

The Coven of Atho, Doreen Valiente and Alex Sanders.

By Melissa Seims

Recently, I was delighted when my book, *Here Be Magick: The People and Practices of the Coven of Atho*, saw the light of day. It reveals much more than had previously been written about the Coven of Atho and its main characters. What a mighty muse it was, propelling me onwards with my investigations, and what a ride it gave me!

During my research for *Here Be Magick*, I came across a particularly interesting elemental rune which seems to have originated with the Coven of Atho and yet, close variants of it later appear in some rather interesting places. Before we embark on this rune's intriguing paper trail, I just want to introduce readers to the two main characters associated with the Coven of Atho: Ray Howard and Charles Cardell. It should be noted that the term 'Coven of Atho' was unique to Howard, but Cardell is the canvas and easel for the larger picture, though he did not use this term in connection with his own practices.

Ray Howard is best known for his possession of the enigmatic wooden Head of Atho, which in the early 1960s, he displayed as an ancient Horned God of Witchcraft, claiming it was over 2000 years old and had been bequeathed to him by a gypsy, Alicia Franch, in the 1930s.



Figure 1: Ray Howard with the Head of Atho in 1967.

Charles Cardell is currently best known for his antics under his pseudonym 'Rex Nemorensis' (King of the Wood). He enlisted the help of Olwen Greene (who used the pseudonym 'Olive Green'), as a spy. She met Gerald Gardner and was initially introduced to the Bricket Wood Coven for potential initiation but they refused as they did not like her. She was subsequently taken through the three degrees by Gerald over the course of a few months in late 1958/early 1959. Olwen then returned to Charles

Cardell with large sections of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows. A few years later, Charles Cardell, under his pseudonym 'Rex Nemorensis', self-published and 'presented' all of the Gardnerian material he had acquired in his small and now very rare book, *Witch*.¹ The second half of this article, looks at an interesting and likely consequence of this book's publication involving Alex Sanders.

Whilst *Witch* had been in preparation for a while, it finally appeared in May 1964, just a few months after Gardner's passing. This, understandably, upset many of the early Gardnerians and was certainly not the best timing. The larger story of Howard and Cardell reveals much more, including a now near-extinct form of modern mystical Witchcraft with a distinctly respectable British feel to it that firmly sits in its own magickal niche.



Figure 2: Charles Cardell outside Dumblecott in 1961.

In *HERE BE MAGICK*, aside from revealing much more about the curious backgrounds, upbringing, writings and practices of Charles Cardell and Ray Howard. I have compiled what seems to be the 'core' material and given it the collective name of *The Atho Book of Magick* (henceforth abbreviated to ABM). This is to reflect the fact that it is definitely a syncretic blending of ideas and practices from

¹ Rex Nemorensis, *Witch*, (Dumblecott Magick Productions, 1964) This has just been reissued by Wishan Books: <http://wishanbooks.org/>

both Ray Howard and Charles Cardell.² I have also included all the details of a unique system of divination created by Charles Cardell, which he based on the I-Ching. As such, Cardell could be considered a creator and creativity was certainly in his bones. For many years he was an artist and sold his artwork under his birth name of Charles Maynard.

The Rune of The Four Elements

Let us now turn to the elemental rune, which is referred to in the extant Atho material as 'The Rune of the Four Elements'. Its earliest confirmed source and usage is from 1962 where it is seen in the Coven of Atho correspondence course issued by Ray Howard.³ It is given in the rite for 'Charging the Sword' where it is recited and accompanied by various actions. The rune reads:

*I call Earth to bond my spell
Air speed its travel well
Fire give it spirit from above
Water quench my spell with LOVE.*

Doreen Valiente took Howard's correspondence course, in 1962 and/or 1963. At Samhain 1963, she was initiated to the rank of Sarsen in Howard's Coven of Atho at Charlwood in Surrey. Ray had gone there with his second wife and stayed there for about two months. I do not think that Charles Cardell was involved with Doreen's initiation, but I do strongly suspect that Howard could well have used Cardell's 'Inner Grove' in which to perform the ritual, for it is there where 'two streams meet', a concept key to this near-forgotten manifestation of modern Witchcraft.

