

Scintillations in Mauve

An Introduction to the Work of Kenneth Grant

Kenneth Grant was one of the most influential occultists of the 20th century. He leaves behind a substantial and formidable body of work which will be explored and developed over the years to come. What follows here is an introductory survey of his work — a basis for deeper, more substantial consideration of his work in the future.

Born in Essex in 1924, Kenneth Grant developed an intense interest in the occult from an early age, as well as a life-long devotion to Buddhism and other oriental religions. He remarked somewhere in his writings that Eastern mysticism was his first love — an indication not only of how well read he was, but more importantly perhaps his heightened sense of the immanent. Grant relates in *Outside the Circles of Time* how he had come across a copy of *Magick in Theory and Practice* — at Zwemmers, in the Charing Cross Road — in the late 1930s or early 1940s. At this period he had also discovered Austin Osman Spare's *The Book of Pleasure* at Michael Houghton's Atlantis Bookshop in Museum Street. After immersing himself in the works of Crowley, he finally managed to make contact with him in 1944, writing to the address provided in *The Book of Thoth* which had just been published. Visiting him several times, Grant subsequently stayed with him at 'Netherwood' in Hastings in 1945, immersed in Magick. Many years later, Grant wrote a memoir of this period of his life, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*. It is clear from remarks in his diaries and elsewhere that Crowley developed a high estimation of Grant, seeing in him the potential to become a future leader of the O.T.O.

It was at this time that Grant first came across Crowley's drawing of Lam, or 'The Lama' as Crowley referred to it. Having offered Grant the

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pick of his portfolio, he was at first hesitant when Grant selected the drawing — or, as Kenneth put it, Lam chose him. Eventually he did pass on the drawing to Grant after an extremely bad asthma attack which Grant helped alleviate by rushing to Crowley's doctor for heroin. Crowley referred to this incident in his diary for 8th May 1945: "Aussik helped a whole lot; gave him 'The Lama' ..." The drawing was subsequently reproduced in *The Magical Revival* and *Outside the Circles of Time*, and came to occupy an increasingly prominent rôle in Grant's developing body of work.

After Crowley's death in December 1947, Kenneth and Steffi Grant were amongst the mourners at Crowley's funeral, and were subsequently members of the small circle who endeavoured to keep the memory of Crowley and his work alive. Crowley had appointed Karl Germer — then living in the USA — as his successor, and his Will stipulated that his papers be sent to Germer. Concerned that there should be copies of the most important documents in case anything happened to them whilst in transit, Grant and subsequently Gerald Yorke set about making typed copies of those they considered of particular importance. It is as well that they did, since Germer's collection of papers was stolen from his widow Sascha in 1967 by members of the Solar Lodge and subsequently destroyed in a fire. The typed copies made by Grant, Yorke and others formed the basis of the archive which Yorke later passed to the Warburg Institute of the University of London, and which continues to be accessible to researchers.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, a small circle of occultists accumulated around the Grants, developing as the core of a working group. Germer had chartered Grant in 1951 to form a 'Chapter' of the O.T.O. Out of this developed New Isis Lodge as a dependent cell of the O.T.O., with a grade structure and programme of work which was influenced by Crowley's *Astrum Argenteum*, as well as by the O.T.O. as it was in Crowley's day. The relationship with David Curwen was instrumental in Grant obtaining a copy of a commentary by a Kaula adept on a tantric text, the *Anandalahari*. This commentary gave important insights into tantric sexual magic, approaching sex magic from a very different direction to that of Crowley. The approach of Crowley is basically solar-phallic, not to say phallo-centric; there is great emphasis on the importance of the male sexual energies, but very little on the female energies. Often, the female partner is regarded as little more than a cup into which the male magician pours his *bindu*. The Kaula text approached the matter from a different perspective, accentuating the rôle of the *kalas* and how they vary throughout the menstrual cycle.

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On the formal launch of the Lodge in 1955, the Grants issued a *Manifesto of New Isis Lodge* in which they spoke of the discovery of a planet beyond Pluto, the transplutonic Isis, and what it might mean for the evolution of consciousness on this planet:

A new and compelling influence is enveloping the earth and as yet there are few individuals who are open to the influx of the subtle vibrations of this influence.

Its rays proceed from a source as yet unexplored by those who are not at one with it in essence and in spirit, and it finds its present focus in the outer universe in the transplutonic planet Isis.

In the inner being of man, also, this influence has a centre which will slowly begin to stir in mankind as a whole as the influence strengthens and flowers. As it is at the beginning of its course in relation to man, however, many ages will pass before he may avail himself fully of the great powers and energies which this influence is silently and continually bestowing on all who know how to identify the inner core of their being with its deep and inscrutable heart.

