

# **Dark Dreams of a Dark Lord: Imaginal Transgression and the Liberation of Consciousness in the Works of Kenneth Grant**

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“We live on a placid island of ignorance amid black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but someday the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.”

(HP Lovecraft – The Call of Cthulhu)



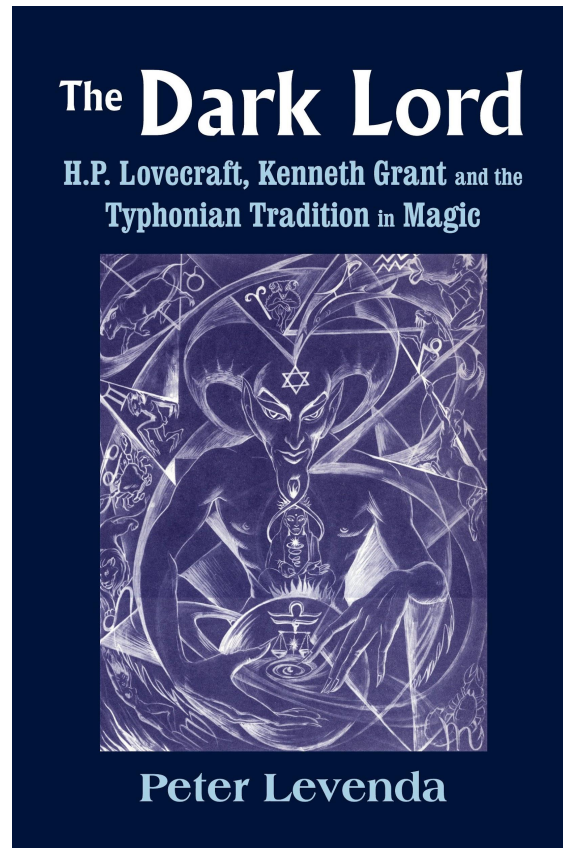
Born in 1924 and passing in 2011, Kenneth Grant was a ceremonial magician, artist, writer, and one of the most notorious students of occultist Aleister Crowley. During his life, Grant created his own synthesis of Left Hand Path Hindu Tantra and Thelemic Magick which is still garnering attention among Occultists today.



Through a set of three trilogies, he propagated his magical teachings. named the Typhonian tradition because of its association with the Ancient Greek titan Typhon. Typhon is the root of the word typhoon. He inaugurated the “New Isis Lodge” in England in 1955 where members practiced his methods documented in books like Hecates’ Fountain.

He later assumed leadership of Aleister Crowley’s Ordo Templi Orientis. His expulsion by Karl Germer didn’t prevent him from leading his own “Typhonian OTO” which later changed its name to the Typhonian order because of copyright issues.

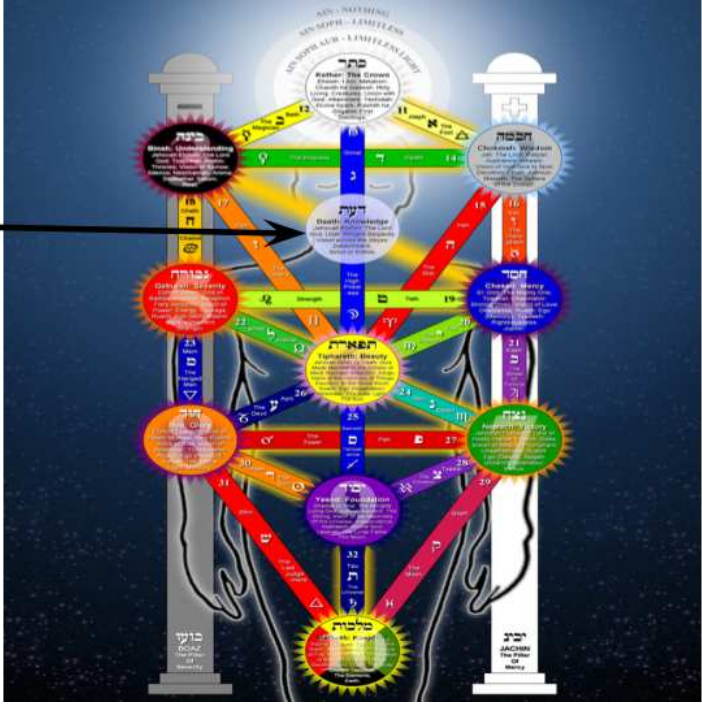
In many occult circles, Grant is seen as sinister or incomprehensible. Others find him fascinating and an essential contributor to the occult.