There is also a slight variation on this rune that was used by the Coven of Atho when 'Forming a Circle':

*I call Earth to bond my spell.
Air to Speed its travel well.
Fire, give it Spirit from above.
Water, end my spell with Love.⁴*

Doreen Valiente wrote a further variant of the rune, into her personal notebooks in August 1964. She placed the following rune in quotation marks. When it comes to Doreen, this often seems to indicate that it was someone else's work but not always, so we can't be wholly certain whether she is quoting somebody else, or if she herself is reworking it. In this instance, her entry comes immediately after one where she has been writing her thoughts on a sequence of symbols seen in the *Atho Book of Magick* and which Doreen attributes to Charles Cardell.

This rune variant reads:

*'I call Earth to bond the spell,
Air to speed its travel well,
Bright as fire may it glow
Through and through like water flow.'⁵*

We find another variant of this rune in what I believe is the earliest of Doreen's two main Atho Books, and almost certainly dates to 1962. In these two books, which are akin to Books of Shadows, she

² This has been published in Part 2 of *Here Be Magick*, (Thoth, 2022)

³ This has been fully presented in *Here be Magick*, (Thoth, 2022).

⁴ As seen in Doreen's red Atho Book, likely dating from 1962.

⁵ Doreen Valiente, notebook entry, 6th August 1964.

predominantly wrote material as copied from Ray Howard. She also included extracts from the earlier writings of Charles Cardell, alongside her own notes and thoughts on it all.

This version is again in quotation marks and we are told this is for working widdershins when using the 'Dark Wisdom':

*'Power arise from Earth below
Water give life unto the spell
Brightly as Fire shall it glow
Air shall speed its travel well.'*⁶

As well as this widdershins version appearing in Doreen's Atho Books, she also wrote this identical version into her personal notebooks in August 1964, along with the following note:

*'In the names of Hecate and Pan, be this circle consecrate for the working of the Dark Wisdom' (2 candles (black) on altar.)*⁷

This again seems likely to be related to the Coven of Atho material she is musing upon at that time. Though again, there is also a chance that Doreen is pondering on it and changing things around to better suit her own practices. That said, Hecate and Pan were not the main deities used by the Coven of Atho, but the suggestion here is that they could have used them as alternate deities when working widdershins with the 'Dark Wisdom'. I remain undecided on whether the 'Dark Wisdom' concept should be considered as core ABM material originating from either Howard or Cardell.

Moving on to 1978, this was the year that Doreen published her much more well-known version of the elemental rune in her book, *Witchcraft For Tomorrow*. It is undeniably based on the version in Ray Howard's course, yet Doreen certainly improved it:

*I call Earth to bind my spell
Air to speed its travel well
Bright as Fire shall it glow
Deep as tide of Water flow
Count the elements four-fold,
In the fifth the spell shall hold.*⁸

We know she did a similar rewrite with Gardner's early material. For example, her now well-known 'Charge of the Goddess', is based on material from Aleister Crowley and Leland's *Aradia* that Gardner had originally written into one of his early Books of Shadows.

Now we may ask at this point, is it possible that Doreen was the originator of the Rune of the Four Elements seen in Howard's course? After all, there is evidence of her knowing Ray Howard going back to 1961. I think the answer is no for two main reasons:

1) There is a notebook of Doreen's dating from the mid-1980s in which she is seen contemplating the Atho material and is writing notes to herself on what is worth keeping from it. Some of it she did not like. She has gathered together her thoughts under the title 'Elements of a reformed Coven of Atho' and has written: '... Keep the Charging of the Sword and forming the circle'. This would seem to leave

⁶ As seen in Doreen's red Atho Book, likely dating from 1962.

⁷ Doreen Valiente, notebook entry, 8th August 1964.

⁸ Doreen Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, (Hale, 1985) p. 157.

us with no doubt that she is not making any inference to having created the rune in connection with the 'Charging of the Sword' which we find in Ray Howard's 1962 course and the slight variation seen in the 'Forming the Circle'.

2) If Doreen had a hand in the creation of this rune for Howard's course, there is nothing else in that course that is suggestive of Doreen's hands behind it, no other poems, verse or prose appear and I think Doreen would have suggested such if this had been the case. Furthermore, usage of the words 'quench' and 'bond' feel awkward and seem out of character for Doreen's natural poeticism.