It is surely obvious that the Grants were not talking about the discovery of a physical planet; such a discovery would have been more relevant to an astronomical journal. If we bear in mind that the first sephirah, Kether, is attributed to Pluto, then a transplutonic planet would be 'One Beyond Ten', the Great Outside. Grant expressed it thus some years later, in *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*:

In *The Book of the Law*, the goddess Nuit exclaims: "My number is eleven, as all their numbers who are of us", which is a direct allusion to the A.: A.:, or Order of the Silver Star, and its system of Grades. Nuit is the Great Outside, represented physically as "Infinite Space and the Infinite Stars thereof" — that is, I s i s. Nuit and Isis are thus identified in *The Book of the Law*. Isis is terrestrial space, illuminated by the stars. Nuit is outer, or infinite space, the undying darkness that is the hidden source of Light; She is also, in a mystical sense, Inner Space and the Great Within.

Germer had at one time, like Crowley, regarded Grant as potentially a future leader of the O.T.O. (see in this connection the extracts from his letters to Grant published in the article 'It's an Ill Wind That Bloweth' in *Starfire* Volume I No 5, London, 1994). However, he was essentially unhappy with anyone who deviated from the line that, following the death of Crowley, the only thing left to do was simply to preserve and to promote Crowley's work. As well as this, he was also not happy that Grant declined to collect money from the members of his Lodge. He was, moreover, angered to learn that Grant had formed connections with Eugen Grosche, an old adversary of Germer's from Germany in the 1920s. He demanded that Grant retract his Manifesto; when he refused, Germer issued a Notice of Expulsion. Grant simply ignored the expulsion and continued with New Isis Lodge as a dependent lodge of the O.T.O., confident that his

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magical work had enabled him to make direct connection with the magical current at the core of the O.T.O., thus superceding Germer's authority and rendering the expulsion irrelevant. This confidence in his position as Crowley's successor strengthened throughout the subsequent years as his magical and mystical work developed.

The New Isis Lodge had a programme of work which started in 1955 and was completed in 1962, although the Lodge continued to operate until the middle 1960s. Developing some interesting and innovative magical techniques, an account of some of their workings is given in *Hecate's Fountain*, written in the early 1980s but not published until ten years later. Grant's experiences in New Isis Lodge were the foundation for his subsequent work, more apparent perhaps in the later volumes of the Trilogies with the publication of two of the transmissions reified during the course of Lodge Workings. One of these transmissions was the exquisite and delicate *Wisdom of S'lba* which was incorporated into the seventh Trilogies volume, *Outer Gateways*, published in 1994. The other was *The Book of the Spider*, around which Grant wove his final Trilogies volume, *The Ninth Arch* (2002).

New Isis Lodge isn't mentioned very much in Grant's early books. I have the impression that although the work carried out in the Lodge was formative for Grant — the foundation of his subsequent body of work — by the same token it is the cumulative insight distilled over the succeeding years which enabled Grant to understand fully the accomplishments of those earlier years, and to take the work to another level. The potential of those years came to fruition many years after the Lodge had ceased its work. I recall him remarking to me in the early 1990s that he had recently come across archive material which had been stored away for many years, and that on going through it again a fresh current of initiation had been sparked.

Throughout the years 1959 to 1963, the Grants produced a series of monographs, the *Carfax Monographs*, each one on a different subject. Years later, in 1989, these were republished in one volume as *Hidden Lore*. More recently they were republished again, this time with additional material, as *Hidden Lore, Hermetic Glyphs* (Fulgur, 2006).

One of the most important influences on Kenneth Grant was Spare. In 1949 he and his wife Steffi met the occult artist and writer. They remained friends until Spare's death in 1956, supporting him with some essentials of life as well as materials for his artwork, and this contact triggered a renaissance in Spare's work. Grant had for some time taken a keen interest in Spare's magic and mysticism as well as his art, and in particular the systems of sigils which Spare had presented in *The Book*

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of *Pleasure*, first published in 1913. Notable exceptions such as the 1928 drawing 'Theurgy' notwithstanding, sigils were generally absent from Spare's work after the First World War, and he confessed to Grant that over the years he had largely forgotten the principles which underlay the systems. Stimulated by Grant's interest and enthusiasm, Spare applied himself to recovering those principles, and sigils resurged into many of his drawings and paintings of the late 1940s and the 1950s. The output of the last few years of his life was something of a renaissance for Spare, a late flowering.

This renaissance included written work, which Grant typed for him, in the process supplying criticism and commentary, and pressing for elucidation where it seemed beneficial. Much of this late work was subsequently published by the Grants in *Zos Speaks!* (Fulgur, 1998), together with letters and diary extracts documenting their time with Spare, as well as reproductions of Spare's artwork. On his death, Spare bequeathed to Kenneth his manuscripts, typescripts, and books. Tireless in promoting Spare's work over the subsequent years, in 1975 the Grants published the beautiful *Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare* (Muller, 1975; Fulgur, 2003), introducing his work — both written and artistic — to a new audience. The revival of interest in Spare in recent years owes a great deal to their efforts.

Like Spare, throughout his work Grant emphasised the primacy of the imagination. Far from being mere whim or fancy, this is in fact the principal means for encountering and exploring the universe and our relationship to it. Grant's work is primarily addressed to the imagination, sounding echoes in the consciousness of the reader of his work. As we have already seen, Grant described Eastern Mysticism as his first love, and during the 1950s he immersed himself in Advaita Vedanta — the realisation that consciousness is undivided — writing a series of articles for Asian journals, subsequently collected and published many years later as *At the Feet of the Guru* (Starfire Publishing, 2006). Though often thought of as a cult which glorifies individuality, Thelema is in fact rooted in this soil, having much in common with Taoism.

