austin Spare, his seeming leading role in the creation or transmission of an expanding fable around ‘Mrs. Patterson the great witch mother’, and his cryptic comments on the often equally unfathomable Aleister Crowley. To this should also be added the interpretation problems added by Grant’s own idiosyncrasies of cabbalistic method, his historical re-interpretation and the worrying (to the academic) width of what he considers to be valid source materials and the withholding of a great deal of detail about his actual methods. However, quite how Grant will be eventually assessed is a moot point; anywhere between Magus and maniac, depending upon each viewers’ perspective, and the clarifying or revelatory effect of any texts which

might emerge after his death. To a large extent, the question of sanity or sanctity is not an area that can be approached academically- as Heelas remarks, **“if people say they are Enlightened... the academic simply does not have the tools to assess the claim”**¹⁵⁵. Regardless of what Grant may or may not be, his influence has been immense, and his magickal systems are in use across a broad range of occult disciplines.

Despite heated discussion and divided opinions about his veracity and methods, Grant continues to consistently provide highly stimulating, contentious and unusual fare for magickians to both read and work with. His *corpus* remains a convoluted and multidisciplinary challenge to academics, covering as it does, Cabbala, Hebrew, Sanskrit, history, magick, voodoo, mediumship, astronomy, astrology, Tantra, Eastern and Western philosophies, literature (including what was once published as ‘pulp fiction’), linguistics, etymology, Egyptology, folklore, zoology, ‘Ufology’, alchemy, religious studies and conspiracy theory. To further add to the task of interpretation, much of this is provided in a far from straightforward, and often seemingly counterfactual manner, with tidbits of information about various events being spread often across several books; requiring painstaking reconstruction to gain a clear (er) picture.

In summary, regardless of any occasionally dubious factually-supportable ‘truth’ in his works, Grant might be seen to be providing a vital service. In a world where comparative ‘truths’ compete with each other and there is perhaps no absolute truth, there is a social situation where people *need* magic- just as some need to believe in a God, or conversely that there is no God, or that friendly aliens orbit the planet in spaceships, *that ‘fictional’ characters are somehow ‘real’*, or a thousand other viewpoints. As Gaskill points out: **“it will never be proven that God and the Devil are scholastic fictions... sheer desire to imagine an enchanted universe would inevitably be indulged in, and the idea would catch on”**¹⁵⁶. Grant, in writing about magic with such aplomb, *provides* magic in huge doses for those who wish to believe, and gives any number of detailed jumping-off points for those occultists with the will to experiment, and the historian of modern occultism simply cannot ignore Mr Grant’s work.

¹ Alan Moore, *Beyond our Ken* (a review of Kenneth Grant, *Against the Light*), in *Kaos*, 14, London, Kaos-Babalon Press, 2002, p 155- 162, p 156