It remains unclear if Howard acquired this elemental rune from Charles Cardell. Some aspects of the extant material from the Coven of Atho are incredibly hard to untangle. What I can say is the key ideas seen in Ray Howard's course, which share commonalities with concepts that the Cardells either earlier wrote about, or were witnessed as using, are; mention of the trident, water city, crystal ball, pentagram, seven-pointed star (septagram), pyramid, the Witches' Seat, the Eight Paths, the elements and use of the horn and a sword. Ray's course revolves around Five Circles and these further relate to the five senses.⁹ We also find a special emphasis on the senses, in Charles and his 'sister' Mary's 1958 writings in *Light* and their later publications.¹⁰

The Cardells' writings and their company, 'Dumlecott Magick Productions', items and booklets, were their veiled way of getting some aspects of their practices into the public domain. Charles Cardell often used the term 'Old Tradition' in association with his magickal practices, though he also referred to it as 'Wicca' and its adherents as 'Wiccens'. Without going into it too deeply here, 'Old Tradition' is I feel, the best term to use. Cardell's Old Tradition was in some ways the antithesis to Gardner's. Gerald and some members of his Covens were far more public in their proclamations of Witchcraft, than Charles ever was. In acts of magnificent singlemindedness, Cardell ardently adhered to his truly secretive path, to the point of proverbially cutting his nose off to spite his face. This was seen as a result of events thrust upon him by the actions of others, which forced a dramatic change in Charles' home environment and left a significant and somewhat depressing cloud over him for the final decade of his earthly life.

All that said, some of the *Atho Book of Magick*, does clearly have Ray Howard's hand behind it, mainly with regard to anything pertaining to the Head of Atho. Cardell claimed to Doreen and others that Howard had stolen his Magick, but there is a syncretic blending of ideas evident in the extant material, which although limited, much seems to have originally been used by Cardell. Sadly, we simply do not have anywhere near as much extant documentary evidence as we do regarding the early writings and letters that revolve around Gardner and the early Wica.

We do have a few notes made by Doreen that reveal her own thoughts as to who was behind what:

Cardell was writing in 1958 about 'the Craft of the Wiccens'. So it seems likely that Howard took Cardell's teachings, rather than the reverse. Howard's contribution was the Head of Atho. But where would he have got this name?... Did the Cardells commission Howard to make the Head?'¹¹

Did Ray Howard supply the witchcraft/gypsy lore side of the teaching, and Cardell the rest? Howard owned the Head of Atho, but who derived the magical language, '7 D's to Moon Magic' and so on!¹²

⁹ Ray Howard's Correspondence Course is reproduced in its entirety in *Here Be Magick*.

¹⁰ Charles and Mary always claimed they were brother and sister though this was not true.

¹¹ Doreen Valiente, notebook entry, 20th of July 1983.

¹² Doreen Valiente, notebook entry, 6th May 1985.

The Cardells articles from 1958, in *Light* magazine give support to the supposition of significant amounts of the ABM material being in use by them in the late 1950s. There was also much evidence for magickal symbolism seen and used on their property at Charlwood, which evinces magickal ideas and practices as far back as the 1940s. This is especially seen in the naming of the dwellings on their property of Dumblecott and Dumbledene and would seem to tie in to certain words beginning with 'D', that are also definitely 'core' to the ABM. There is also firm evidence for Charles Cardell having an interest in old religions and occult ideas, as far back as 1915.

Returning now to the elemental rune, another close variation on it is seen in a Book of Shadows found in one of the British Gardnerian lineages. This version dates back to the mid to late 1960s and has a few word changes in it but without doubt, is based on the 1962 Coven of Atho version.

Another variant is found over in the USA, so this rune actually went international! This one is near-identical to Ray Howard's 1962 version with only one letter changed; 'bond' became 'bind'.

Ray Buckland, an American who was initiated on the Isle of Man in 1963 by Monique (Craft name Olwen) and Scotty Wilson (Loic) said he had got it from them and they had told him, it was part of the oral teachings of Gardner.¹³ This may in part be true but as I have been unable to find anything written by Gardner that mentions this elemental rune, I rather suspect syncretic squirrelling was afoot somewhere.

The other possibility is that it came from Roger Pratt or Donna Cole. Donna was an American living in London who was initiated into the Whitecroft line in 1968. She subsequently moved back to the USA, formed a Coven and met Roger Pratt. He copied stuff from her and later, both Roger and Donna became friends with Phoenix and Theos, who had taken over Ray and his wife Rosemary's Coven at Long Island. Both Roger and Donna further shared material with Theos and Phoenix. Roger received the rune from Donna, in its original, unchanged 1962 form. So, it looks like this rune made its way over to the USA in two different ways.