A recent popular book by occult writer Peter Levenda titled the "Dark Lord" has brought Grant into the public eye. This book portrays Grant as an innovative psychonaut and explorer of consciousness worthy of anthropological attention.

To understand the relevance of Grant's work, we first need to take a quick look at the Hermetic-Kabbalah's Tree of Life at the core of Ceremonial Magic. This tree is a symbolic map of the emanation of divinity into the matter and the path of return. One of the techniques used in this practice is known as "Pathworking," (similar to Jungian Active Imagination techniques), where an aspirant ascends back up the tree through various imaginal exercises in order to eventually attain a unitary state of being. The Alan Moore comic Promethea is a good visual representation of this process.

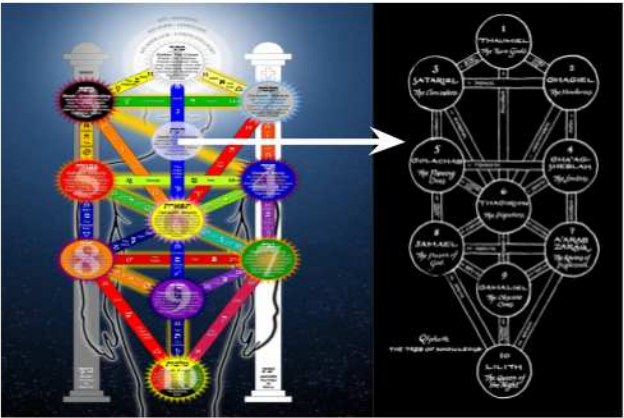
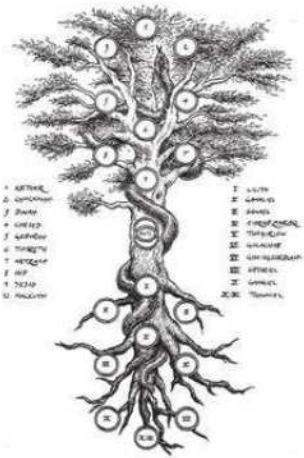
Dath:  
Knowledge



The tree itself consists of 10 spheres or Sephiroth along with 22 paths denoting qualitative differences in the creative process from a divine idea into the matter which is in turn mapped to planets, angels, elements, tarot trumps, and other correspondences. The aspirant is thought to dwell in the lowest sphere, "Malkuth" and tries to "Climb the Tree "along these paths and spheres elevating his consciousness on the way. Kenneth Grant Turned all of this on its head by focusing his system on descent through 22 Tunnels of Set on the Inverse Tree of Death.

Universe A: Day Side  
Being

Universe B: Night Side  
Nonbeing



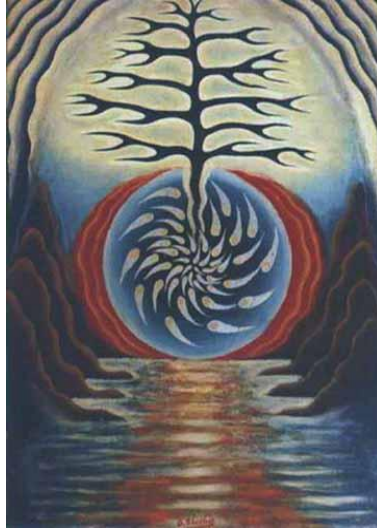


To that effect, Grant's system sets up a series of binaries that inverts mainstream occultism as seen in the following table:

Paradigm	Night Side	Day Side
Structure	Tree of Death	Tree of Life
Emphasis	Lunar-Vaginal	Solar-Phallic
Patron Deity	Set	Horus
Facets	Qlippoth	Sephiroth
Connections	22 Tunnels of Set	22 Paths
Themes	Invasions from the Outside, Revealing the Hidden, Repressed, Transgression, Access Forbidden forces, ideas, zones	Elemental Balancing, Integrating of Macrocosm and Microcosm
Entities	UFOS, Monsters, Typhonian Teratomas, "NIGHTMARES" Cthulhu	Celestial Contact, Angels, Planets, Elementals
Guide	Holy Guardian Angel	Holy Guardian Angel
Gender	Female Tantrika/Witch	Male Magician
Consciousness State	Dreams, The "Mauve Zone" Sphere between dreams and dreamless sleep, Eroto-Comotose Lucidity	Waking Life/Active Imagination, Meditative Awareness
Metaphysical State	NonBeing – Void	Being
Tradition	Left Hand Path	Right Hand Path

(Like the Vama Marg Left Hand Path Tantrics, Grant sought to reverse the categories and foci of Thelema. If mainstream Thelemites climbed the Tree of Life, Grant promoted the Descent on the Tree of Death. If they venerated the Solar Phallic Horus, he promoted the Lunar-Vaginal Set.