² *Ibid*, p 162

³ *Ibid*, p 156

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- ⁴ John Symonds, *The King of the Shadow Realm. Aleister Crowley, his life and magic*, London, Duckworth, 1989, p 570-572
- ⁵ Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: the life of Aleister Crowley*, Tempe, Arizona, New Falcon, 2002, p 440
- ⁶ Kenneth Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, London, Skoob, 1991, p v
- ⁷ Moore, *Kaos*, 14, p 156
- ⁸ Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 440
- ⁹ Kenneth Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time*, London, Muller, 1980, p 87.
- ¹⁰ Grant, *Remembering*, p 1
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, p 6
- ¹² *Ibid*, Aleister Crowley to Kenneth Grant, Letter of 22-2-1945
- ¹³ Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: A life of Aleister Crowley*, New York, St Martins, 200, p 406
- ¹⁴ Symonds, *King of the Shadow Realm*, p 572
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p 570-572
- ¹⁶ Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p 406
- ¹⁷ Grant, *Remembering*, Letter from Aleister Crowley to Kenneth Grant's father 14-5-1945
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 40, Letter from Aleister Crowley to Kenneth Grant, 21-06-45, emphasis original
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, Letter from Aleister Crowley to Kenneth Grant, 15-2-1945
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, Letter from Aleister Crowley to David Curwen, 22-1-46
- ²¹ *Ibid*, p 3, Letter from Aleister Crowley to Kenneth Grant, 27-11-1944
- ²² For example Aleister Crowley, *Magick without tears*, Scottsdale, Arizona, New Falcon, 1991, p 357. This volume originally appeared as 'Aleister Explains Everything' in 1954
- ²³ Kenneth Grant, *The Ninth Arch*, London, Starfire, 2002, p 498
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, p 411-412
- ²⁵ Kenneth Grant, *Against the Light: a Nightside narrative*, London, Starfire, 1997, p ix, the questionable book being Phineas March Black, *Clinical Studies in Senescence and Diseases of Memory*, Edinburgh, 1886 via an un-named publisher.
- ²⁶ Aleister Crowley (John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, Eds.), *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, London, Routledge, 1979
- ²⁷ These being John Symonds. *The Great Beast*, St Albans, Mayflower, 1973; John Symonds, *The King of the Shadow Realm. Aleister Crowley, his life and magic*, London, Duckworth, 1989; Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: the life of Aleister Crowley*, Tempe, Arizona, New Falcon, 2002; Martin Booth, *A Magick Life*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000; Colin Wilson *Aleister Crowley: the nature of the Beast*, Wellingborough, Aquarian, 1987; Roger Hutchinson, *Aleister Crowley: the Beast demystified*, Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1999, and Susan Roberts, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, Chicago, Contemporary Books, 1978.
- ²⁸ Kenneth & Steffi Grant, *Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare*, London, Fulgur, 1998.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*, p 30
- ³⁰ Kenneth Grant, *Beyond the Mauve Zone*, London, Starfire, 1999, p 33
- ³¹ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 20
- ³² *Ibid*, p 129, p 284 fn 119
- ³³ *Ibid*, p 123
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p 20
- ³⁵ Gavin Semple, *Study for a portrait of Frank Letchford*, London, Fulgur, 2002, p 18
- ³⁶ Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p 25, citing Correspondence between Jack Parsons and his 'elemental' Marjorie Cameron, letter of 27-1-1950. The letters were handwritten originally, and Grant does not mention that 'backside' may

actually read **“blackside”** (www.babalon.net). This is presumably because ‘backside’ fits better into Grant’s magical worldview of the ‘other’, or ‘back’ side of the cabalistic Tree of Life being so important to his system.

³⁷ Jan Fries, *Visual Magick*, Oxford, Mandrake, 1992, p 42. In this instance Fries is talking about sigilisation techniques.

³⁸ Matt Lee, ‘Memories of a sorcerer’: notes on Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Austin Osman Spare and anomalous sorceries, *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, 1, 2003, p 102-130, p 124, Emphasis added

³⁹ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 68

⁴⁰ Keith Richmond, Discord in the garden of Janus: Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare, in *Austin Osman Spare: Artist, Occultist, Sensualist*, Bury St Edmunds, Beskin, 1999, no page numbering

⁴¹ Sunny Shah, *An Edwardian Blake: an introduction to the Life and Works of Austin Osman Spare*, Thame, Oxon, Mandrake Press, 1996, p 20

⁴² Frank Letchford, *Austin Osman Spare, From the Inferno to Zos*, Volume 3, Thame, Oxon, First Impressions, 1995, p 44

⁴³ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 93, Emphasis added

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p 128

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p 129

⁴⁶ *Ibid*,

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p 13

⁴⁸ Grant, *Remembering*, p 15

⁴⁹ Letchford, *From the Inferno to Zos*, Volume 3, p 69

⁵⁰ Grant, *Zos Speaks!* p 15, Emphasis added

⁵¹ Letchford, *From the Inferno to Zos*, Volume 3, p 87

⁵² *Ibid*, p 103

⁵³ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 20

⁵⁴ Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, Skoob, London, 1994, p 40. Malkuth, Kether etc need to be defined somewhere. The capitalisation used may also hide a code, in the same way that Crowley used to, in the sentence above Grant may be alluding to the magical order the AA, *Argentum Astrum*, by his use of capitals.

⁵⁵ Grant, *Remembering*, p 58

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p 38.