Another place where the original and unchanged 1962 rune from Howard's course appeared, was in what is commonly known as Alex Sanders' 'early Burnt Book of Shadows'. This book is so-named as it demonstrates evidence of it having been partially burnt and torn up. The story goes that Alex, in the 1980s, ripped it up in a fit of pique and tried to burn it. It is in Alex's own handwriting and Maxine Sanders confirmed that it was his earliest Book of Shadows and was being used by him in 1964. It is this book that was given by them to new Alexandrian initiates to copy from, most importantly, for one hour at a time. The Burnt Book was the Sanders' core Book of Shadows up until 1967, when it started to be reworked to create a second Alexandrian Book of Shadows that was more in line with their own personal magical thinking and practices.¹⁴

Whilst it is certainly possible Alex took Howard's correspondence course, there is nothing else identifiable from that in Sanders' Burnt Book. I think it is perhaps more likely that the rune was passed to Alex by someone else who had an association with Howard and/or Cardell. This could have been Eleanor Bone, one-time friend to Charles Cardell. She was also close to Alex Sanders up until he attracted significant attention from the British Press in the mid-1960s; something that Eleanor disapproved of.¹⁵

¹³ Personal email between Ray Buckland and Lynne Sydelle Russo-Gordon – thanks to Lynne for this information.

¹⁴ Information from Maxine Sanders to author, Dec 2021.

¹⁵ Information from Maxine Sanders to author, Dec 2021.

Whilst we cannot be sure on the precise journey the rune made from one document or Book of Shadows to another, it is clear that there were several potential pathways of transmission from Howard's Coven of Atho into the Alexandrian, Whitecroft and Long Island traditions of Witchcraft.

One Book, Two Kings.

Not only did Alex have a copy of the version of the rune from Howard's course, it also appears that Alex copied much of the material seen in 'Rex Nemorensis' (Charles Cardell) 1964 publication, *Witch* and incorporated it into his 'Burnt Book'.

The bulk of *Witch* contains many of the rites from Gardnerian Witchcraft and was Charles' way of revealing Gardner's practices to the general public. Cardell had no love for scourging and considered the flail of ancient Egypt, whose beliefs Cardell held dear, had been misappropriated by Gardner. He further believed that Gardner's Witchcraft was based in part on Gardner's personal proclivities, that he had hoaxed the nation and that the Press, which Cardell found increasingly disdainful, lapped up every bit of it in their insatiable quest for sensationalism.

Now, It would be understandable that Alex may have copied his early Book of Shadows (BOS) from several sources. A significant clue to the reason for this can be found in a September 1963 letter from Pat Kopinski (born Mary Chetwynd)¹⁶ to Gerald Gardner where she writes about her time with Patricia and Arnold Crowther:

I was given nothing except a slightly crude [crude] rite for the morning. I had no book - except an empty one - and the high priestess would never give me even the ordinary rites which were performed by the whole coven, in spite of the fact that the oath we all took states that we will not deny the secrets of the Craft to our brother and sister witches.¹⁷

This same letter further reveals that Pat Kopinski was then friendly with Alex Sanders, and that they all went to meet a Derbyshire Priestess called 'Medea', who by this time, had already initiated Kopinski's friend 'Sylvia'; I think this was Sylvia Tatham (born Sylvia Helen Gamble)¹⁸. Kopinski, after having an unsatisfactory experience with the Crowther's asked Medea if she could be initiated. Initially 'Medea' refused Kopinski due to her having known the Crowthers and 'Medea' does not appear to have liked them. However, Kopinski encouraged 'Medea' to reconsider and she subsequently changed her mind.

Kopinski continues in her letter to Gardner and makes mention of Alex Sanders having been initiated on the 9th of March that year, one day before the Full Moon, with Kopinski as his sponsor. The following day, 'Medea' made Kopinski a High Priestess and Sylvia became the Coven Maiden. Just shortly afterwards, in April 1963, Medea's husband died and she went to live with her sister in Dorset, resigning as a High Priestess of the Derbyshire Coven. Kopinski further writes to Gardner:

She [Medea] put me through the pentacle and gave me the secret names. But we still do not have all the rites. We have to manage as best we can.

Continuing that she has:

¹⁶ William Wallworth, 'The Lost Coven of Nottingham' (<http://deadfamilies.com/Z3-Others/PDF-Files/Book-The-Lost-Coven-Of-Nottingham-W016-1209-2021-01.pdf>) p. 8.

¹⁷ Letter from Pat Kopinski to Gerald Gardner, 5th September 1963. Thanks to Brian Worthley for reminding me of it.