In many ways, Grant's symbolic and sacred inversion can be seen as an effort to promote non-duality. Grant was himself a student of Tantric teacher David Curwen and was interested in bringing an Advaitist nondual perspective to Thelema that would break down its traditional categories. Transgression and inversion are tropes in Vama Marg and Grant embraced them with a gusto.



For Grant, Just as the Tree of Life represented Being, The Tree of Death represented Non-Being from which it emerged. The gateway to understanding this was through the sphere “D’ath” on the tree. D'ath means knowledge, and among other things, Grant equated D’ath to death. From Grant’s POV, one has to symbolically “die” to the known world of daylight to venture into the mystery of the night side.

But what does one find there on the opposite side of the Tree? Why would one go seeking an encounter with Qlippothic forces in these tunnels of Set?

According to Grant, this realm is the home of all of those archetypal forces of adversarial, opposition, rebellion, and otherness seen in such figures as Set, Typhon and the other deities classically opposed to daylight gods in mythology.

These spirits of rebellious, unlawful, forbidden repressed power, Grant associated with previous states of human evolutionary consciousness. Like his mentor Artists AO Spare, he believed they are seen in atavistic animal/human hybrids in religious iconography.

### **Grant’s Usage of the HP Lovecraft Mythos**

One curious aspect of Grant’s understanding of Atavisms is his use of the malevolent forces of HP Lovecraft’s Cthulhu mythos as a way to describe these oppositional Qlippothic forces thought to dwell within the night side.



Grant writes,

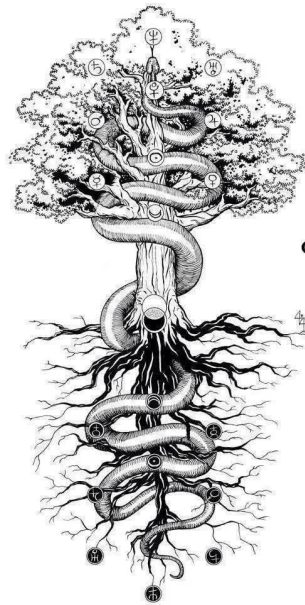
*“The zoomorphic symbol of universe B is the ape.....that actual beast was more hideous than the ape...described in certain of Lovecraft’s Fictions an octopoid cephalopod bat-winged and clawed in its lower extremity...it possesses a central glowing eye reddish and baleful set at the top of the head while the lower part of the face (where one would expect a mouth) is a mass of writhing tentacles. Nightside pg 79-81)*

For Grant, the Nightside is the realm of everything alien and far removed from our everyday reality. He uses the arch-alien enemy Cthulhu from HP Lovecraft’s fiction as a representation of its qualities. In addition to Lovecraft, Grant associated these Qlippothic forces with hostile UFO encounters, abduction myths, and Alien Grays. He writes in his book, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God:

*“Crowley was aware of the possibility of opening the spatial gateways and admitting an extraterrestrial current in the human life wave... It is an occult tradition and Lovecraft gave it persistent utterance in his writings — that some transfinite and superhuman power is marshaling its forces with the intent to invade and take possession of this planet.” (Ibid)*

Some question whether Grant was writing Science Fiction or Horror represented as Occult Wisdom. Others believe that Grant had intuited something about the nature of Archonic forces influencing human history. Either way, Grant was evocative.