⁵⁷ Cabalistic term, meaning **“neither Form nor Void, but absence of the presence of both Object and Subject (i.e. the Absolute Absence, or Void.”** Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden*, Skoob, London, 1994, p 40

⁵⁸ Grant, *Nightside*, p 36, fn 7

⁵⁹ Frank Letchford, The search for a Guru, *Skoob Occult Review*, 3, 1990, p 30-36, p 31

⁶⁰ Gavin Semple, *Study for a portrait of Frank Letchford*, London, Fulgur, 2002, p 21

⁶¹ Richmond, Discord in the garden of Janus, in *Austin Osman Spare: artist, Occultist, Sensualist*, Bury St Edmunds, Beskin, 1999, no page numbering, fn 58

⁶² For an extensive discussion of Spare’s alleged plagiarism see A.R.Naylor, *Stealing the Fire from Heaven*, Thame, Oxon, IHO, 2002, especially pages p 9-22

⁶³ Grant, *Zos Speaks!* p 16-17

⁶⁴ Kenneth Grant, Introduction to Austin Osman Spare, *The Book of Pleasure*, 1975. (Online) Fulgur website <http://www.fulgur.org/articles/grant1975.html>

⁶⁵ David Cantu, A brief evolution of “Mrs Patterson”, witch mentor to Austin Osman Spare, in Joel Biroco (Ed.), *Kaos 14*, London, Kaos-Babalon Press, 2002, p 38-41, p 38.

There is a lead that I am pursuing from a possible Patterson descendant -with a likely Mrs. Patterson being described as having a large occult library, including a rare 14th

Century alchemical treatise which sold for a very large sum of money after her death, and it seems her family was associated with Watkins Occult bookshop in London very early in the 20th Century. However further information, including a hoped-for birth certificate from which to make further enquiries, is likely to be slow in emerging due to internal divisions and communication breaks within that family. It is only after such information should become available that the depth of any link with Austin Spare will become researchable.

⁶⁶ Richmond, *Discord in the garden of Janus*, in *Austin Osman Spare: Artist, Occultist, Sensualist*, Bury St Edmunds, Beskin, 1999, no page numbering

⁶⁷ Correspondence between David Cantu and Joel Biroco, in *Kaos 14*, London, Kaos-Babalon Press, 2002, p 42-44

⁶⁸ Letchford, *From the Inferno to Zos*, Volume 3, p 147, Emphasis added

⁶⁹ My own copy of Grant's *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* came from a sale of the library of Mr. Letchford after his death. It has been well-thumbed **by somebody**, and he had taken the trouble to cover it in a second dust jacket to preserve it.

⁷⁰ Letchford, *From the Inferno to Zos*, Volume 3, 1995, p 35

⁷¹ Semple, *Study for a portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 21

⁷² Ronald Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p 303 and Kenneth Grant, *Outer Gateways*, London, Skoob, 1994, p 17-31

⁷³ Hermetic Com website, An Interview with Gavin Semple, February 2001
<http://www.hermetic.com/spare/semple-interview.html>

⁷⁴ Semple, *Study for a portrait of Frank Letchford*, p 29

⁷⁵ Hermetic Com, Interview with Gavin Semple,

⁷⁶ Grant, *Zos Speaks!* p 135.

⁷⁷ Kenneth Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time*, London, Muller, 1980, p 140 *fn* 10

⁷⁸ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, p 29

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p 150

⁸⁰ Michael Staley, personal communication, October 2001. Mr. Staley is a senior official in the Typhonian OTO of Kenneth Grant, and runs their publication arm, Starfire.

⁸¹ Nema (Margaret Ingalls), *Maat Magick: a guide to self-initiation*, York Beach, Weiser, 1995, p 218

⁸² Henrik Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography- from 1948*, Academia Esoterica Press, Gothenburg, 2003, p viii

⁸³ Sunny Shah, *An Edwardian Blake: an introduction to the Life and Works of Austin Osman Spare*, Thame, Oxon, Mandrake Press, 1996, p 12

⁸⁴ Gerald Suster, *Letters, Nox*, 5, 1987, p 7-8

⁸⁵ Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 461

⁸⁶ Uncarved website: Current 93: Interview with David Tibet, June 1989

<http://www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/music/OOOc93.html>

⁸⁷ Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, p 461, Emphasis added

⁸⁸ Anon, Review of Kenneth Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time*, *Cincinnati Journal of Ceremonial Magick*, 1, 5, 1983, p 76, Emphasis added

⁸⁹ Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p i, italics authors own.