With John Symonds, Crowley's literary executor, Grant edited Crowley's sprawling and rumbustious autobiography, *The Confessions* (Cape, 1969). This played a large part in bringing the work of Crowley to popular attention. Symonds and Grant built on this, continuing to edit and publish further works by Crowley throughout the 1970s, notably *The Magical Record of the Beast 666* (Duckworth, 1972) — a selection of Crowley's diaries — and *Magical and Philosophical Commentaries on the Book of the Law* (93 Publishing, 1974).

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Over the years, Kenneth Grant had been creating his own body of work, and in an article on Crowley's work — 'Love Under Will', published in the *International Times* during 1969 — he referred to a study of his which was awaiting publication, entitled 'Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God'. His publisher, Muller, subsequently asked him to apportion the work into two volumes, the first of which was published in 1972 as *The Magical Revival*. The second, issued under the original title *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*, followed in 1973. This was the beginning of the Typhonian Trilogies, the ninth and final volume of which, *The Ninth Arch*, was published in 2002 by Starfire Publishing. These volumes comprise a substantial body of work which, though eclectic and covering vast areas of magic and mysticism, is firmly rooted in Thelema. In the course of this work, Grant took Thelema into areas beyond what are often considered to be the confines of Crowley's work, in the process highlighting the universality of Thelema and its affinities with a wide range of traditions and disciplines. What follows is a brief summary of each of the Trilogies volumes; along the way, a few themes will be highlighted.

The Magical Revival (Muller, 1972; Starfire Publishing, 2009) was a study and analysis of a variety of occult traditions which have survived over many thousands of years, and which are now reviving in fresh forms and with renewed vigour. In particular, the genesis and development of the Draconian Cult throughout the Egyptian Dynasties was traced, and against this more ancient backdrop were examined the more modern manifestations such as Blavatsky, Crowley, the Golden Dawn, Dion Fortune, and Spare. It was demonstrated that though these are recent manifestations, they are rooted in the considerably older magical current which has nourished and sustained all subsequent efflorations. Included as a plate in the book was a reproduction of Crowley's drawing of Lam, the first time that it had been published since its original appearance in *The Blue Equinox* in 1919.

In the chapter 'Barbarous Names of Evocation', Grant advanced the notion of similarities between elements of the Cthulhu Mythos as elaborated in the fiction of Lovecraft, and aspects of Crowley's work. This was to suggest that they drew upon similar archetypes in the collective unconscious. In his subsequent work, Grant sometimes played around with the pantheon of deities, but this was never to suggest that the deities were real, or that they should be worshipped.

This was succeeded by the second volume, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (Muller, 1973). This was a study more specifically of Crowley's system of sex magick, amplified by a consideration of the Kaula commentary referred to above. Grant summarised the book as follows:

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This book contains a critical study of Aleister Crowley's system of sexual magick and its affinities with the ancient Tantric rites of Kali, the dark goddess of blood and dissolution represented in Crowley's Cult as the Scarlet Woman. It is an attempt to supply a key to the work of an Adept whose vast knowledge of occultism was unsurpassed by any previous Western authority. I have emphasized the similarity between Crowley's Cult of Thelema and Tantra because the present wave of interest in the Tantric System makes it probable that readers will be able to assess more fully the importance of Crowley's contribution to occultism in general and to the Magical Path in particular.

There was also a chapter on 'Nu-Isis and the Radiance Beyond Space', in which Grant referred to New Isis Lodge and its programme of work.

The third volume, *Cults of the Shadow* (Muller, 1975), explored obscure aspects of occultism that are frequently viewed negatively as 'black magic', the 'left hand path', etc. The thrust of this book is set out in the opening paragraphs of the Introduction:

This book explains aspects of occultism that are often confused with 'black magic'. Its aim is to restore the Left Hand Path and to re-interpret its phenomena in the light of some of its more recent manifestations. This cannot be achieved without a survey of primal cults and the symbolic formulae which they deposited. There exists no richer field for such a survey and no more perfect a skeleton whereon to found it than the Fetish systems of West Africa and their efflorescence in pre-monumental Egyptian cults. Such a survey is presented in the first three chapters, after which the symbols emerge into the light of historic times and appear in the form of the Tantric Current explained in Chapters Four and Five.

This Current appears to diverge into two major streams that reflect endlessly the original rift between the votaries of the feminine and the masculine creative principles known technically in Tantra as the Left and Right Hand Paths. They are of the Moon and the Sun, and their confluence awakes the Fire Snake (*Kundalini*), the Great Magick Power which illumines the hidden path between them — the Middle Way — the path of Supreme Enlightenment.

It is the almost universal failure to understand the proper function of the Left Hand Path that has led to its denigration — principally on account of its unconventional practices — and to an imperfect realization of the ultimate Mysteries on the part of those who are unable to synthesize the two.