## Grant and the Jungian Shadow



No tree,  
it is said,  
can grow to heaven  
unless its roots  
reach down to hell  
— C.G. Jung

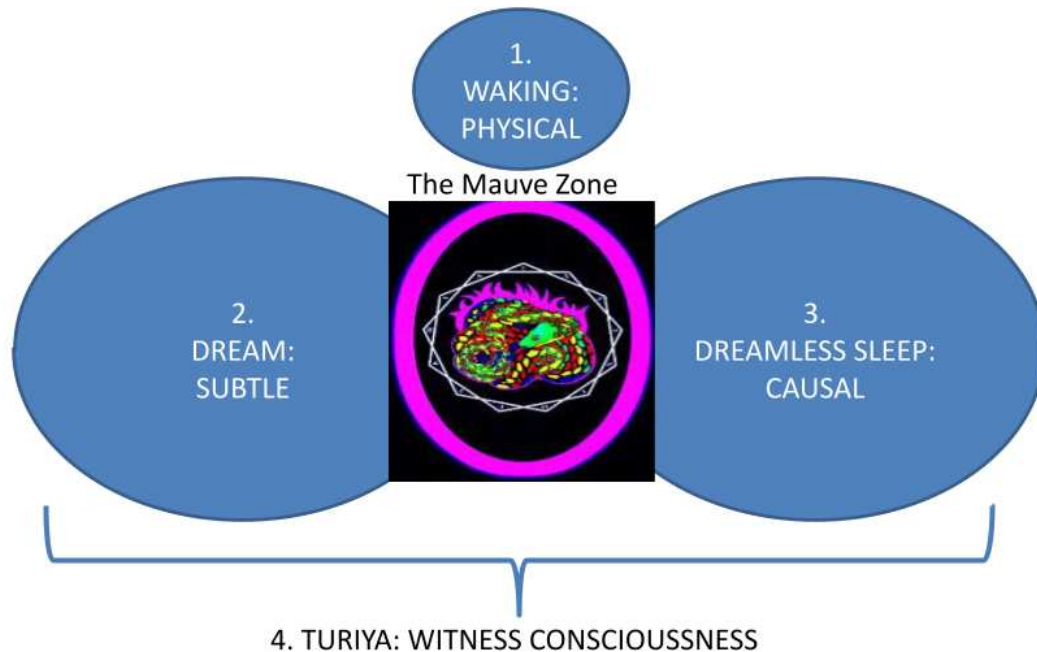
There is a strong family resemblance to what Grant says about the night-side and Jung says about the shadow. He believed, like Jung, that the path to wholeness lay in the exploration and integration of the shadows thought to lie beneath the surfaces of things.

For Grant, spiritual growth requires an engagement with those forces historically considered monstrous, other, outside, and oppositional that we project as outside of us. Grant's work seems to be oriented to the collective or Transpersonal Shadow that Jung hints at in his work.

Jung writes,

*“Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the Shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular. (CW 13: Alchemical Studies, par 335, pg 265)*

Grant believed, like Jung, that access to these shadows and the integration of them into the self was key to tapping hidden potentials of mastery. Like Jung, he believed the path to doing this was intimately connected to the realm of dreams.



### Dreams and the Mauve Zone

From Nondual Advaita Grant embraced the concept of the four primary states of consciousness with a 5th integrating them all.

- Waking - Physical
- Dreaming- Subtle
- Dreamless Sleep – Causal
- Turiya(4th): Witness
- Turiyatita(Beyond the 4th) The underlying nondual ground of all consciousness

Grant was particularly interested in the area between the Dream and Dreamless sleep and called this borderland region the Mauve Zone. He developed a form of Lucid “Dream Control” through sexual practices combining visualization and trance states to access this zone and project one’s consciousness into the “Nightside” of the Tree.

He describes the method in a chapter titled “Dream Control by Sexual Magick” in his book Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God. This method involved:

- Stage1: Karezza or nonorgasmic sexual activity to the point of exhaustion with visualization of the sigil until sleep supervenes
- Stage2: Sexual congress in the dream state continues with the “shadow women” evoked in stage one...the desired state will reify in the stage After awakening

He is saying that one can through a period of extended sexual activity enter a trance that tilts at the edge of waking and dreaming. From this state just before sleep, one projects one's intention

into the dream state holding the sigil in mind (shown previously regarding liber 231). By doing this one can encounter the relevant Qliphothic entity thought to dwell in the respective Tunnel of Set.

Furthermore, one might engage in a form of dream intercourse with the qliphothic spirit accessed through the sigil, and doing this, can lead to the realization in waking life of the power associated with the qliphothic entity communed with. Grant likely drew inspiration from Crowley's similar method known as Eroto-Comotose Lucidity informed by his own studies of Tantra.