⁹⁰ Gerald Suster, Barking up the wrong tree: Review of Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, London, Skoob, 1995, p 187-190, p 190

⁹¹ Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 85

⁹² *Ibid*, p 260

⁹³ Suster, Barking up the wrong tree, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 187

⁹⁴ For an superb examination of the ritualisation and elaborate quality of the publication process by Crowley, see Timothy d'arch Smith, *Books of the Beast*, Oxford, Mandrake, 1991, chapter 1

⁹⁵ Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant*, p viii

⁹⁶ Phil Hine, Review of Kenneth Grant, Hecate's Fountain, *The Occult Observer*, 2, 3, Winter 1992, p 56-7

⁹⁷ Anon, Interview with Kenneth Grant, *Skoob Occult Review*, 3, 1990, p 5-7, p 5

⁹⁸ Frater M.E.D, Review of Hecate's Fountain, Online

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/7069/grant6.html>

⁹⁹ Grant, *Nightside*, p 150.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, introduction, p xi

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p 181, footnote 16

¹⁰² Moore, Beyond our Ken, *Kaos* 14, p 155- 162, p 155

¹⁰³ Hermetic Com website, An Interview with Gavin Semple, February 2001

<http://www.hermetic.com/spare/semple-interview.html>

¹⁰⁴ Colin Wilson, Tentacles across time, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, London, Skoob, 1995, p 13- 15, p 13

¹⁰⁵ Grant, *Nightside*, p 90 *fin* 37

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p 5

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's conjuror: the science and Magic of Dr Dee*, London, HarperCollins, 2001, p 3, p 322. The exact birth and death dates are open to debate, as discussed by Woolley, but are not so wrong as to make Grant's comment remotely accurate.

¹⁰⁸ John Dee, *Liber Loagaeth, or Liber Mystorium, Sextus et Sanctus*, Approximately 1583, British Library Sloane Ms A3189. Online at www.esotericarchives.com/dee/sl3189.htm

¹⁰⁹ Sax Rohmer: pen name of Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward, a "**prolific mystery writer best known for the master criminal Fu Manchu**" among his characters, with his first successful novel being published in 1913 and his numerous works including some occult fiction remaining best-sellers into the 1950s. Kirijasto Website.

www.kirijasto.sci.fi/rohmer.htm Ward was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

¹¹⁰ For example Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 512

¹¹¹ Most famous for his horror film roles such as Dracula, the Hungarian Bela Lugosi (Bela Ferenc Dezso Blasko) was at the height of his fame in the 1920s and 1930s.

EOFFTV.com website. www.eofftv.com/names/l/lugosi_bela_main.htm

¹¹² Salvador Dali, Famous Spanish Cubist and Futurist artist. Grant makes *seventeen* references to Dali in one book alone (Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time*, London, Muller, 1980)

¹¹³ For example Grant, *Nightside*, p 148. William "Count" Basie: an extremely popular 20th Century Black American Jazz and Swing Pianist and Band Leader who reached the height of his fame on either side of World War II. Harlem Org Website, www.harlem.org/people/basie.html

¹¹⁴ For example Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 337, where Grant equates a Chinese character called Li Sing with one of his mediums, Margaret Leasing

¹¹⁵ Grant, *Ninth Arch*, p 509

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 490. This may seem particularly strange to include as a source, but at least Grant does not go so far as to write *an entire occult book* about mystical cats, as was done by Mama San Ra-Ab Rampa in *Pussywillow*, London, Corgi, 1965. Mrs Rampa was the wife of T Lobsang Rampa, the probably fraudulent 'Tibetan Lama' who published numerous spurious occult titles in the 1960s