Of particular note is a chapter on the work of Frater Achad (Charles Stansfeld Jones) and the Aeon of Maat, in which Grant took a somewhat sceptical view of Frater Achad's claims of the dawning of the Aeon of Maat. Subsequently, as we shall see, Grant came to revise his views. The book also contained chapters on the work of Michael Bertiaux, introducing Bertiaux to a new readership and leading to an upsurge of interest in his work.

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The second Trilogy opened with *Nightside of Eden* (Muller, 1977). At the core of this is an exploration of the Tunnels of Set, which underlie the paths of the Tree of Life. Grant's work was based initially on a brief and obscure work by Crowley, *Liber 231*, first published in *The Equinox*. This Liber consists of sigils of the genii of the 22 scales of the Serpent, those of the 22 cells of the Qliphoth, and some obscure oracles; it evidently fascinated Grant, and the exploration of these cells of the Qliphoth formed an important element of the work of New Isis Lodge. Grant has been criticised in some quarters for working with what some regard as the evil and averse aspects of magic. However, the darker aspects of experience are just as necessary to comprehend as the lighter aspects; an understanding of both is necessary. The following passage from the Introduction to *Nightside of Eden* addresses this matter:

This brings me to the final point: Unless occultism becomes creative in the sense of opening up new approaches, modifying and developing traditional concepts and generally revealing a little more of that Supreme Goddess whose identity is hidden behind the veil of Isis, Kali, Nuit, or Sothis, there will be stagnation in the swamp of beliefs rendered inert by the recent swift acceleration of humanity's consciousness, which is little short of miraculous. If the science of the unmanifest is not to remain grounded at a prepubescent stage, while the manifested sciences soar into space, the mature occultist must put aside the toys of superstition and face fearlessly the Trees of Eternity whose trunks and branches glow with solar fire, but whose roots are nourished in the dark.

Although this passage relates specifically to *Nightside of Eden*, the case here articulated for innovation and creativity applies to Grant's work as a whole.

Throughout the book there are several references to the Aeon of Maat, and it is clear that Grant had by now revised his previous, somewhat sceptical view of this aspect of Achad's work. In fact he had by this time been sent material by Margaret Ingalls (Soror Andahadna) which had led him to reassess Achad's work about the incoming in 1948 of another Aeon which runs alongside the Aeon of Horus, the two aeons constituting a double current.

In 1980 Grant published *Outside the Circles of Time* (Muller, 1980; Starfire Publishing, 2008), a work that covers an extremely wide area and exposes, to quote from the cover blurb: "a network more complex than was ever imagined: a network not unlike H.P. Lovecraft's dark vision of sinister forces lurking at the rim of the universe". There are many strands woven in a rich and dazzling fabric, a principal strand being non-duality:

The phenomenal world has no real existence apart from its noumenal source.
The world is not searching for anyone, the world knows nothing of anyone; but

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people are searching for the world and are failing to find it, because they are the world and they are really searching for themselves. But because they are not refined, are not subtle, are not silent; because they are gross and full of noise, the world appears to them also as gross and full of noise. They are identified with these qualities, they are them, and therefore they cannot control them.

Only by refining the gross into the subtle, the world of the object into the world of the subject, the wake-world into the dream world, only thus can be found the key to 'occult' power. It may be found only in total silence, when the mind has ceased thinking, when the mouth has ceased speaking, when the eye has ceased projecting images. Only then can the formula of dream-control lead to total awakening from the delusion of living.

It is therefore necessary to become habituated to the idea, to live perpetually with the idea, that the whole of an individual's life — all that can be remembered of it — has been composed by the individual as a play is composed by a playwright. It is a fabrication, a *lila*, a *masque* or dance in which the individual is the sole actor; and even this actor is but a figure in the play. He is not real; no object can be real, for there is absolutely no *thing* at all. No thing is Nuit, and she is no thing precisely in this particular sense of a play of power (*shakti*) evolving an endless drama of light and shadow that appears to entify as subject and object. But objectivity is a dream, *for there is no subject*, no dreamer; there is but a dreaming. It is only when this truth is profoundly apperceived that the dreaming is resolved into its source, which is the *bindu* known as Hadit, at the heart of Nuit ...

Hadit dissolves into Nuit, some thing into no thing, object into subject, and subject — finally — into that absolute subjectivity which, being free of both objectivity and subjectivity, remains indescribable.

The book is most famous, perhaps, for featuring the work of Soror Andahadna, a contemporary Priestess of Maat whose work had parallels with the work of Frater Achad several decades before. Many Thelemites have problems with the Aeon of Maat. As far as they are concerned, each Aeon lasts 2,000 years; we are at the beginnings of the Aeon of Horus, so Maat is a way off yet. They will echo Crowley's famous retort to the young Grant: "Maat can wait!". However, the following passage from *Outside the Circles of Time* puts the matter in a much more interesting light:

Myths and legends are of the past, but Maat should not be thought of in terms of past or future aeons. Maat is present now for those who, knowing the 'sacred alignments' and the 'Gateway of Inbetweenness', experience the Word ever coming, ever emaning, from the Mouth, in the ever new and ever present forms that are continually being generated from the mystical Atu or House of Maat, the Ma-atu ...