Although having sex with imaginal deities is in no way unfamiliar in the tradition of Shamanism according to Eliade, Grant believed that doing so would lead to the realization of hidden powers potentials and the manifestation of desires in waking life. In effect, Grant was saying,

*“There is no dream or dreamer. There is the only reality, ie. Consciousness undivided by subject or object. If this substratum is realized, it will shine, “(Grant 83)*

For lack of a better word, this is magic.



**Occult and Mahakala Cthulhu Image**

### **A Practitioner's Perspective**

In an online conversation with one of Grant's longtime students, I asked him to describe his most important experiences with the work:

He wrote,

*I did a Tibetan Kalachakra ritual and Chod practice matched with an invocation of Kali and her retinue into the priestess, who served as the physical medium of the goddesses. Sexual workings were then utilized to open the gateways and explore the backside of the tree.*

I then asked him, what was the impact on his life:

*On one level, consciousness expands and has a deeper connection with the intrinsic awareness of the Dzogchen (Dzogchen). On a samsaric level, (it) has resulted in advances at work, personal life, and overall better experiences in the world.*

I asked him how he understood the Mauve Zone:

*This is a place in between waking and sleeping, physical and astral, the nexus or meeting point between multiverses and timelines. This is akin to the folding of space and time*

Finally, I asked him to describe his experience with the Mauve Zone:

*"Experience" and "mauve zone" are almost mutually exclusive, as experience means there must be an experience. That said, on some levels, the mauve zone experience is not unlike a waking dream, or being aware in the Matrix, that point of consciousness where all space and time are seen as illusory and plastic, moldable and transformations are the norm,*

The practitioner refers to Sci-Fi metaphors from Dune such as "Folding Time and Space" or the reality-bending, and Gnosticism-inspired movie, the "Matrix" with its concept of an illusionary, plastic, and moldable world.

Aligned with Grant's ideas, he sees reality as a fabric to be molded, bent, and manipulated for its very nature is dreamlike. He not only is seeking out control of his dreams, but he is also attempting to manipulate the fabric of the dream...for to intentionally fully shape the dream realm is to lend shape to waking life.



### **Rite of Chod, Tantric Dream Yoga a Wrathful Deities**

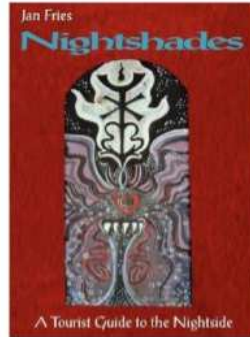
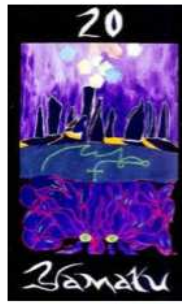
Going to such transgressive and experiential edges is not uncommon in the lore of both traditional shamanic and tantric practices. In particular, the use of dreams as a way to realize worldly change as well as evolve consciousness lies at the heart of shamanically influenced Tibetan Dream Yoga.

In addition to Dream Yoga, It's in the Tantric Rite of Chod that the transformational potential of Grant's practice finds a close parallel. Chod, from the word "Sever", is a practice in the Nyingma line whereby an advanced practitioner seeks to overcome duality through the encounter and ritual relationship with transgressive and demonic forces.

In the rite of Chod, a high-level tantric adept will go to a haunted location, like a funeral ground thought to be possessed by evil spirits. Through ritual means, a practitioner will then offer their own body as food to the demons thought to dwell there.

To do this successfully they must first identify with the Ground of Being, "Clear light" or "Rigpa" beyond duality, and in so doing, demonstrate their insight into the ultimate realization of the union of all things in the void.

Chod thus demonstrates both the profound compassion and supreme enlightenment of the practitioner for they have transcended the fear of ego death by communing with the ultimate other and offering their very life essence to be consumed. Here the Tibetan adept demonstrates, "All Monsters are my Mother."



## Nonduality and the Healing Power of Shadow Art

Both food and sex are a form of communion, and through the veil of dreams, Grant proposed a means of transcending opposites and attaining a state of unity beyond fear and a sense of the other. Some of the most accomplished voyagers into the Nightside are talented artists who work to share their visions and psycho-nautic journeys with others.

In the realm of art, the sublime is that category thought to derive from the encounter of both beauty and terror. One is reminded of Rudolph Otto's description of the divine as *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans*, which both fascinates and terrifies.