- ¹¹⁷ Suster, Barking up the wrong tree, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 188
- ¹¹⁸ d'arch Smith, *Books of the Beast*, p 37-46
- ¹¹⁹ Grant, *Nightside*, p 124 (Skoob 1994 edition, original 1977)
- ¹²⁰ Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, numerous mentions in correspondence, p 86-97
- ¹²¹ Kenneth Grant, personal communication, 17-7-2002
- ¹²² Martin Starr, Foreword to Henrik Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography- from 1948*, Academia Esoterica Press, Gothenburg, 2003, p vi, Emphasis added.
- ¹²³ Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn*, London, Spearman, 1975, p 189
- ¹²⁴ Gerald Suster, *The Legacy of the Beast: the life, work and influence of Aleister Crowley*, London, WH Allen, 1988, p 216
- ¹²⁵ Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p 221
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p 197
- ¹²⁷ Moore, Beyond our Ken, in *Kaos* 14, p 155- 162, p 161
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p 156
- ¹²⁹ Michael Bertiaux, La Couleuvre Noire Course, Section GG, Part 2, paper 2. In Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain*, Skoob, London, 1992, p 197
- ¹³⁰ Moore, Beyond our Ken, in *Kaos* 14, p 161, Emphasis added
- ¹³¹ Carlo Ginzburg (John & Anne Tedeschi, Trans.) *The Night Battles, Witchcraft and Agrarian cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press , p xiv Emphasis added
- ¹³² Malcolm Gaskill, *Hellish Nell; last of Britain's Witches*, London, Fourth Estate, 2001, p 2
- ¹³³ . Letter from Kenneth Grant to Cecil Williamson, 25-6-1951, Museum of Witchcraft Archive. Emphasis added.
- ¹³⁴ Bengt Ankarloo & Stuart Clark, Introduction to *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century*, London, Athlone, 1999, p vii
- ¹³⁵ Paul Heelas, *The New Age movement*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1996, p 6, Emphasis original
- ¹³⁶ Herman Skelder, "Laughing stock" danger of worshipping strange entities, in *Kaos* 14, p 35-37, p 36
- ¹³⁷ Colin Wilson *Aleister Crowley: the nature of the Beast*, Wellingborough, Aquarian, 1987; Roger Hutchinson, *Aleister Crowley: the Beast demystified*, Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1999
- ¹³⁸ Colin Wilson, Tentacles across time, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, London, Skoob, 1995, p 13- 15, p 13
- ¹³⁹ Martin Booth, *A Magick Life*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000
- ¹⁴⁰ Wilson, Tentacles across time, *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*, 1, p 14
- ¹⁴¹ Anon, Interview with Kenneth Grant, *Skoob Occult Review*, 3, 1990, p 5-7
- ¹⁴² Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography*, p 11
- ¹⁴³ Kenneth Grant, The Golden Dawn, *International Times*, 33, June 14-27 1968, no page numbering
- ¹⁴⁴ Kenneth Grant, Love Under Will, *International Times*, 49, January 31-February 13, 1969, p 18
- ¹⁴⁵ Linda Falorio & Fred Fowler, Shadow Tarot, *Cincinnati Journal of Magick*, 7, 1989, p 48-9
- ¹⁴⁶ Kenneth Grant, *The Magical Revival*, London, Frederick Muller, 1972, p 1-2
- ¹⁴⁷ Suster, *Legacy of the Beast*, p 215
- ¹⁴⁸ Martin Starr, Foreword to: Henrik Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant A bibliography- from 1948*, Academia Esoterica Press, Gothenburg, 2003, p vii
- ¹⁴⁹ Stephen Sennitt, Editorial, *Nox*, 2, 1986, p 3
- ¹⁵⁰ Anon, Foreword to *Cincinnati Journal of Ceremonial Magick*, 1, 5, 1983, p 6

¹⁵¹ Moore, Beyond our Ken, *Kaos* 14, p 155

¹⁵² Dave Lee, What is magick for? *Nox*, 5 p 11-16, p 13, the 'Great Man' presumably being Crowley

¹⁵³ Stephen Sennitt, Editorial, *Nox*, 2, 1986, p 3

¹⁵⁴ Moore, Beyond our Ken, *Kaos* 14, p 155

¹⁵⁵ Paul Heelas, *The New Age movement*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1996, p 6

¹⁵⁶ Gaskill, *Hellish Nell*, p 364