But the book is about much more. It is a potent weaving of a host of apparently diverse strands into a single, broad and powerful current.

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Though Grant's books are each different from their predecessors, *Outside the Circles of Time* seemed to herald a jump into a different dimension.

Outside the Circles of Time was the last of Grant's books published by Muller, and there was a break of 12 years until 1992, when Skoob Publishing released *Hecate's Fountain*. Grant had originally conceived this as an account of the rituals of *New Isis Lodge*. However, as is often the case, the work took on a momentum of its own and threw forth a quite different flower. The book was still woven around the work of the Lodge. However, this work was illustrated as anecdotal accounts of specific workings, demonstrating in particular what Grant referred to as 'tangential tantra', whereby a magical working has curious and sometimes alarming side-effects at odds with its apparent purpose. Grant traced these anomalies to a catalytic interface which he called 'the Mauve Zone', existing between the realms of dreaming and dreamless sleep. There are movements, whorlings and eddies in the Mauve Zone which give rise to tenuous wraiths, dreams, images which enter the awareness and are clothed by the imagination.

The third Trilogy opened with *Outer Gateways*, published by Skoob in 1994. This book continued and amplified some of the themes of *Hecate's Fountain*. It contained a lengthy account of the diverse strands of *The Book of the Law*, explored Crowley's work in relation to the *Sunyavada*, and had some remarkable things to say about the creative potential of gematria:

A percept, a concept, or a number – any *object* in fact – has no real relationship with any other percept, concept or number. Relationship exists only in the consciousness of the perceiver, the consciousness which is the background upon which all objects appear as images on a screen. There can be no association of ideas, no correspondences of any kind, between numbers or the ideas which they represent, *except* in the consciousness of their subject, because no thing exists as an objective entity.

The implications of these considerations are not generally appreciated, although they are of tremendous importance. Numbers can mean to the qabalist precisely what he wishes them to mean within the framework of his magical universe. They have a relative existence but no objective reality. Numbers may therefore be used as a magical means of invoking specific energies latent in the consciousness of the magician. In other words, numbers may be viewed as entities which are apparent objective identities, or personalities, for they are one with the objective power of the magician.

The power of numbers lies not in the numbers themselves, but always and only in the magician. If his mind is well furnished with magical numbers (i.e. numbers meaningful to him) there is no limit, quantitatively speaking, to the worlds he may construct from their energies (*shaktis*). This is the basis of the science of numbers, and the rationale of numerology as a creative art distinct

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from a merely interpretative gauge of phenomenal probabilities. The magician aims not at predicting the future – which would imply that that it already existed – so much as creating it according to the laws of his magical universe. Creative gematria is therefore the science and the art of projecting other worlds or orders of being, in harmony with the vibrations symbolised by numbers, which render the vibrations directly amenable.

Gematria is used throughout Grant's work to underpin insight which already exists, rather than to deduce an insight from a perceived gematrical relationship.

However, the core of the book was undoubtedly *The Wisdom of S'lba* and the several chapters of analysis which were appended. *S'lba* is a beautiful, highly-charged and rich transmission received over many years by Kenneth Grant since the late 1930s, the bulk of it reified during the years of *New Isis Lodge*.

There is a good deal of misunderstanding about the nature of transmissions. It is not a case of simply taking dictation from a discarnate entity. Contact with what is referred to as the inner planes is a great deal more complex and more subtle than that. Take for instance the following introductory note by Grant:

The series of verses entitled collectively the *Wisdom of S'lba* ... were not written down at any particular time or place, although the state of consciousness in which they were received was invariably the same. The process was initiated as early as the year 1939 when the Vision of Aossic first manifested in the manner described in *Outside the Circles of Time* (chapter 8). The vision unfolded sporadically throughout the time of Aossic's association with Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare. But the dynamic aspect of the Working, that is to say the integration of the Vision into a coherent whole, occurred during the period of *New Isis Lodge's* existence.

In an interview with Skoob published shortly before *Outer Gateways* was released, responding to a question about *S'lba*, Grant said: "It was 'distilled', by a protracted process extending over many years, from the intensive Rituals performed in New Isis Lodge between 1955-1962".

As mentioned above, Grant first set out in *The Magical Revival* his thesis that there were suggestive analogies between elements of the Lovecraft pantheon and aspects of Crowley's work. There is a passage in *Outer Gateways* which throws the function of these and similar 'deities' into a very different light:

... Like other accounts of unclassifiable phases of earth's history, the Cthulhu Cult epitomises the subconsciousness and the forces outside terrestrial awareness. It may be said in passing that true creativity can occur only when these forces are invoked to flood with their light the magical network of the mind. For purposes of explanation the mind may be envisaged as divided into

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three rooms, the edifice which contains them being the only real or permanent principle. These rooms are:

- 1) Subconsciousness, the dream state;
- 2) Mundane consciousness, the waking state;
- 3) Transcendental consciousness, veiled in the non-initiate by the state of sleep.