In her "Nightside Tarot", Linda Falorio discusses the benefits of working with the Nightside. She writes,

*When owned as the most relevant, alive, truly whole/holy parts of ourselves, these most basic "dark" life energies can be wonderfully daimonic., transforming us into vibrant, creative, fully actualized human beings. It is only when they are denied, cut off, and repulsed, repressed that their darkness can become demonic. (Falorio, Shadow Tarot, pg 26)*

In his book *Nightshades, a Tourist Guide to the Nightside*, German artist Jan Fries presents numerous Night side-inspired drawings and paintings derived from his descent into the depths. Echoing Lovecraft he writes,

*“That Dayside is a tiny island of experience in a huge ocean, the Nights Side, full of currents, island chains and continents of the possible and the impossible.” (Jan Fries a Tourist Guide, Pg 23)*



**ScapeGoat By Max Ernst**

### **The Daemonic: From Scapegoat to Superhumanity**

Magician artists like Grant, Falorio, and Fries are each trying to reclaim what was once known as the Daemonic. In his book “Anger, Madness and the Daimonic, The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil and Creativity” clinical psychologist Stanley Diamond attempts to clarify the Daemonic as a model for true psychological health.

In contrast to the concept of the Demonic, he writes,

*The daemonic includes the diabolic as well as divine-human endowments without making them mutually exclusive. It is that numinous aspect of nature which is both beautiful and terrible at the same time.” (Anger, Madness and the Daimonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil and Creativity - 1871)*



### **The Nightside In Media**

If we look at our current media, we can see the dance with the night side, whether in frightening movies like John Carpenter “Prince of Darkness” with its portrayal of a dark anti-universe and its anti-God, or movies like event Horizon with its trope of a Black Hole as a portal into a demonic universe. In these examples, we are offered the idea that there dwells a negative anti-world, framed as evil.

By rejecting the dualistic metaphysic upon which such ideas are based, Grant and members of the Typhonian tradition courageously seek to “Go There” and delve into the realm of shadows, dreams, and even nightmares for the hope of some higher-order Daimonic integration beyond the bounds of opposites.

Like the Tibetan Rite of Chod, one must move beyond fear, for as many Witches say, “Where there is fear, there is power.”



### **Kenneth Grant and the Anthropology of Magic**

In her book, *The Anthropology of Magic*, Susan Greenwood shows how magic and shamanic traditions conceive of consciousness in contrast to that of secular psychology. According to Greenwood, psychology reduces magical experiences to personal mythic language which provides access to the individual's subconscious.

*"In contrast, the Shamanic and magical model provides a collective mythic language that portends healing through engagement with spirits." (Greenwood, Anthropology of Magic Pg 121*

In the case of Grant, the question becomes what spirits exactly is one encountering and how does one conceptualize healing? As I've alluded to, a comparable concept might be Carl Jung's notion of the shadow side of the collective unconscious but is that any less mysterious?

In his new book "Cave and Cosmos" Michael Harner describes how members of his Foundation for Shamanic Studies have attempted to map the upper and lower worlds in a cross-cultural study of shamanic cosmologies. In doing this, he claims they have not found anything comparable to the Western concept of "Hell."

That said, what seems clear to me is that in the realm of consciousness studies, we've often held close to the shores of the light. When we do venture into darker realms, we do so from the POV of psychopathology, or harmful sorcery like Whitehead's works on "Dark Shamanism."

Both Grant and Jung's work seems to be offering a different path pinned to the Daimonic. Here humanity's greater heights lie in the descent into the depths, and the path up the Holy Mountain lies in traversing the shadowy and chthonic Tunnels of Set beneath.

As Aleister Crowley says in *Liber Tzaddi*, "*My adepts stand upright; their head above the heavens, their feet below the hells.*"



*"Eckhart saw Hell too. He said: 'The only thing that burns in Hell is the part of you that won't let go of life, your memories, and your attachments. They burn them all away. But they're not punishing you, he said. They're freeing your soul. So, if you're frightened of dying and... And you're holding on, you'll see devils tearing your life away. But if you've made your peace, then the devils are really angels, freeing you from the earth.'"* -Louis in Jacob's Ladder

## **Conclusion**

Communion with Hostile Aliens, Dream Induced Sex Succubi, All this may sound strange, but Levenda at the end of his book reflects on the contemporary relevance of Grant's work. He writes,

Grant is saying we need a new narrative because the old one is not working. The old one is not up to the challenges we will soon face as resources become limited, fanatics get the Bomb, and governments go all Emperor Neros on our asses. At least with Necronomicon Gnosis, we look the danger straight in the eye." (Pg 303).

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