The compartments are further conceived as being connected with the house that contains them, by a series of conduits or tunnels. The house represents trans-terrestrial consciousness. The invoked forces — Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Azathoth, etc — are then understood, not as malignant or destructive entities but as the dynamic energies of consciousness, the functions of which are to blast away the delusion of separate existence (the rooms in our illustration).

The next volume, *Beyond the Mauve Zone*, was released by Starfire Publishing in 1999. It is, as its name suggests, a deeper consideration of that region between dreamless sleep and dreaming which fecundates imagination, and in particular a consideration of various methods of accessing the Mauve Zone. There are three chapters on the Kaula Rite of the Fire Snake, giving much more material from the initiated Kaula commentary obtained from David Curwen. There is also a protracted analysis of *Liber Pennae Praenumbra* received by Soror Andahadna, and an account of the work of the Serbian author Zivorad Mihajlovic Slavinski.

The final Trilogies volume, *The Ninth Arch*, was released by Starfire Publishing in 2002. It consisted of a verse-by-verse commentary on a transmission received over the course of *New Isis Lodge* workings, *Liber OKBISh*, 'The Book of the Spider'. This transmission commenced during a magical working of Qulielfi, the 29th Tunnel of Set, around 1952. The principal medium for the transmissions was a priestess known as Soror Arim. She appears in Grant's novel *Against the Light* as Margaret Leasing. She was not the only medium for the transmissions, but she played the larger rôle and coördinated the work of several priestesses of the Lodge.

The Book of the Spider is essentially a collection of cryptic oracles which were received over a number of years, and were in retrospect arranged into 29 chapters, each of 29 verses; some of the verses were not heard, or were lost, but this is the basic pattern. A couple of years after the original transmission was received, the Current once again became active. This subsequent transmission yielded a smaller number of verses, and was arranged into 3 additional chapters, again of 29 verses each.

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Transmissions are not a matter of establishing some sort of radio contact with a discarnate entity and transcribing what it has to say. A transmission can be via any of the senses. Often it will be intuited or subtly apprehended, with the imagination as catalyst. Imagination is not mere whim or fancy, though this is the baggage that the word has accumulated in modern times. It is cosmic, though there are individual areas of awareness of imagination, and it is those areas around the individual of which he or she is more immediately aware, that we regard as 'our' imagination. The truth is, though, that it is not ours, but a common or cosmic area — a continuum, the local reaches of which we are more immediately aware.

Transmission takes many forms. It is an inspirational flow into the more personal areas of imagination, and will often become garbed in forms drawn from the personal subconscious. We see this in Lovecraft's work for instance, much of the inspiration occurring through dream, and expressed through imagery drawn from the extensive reading and day-dreaming of Lovecraft's childhood. As light is refracted by its passage through a prism or a piece of coloured glass, or as the setting sun through atmospheric matter produces a pageant of glorious and stirring colours, so the transmission of a Current will be coloured by the personal areas of imagination through which it passes. The wind, for instance, only becomes manifest in the stirring leaves of the tree through which it moves, the perfumes which it agitates, the skin against which it brushes, the shapes into which it swirls the desert sand.

At the time of the *New Isis Lodge* workings which attracted and then incubated this informing Current, the main Priestess, Margaret Leasing, and others were caught up in occult fiction, and in two books in particular — *Dope* by Sax Rohmer, and *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh. At this time, New Isis Lodge had evolved a magical ritual technique which involved the dramatization of fiction. As Kenneth Grant describes it in *The Ninth Arch*:

As already mentioned in the General Introduction to this book, the ritualists of *New Isis Lodge* utilized certain novels and stories as other magicians might use paintings or musical compositions to affect *perichoresis* and astral encounters. They entered into a tale as they might enter into a given picture, a scene, a desert, a crowded drawing-room, or other venue. Applied to the novel, the process develops dramatically as a vividly kinetic experience that becomes startlingly oracular. We used, principally, Richard Marsh's novel *The Beetle*, and Sax Rohmer's 'A Tale of Chinatown' or *Dope*, for no other reason than because the chief Skryer had recently read these writings, and because other Lodge members also were acquainted with them. Marsh's tale, in particular, was chosen because it

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contained the only published account known to the present author of the *Children of Isis*, and therefore seemed *en rapport* with the *Wisdom of S'lba* and with the oracles of OKBISH.

These are the circumstances, the prism, the coloured glass, through which the verses of the *Book of the Spider* are expressed. There is reference, for instance, to such characters as Shōa, the Evil Woman; Sin Sin Wa, the Chinese villain and sage; Tling-a-Ling, his pet raven and familiar; Sam Tūk, his revered Ancestor; all these characters are drawn from Sax Rohmer's *Dope*. There are references to Limehouse, to Ho-Nan, to Chandu, to the Yellow River, to the poppy trails; these are locations drawn also from *Dope*. There is the languor of dream, of reverie; the images seem to drift, to shift, to coalesce — to emerge, to flicker, to fall back. There are also references to characters drawn from other stories, such as Helen Vaughan and Mrs Beaumont from Arthur Machen's story *The Great God Pan*. These are masks, clothing, and are not intended to point to profundities of meaning inherent in the stories from which these characters are drawn. There are references to scenes in novels, such as *The Brood of the Witch Queen* by Sax Rohmer; or characters from Lovecraft's stories, such as Joseph Curwen in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

There is much in the verses of *The Book of the Spider* which bears on the life of Kenneth Grant, and it seems at times as if the informing Current is directed principally at him. We are all of us expressing an informing Current of magical energy. None of us can express an absolute truth, but we convey truth as we see it. The work of an adept is always in a sense intrinsic to him or her. The light is one but the lamps are many, and each lamp transmits that light in its own way.

Non-fictional characters are also woven into this Spider Web. In the course of *The Book of the Spider*, we become aware of a doctrine of avatars, whereby several persons living at the same time can each be embodiments of an entity. As anyone who has read *Against the Light* will know, it concerns a witch called Awryd, an ancestor of Grant's who was executed for witchcraft in the Sixteenth Century. Awryd returns, in the guise of Margaret Leasing, Soror Arim, the chief seer; and before her, Yelda Paterson, Spare's witch-mentor. However, the situation becomes more complex when several people living at the same time are each avatars of Awryd — for instance, Margaret Leasing and Clanda Fane, both contemporaries of Grant in *New Isis Lodge*. Some of the avatars are characters drawn from fiction, such as Helen Vaughan from Machen's *The Great God Pan*, or Besza Lorie from Grant's novel *The Stellar Lode*. There are references to David Curwen, a contemporary of Grant's in *New Isis Lodge* who had a strong interest in alchemy; in the Spider's

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Web he is cast as an avatar of Joseph Curwen, the alchemist whose dark presence looms large in one of Lovecraft's best stories, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

Following this brief consideration of the Typhonian Trilogies, what is it that constitutes the Typhonian Tradition which is central to Grant's work? 'Typhonian' is not a precise label, as is apparent from a consideration of the Glossary entries for Typhon, Draco, Ta-Urt and related topics across the Typhonian Trilogies; there is a great deal of diversity. Although the emphasis changed over the span of the thirty years between the publications of the first and the final volumes, none of these entries by themselves are definitions of the Typhonian Tradition. Instead they each articulate a facet of it, no matter how important those individual facets might at first sight seem. It is more fruitful therefore not to look for a hard-and-fast definition, but to allow intuition to detect an underlying consistency and continuity running throughout these passages.

If there is one thing which could be said to characterise the Typhonian Tradition then it is communing with what some have termed 'Outside', whether that be considered as the reaches of space beyond the terrestrial, or the sweeps of consciousness beyond the human. In this context, 'Outside' can only ever be a relative term, since from the perspective of the continuum of consciousness there is no inside or outside.

In *Beyond the Mauve Zone* Grant analyses the Maatian transmitted text *Liber Pennae Praenumbra* from a Typhonian perspective, and makes the following remark:

It is at this point that the divergence appears between the Way of Aiwass-Lam and that of N'Aton who prefigures a future embodiment of human consciousness – in other words, ourselves as we shall appear at some future time. As should by this time be evident, we refute this postulate in favour of the notion that consciousness in its human phase is an altogether transient phenomenon, a mere flash in the immensity of Space-Time (Nu-Isis). Transmissions such as the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, *Liber AL*, the *Necronomicon*, and, we maintain, *Liber Pennae Praenumbra* itself, give no support to the notion of an identifiably human mask to consciousness perpetuating itself indefinitely. But all whose will it is to make – as Nema phrases it – “the mutational leap into being a new species” should be prepared to relinquish the concept of 'human' consciousness with all its dualistic implicits.

These depths of consciousness are far deeper and wider than human consciousness, which as indicated in the above quote is transient and relatively superficial. The Typhonian Gnosis is concerned with

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encountering and exploring these depths. As Crowley remarked in a postscript to Chapter 30 of *Magick without Tears*:

I thought it a good plan to put my fundamental position all by itself in a postscript; to frame it. My observation of the Universe convinces me that there are beings of intelligence and power of a far higher quality than anything we can conceive of as human; that they are not necessarily based on the cerebral and nervous structures that we know, and that the one and only chance for mankind to advance as a whole is for individuals to make contact with such Beings.

It was Crowley's conviction that the Cairo Working of 1904, which led to the contact with Aiwaz and to the reception of *The Book of the Law*, was the first in a series of communications. After asserting his belief in *The Confessions* that there was no longer any *à priori* reason to doubt the existence of discarnate intelligence, he states:

The way is therefore clear for me to come forward and assert positively that I have opened up communication with one such intelligence; or, rather, that I have been selected by him to receive the first message from a new order of beings.

Indeed there have been further messages or communications. The Cairo Working of 1904 was followed seven years later by the Abuldiz Working, and seven years after that by the Amalantrah Working. All three workings were characterised by contact with praeter-human intelligences who imparted information. There were also a number of transmitted texts known as *The Holy Books*, such as for instance the sigils and gnostic utterances which constitute *Liber 231*.

Nor has this contact been confined to Crowley. It has continued beyond his death with *Liber OKBISH* and *The Wisdom of S'lba*, both reified — as delineated above — during the period of activity of New Isis Lodge. Doubtless there have been other transmissions, and there will be more in the future. These are upsurges from the deeper strata of consciousness into awareness.

As well as his Trilogies, Grant also published several volumes of poetry and a number of short stories and novellas. 1963 saw the publication of his first volume of poetry, *Black to Black and other poems*. An intense and moving collection of poems, this was followed in 1970 by *The Gull's Beak and other poems*. A third volume was released by Starfire Publishing in 2005, *Convolvulus and other poems*; this included the two previous volumes and added a third, previously unpublished collection, *Convolvulus: Poems of Love and the Other Darkness*. This collected volume included sketches by Austin Osman Spare, some of which had been specially drawn for Grant by Spare.

Grant had started writing short stories at a young age, and wrote his first novel in the early 1950s, *Grist to Whose Mill?* (soon to be

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published for the first time). Others followed, and were published from 1996 onwards. Most of these novels had been written during the period of New Isis Lodge, and revisited ahead of publication. They featured characters many of whom were based to a greater or lesser degree on members of the Lodge. Grant gave an insight into this in his dustjacket notes to the second volume in the series, *Snakewand & the Darker Strain*:

These stories, and other tales in this series, were written in the wake of rituals performed over a period of seven years in *New Isis Lodge*. Many were the magicians and mediums who passed through the Lodge, and some of them feature in the series of novellas. Their mundane personalities may not have appeared unusual to casual observation, but when elongated and siderealised by the unique perspectives which their magical rôles created for them, they achieved an apotheosis, an epiphany. This extraordinary phenomenon demonstrated the heights and the depths which human nature is capable of scaling and of fathoming, in the delirious frenzy inspired by their art. These tales are likewise orientated to the other side of a reality rarely glimpsed outside a magically charged Circle.

Though retaining a devotion to Crowley, Spare, and many other mystics and occultists whose work had influenced him throughout his life, Grant was never a follower but, on the contrary, created his own way from a number of influences, transformed through the crucible of his mystical and magical experience. He was acutely aware of the principle of *parampara* or spiritual lineage, whereby it is the responsibility of an initiate to develop the work of his predecessor, the predecessor in this case being Crowley. In the course of such development, new avenues of approach are opened up, whilst others are found to be perhaps now redundant. In this way, a body of work is a living thing, developed by successive generations of initiates.

Kenneth Grant's work was rich, diverse and eclectic, woven from many strands and distilled from many sources. However, his principal influence was Crowley, and Thelema is at the heart of his work. In the wake of his death, the immediate task is to ensure that all his published work is once more in print and readily available, and to continue the explication of the principles which underlie that work. Beyond that, however, the body of work which he developed will, in its turn, be continued, worked upon and redeveloped by those coming after him. This is the greatest testament for which any of us can hope.

I'd like to close this preliminary survey with a passage from the Introduction to *Outside the Circles of Time*. Here, Grant gave an insight into the aims of his work; the passage in question is succinct and beautifully expressed:

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One final point is here relevant, and I state it without apology. It is not my purpose to try to prove anything; my aim is to construct a magical mirror capable of expressing some of the less elusive images seen as shadows of a future aeon. This I do by means of suggestion, evocation, and by those oblique and 'inbetweenness concepts' that Austin Spare defined as 'Neither-Neither'. When this is understood, the reader's mind becomes receptive to the influx of certain concepts that can, if received undistortedly, fertilize the unknown dimensions of his consciousness. In order to achieve this aim a new manner of communication has to be evolved; language itself has to be reborn, revived, and given a new direction and a new momentum. The truly creative image is born of *creative imagining*, and this is — ultimately — an irrational process that transcends the grasp of human logic.

It is well known that scientists and mathematicians have evolved a cryptic language, a language so elusive, so fugitive, and yet so essentially cosmic that it forms an almost qabalistic mode of communication, often misinterpreted by its own initiates! Our position is not quite as desperate, for we are dealing primarily with the body-mind complex in its relation to the universe, and the body-aspect is deeply rooted in the soil of sentiency. Our minds may not understand, but in the deeper layers of subconsciousness where humanity shares a common bed, there is instant recognition. Similarly, a magician devises his ceremony in harmony with the forces he wills to invoke, so an author must pay considerable attention to the creation of an atmosphere that is suitable for his operations. Words are his magical instruments, and their vibrations must not produce a merely arbitrary noise, but an elaborate symphony of tonal reverberations that trigger a series of increasingly profound echoes in the consciousness of his readers. One cannot over-emphasize or over-estimate the importance of this subtle form of alchemy, for it is in the *nuances*, and not necessarily in the rational meanings of the words and numbers employed, that the magick resides. Furthermore, it is very often in the suggestion of certain words *not* used, yet indicated or employed by other words having no direct relation to them, that produce the most precise definitions. The edifice of a reality-construct may sometimes be reared only by an architecture of absence, whereby the real building is at one and the same time revealed and concealed by an alien structure haunted by probabilities. These are legion, and it is the creative faculty of the reader — awake and active — that can people the house with souls. So then, this book may mean many things to many readers, and different things to all; but to none can it mean nothing at all, for the house is constructed in such a manner that no echo can be lost.