¹⁸ William Wallworth, 'The Lost Coven of Nottingham', Dec. 2021 (<http://deadfamilies.com/Z3-Others/PDF-Files/Book-The-Lost-Coven-Of-Nottingham-W016-1209-2021-01.pdf>) p. 24

...five members in my coven at the moment, counting Alex who comes now and again.

Kopinski ends her letter by inviting Gardner to come and spend a week with them, so that he can meet her new coven.

So, what we see here is a Gardnerian coven schism and an emphasis of the fact that they did not have all the rites. This makes it completely understandable that Alex's early BOS is based in part, on material that was available publically. *Witch* was first published in May 1964, and has recently been reissued by Wishan Books.¹⁹

I just want to add that there are other lines of thought surrounding Alex's initiations, but that investigation is beyond the scope of this article.

Before looking further at some of the similarities and differences between Alex's Burnt Book and *Witch*, let us first ask ourselves how and where Charles Cardell got hold of these indisputably Gardnerian documents. I think there are two main possibilities: The first is that Gardner himself gave some material to Cardell. This is something suggested by Jack Bracelin to Doreen Valiente and she wrote in her notebooks: 'Jack thinks G.B.G. gave the rituals to Cardell, at the time when they were friendly...'²⁰ There is also one piece of evidence, a letter from Robert Cochrane to Bill Gray, that states Gardner actually initiated Charles Cardell:

*...according to my information dating some years ago, Cardell was initiated himself by Gardner, then quarrelled over something or the other (presumably inflated ego) and they parted.*²¹

The other option and I think the more likely one, certainly when it comes to most of the rituals in *Witch*, is that they were given to Olwen Greene. As previously described, she was initiated by Gardner whilst effectively acting as a spy for Charles Cardell; reporting back to him on Gardner and his ritual approach. Olwen could simply have copied the rituals from Gardner but there are some striking similarities to the rituals in *Witch* and a collection often referred to as the 'Weschcke Documents'. I think it very likely that Gardner gave her some copies of those.

The 'Weschcke Documents' are the name given to a particular collection of early documents that were typed up and hand-annotated by Gardner in the late 1950s. These were given to various members of the Wica to copy from and several late 1950s initiates have made mention of them. Original copies were sent to the late Carl Weschcke, president/owner of the publisher Llewellyn Worldwide, by the High Priest, Charles Clark, in 1969, having received permission from Gardner to do this several years earlier. As such, the Weschcke document collection is the most complete set of these original documents that are currently known to exist. However, they should not be considered complete in themselves and other contemporary loose documents exist that never made it into this particular set.

¹⁹ <http://wishanbooks.org/>

²⁰ Doreen Valiente, notebook entry, 8th march 1966.

²¹ Cochrane to Bill Gray letter, Summer 1964, as published by Shani Oates, *The Taper that Lights the Way: The Robert Cochrane Letters Revealed*, (Mandrake of Oxford 2016) p. 254.



Figure 3: Olwen Greene in 1951

Key features seen in *Witch*, that also feature in Alex's early book are: the incorrect usage of the symbol for the Gardnerian first degree, the underlining of certain phrases and the identicalness of the text, complete with the odd, and consistent, spelling mistakes and missing or unintentionally duplicated line of material.

Now it is clear that Charles Cardell had retyped the rituals for his publication as there is very little evidence of Gardner's idiosyncratic spelling that we see in many other original documents typed up by him, the Weschcke documents being a good example of this.

As mentioned, there is quite a lot in common between *Witch* and the Weschcke documents. So why do I think Alex copied from *Witch* instead of having had access to the Weschckes or a Book of Shadows based on them?

I think Alex still copied the *Witch* versions as evinced by examples of underlining and other striking similarities, that are seen in *Witch* and the Burnt Book but not in the Weschckes. As such, we can reasonably discount that Alex had access to the Weschckes as an alternative explanation for the similarities observed.

Examples of such underlining emphasis in *Witch* and also identically in Alex's Burnt Book are seen in certain phrases found in 'The Book of Shadows' section:

'Keep all thoughts of the Cult from your mind.'

'Think to yourself: "I Know Nothing, I Remember Nothing. I Have Forgotten."'

'There is no hope for you in this life, or in that which is to come.'

I know of no other original Gardner document or BOS that has the exact same occurrences of underlining.

In both *Witch* and the *Burnt Book*, the 'Book of Shadows' section is followed by a passage entitled 'The Ecstasy of the Goddess'. Alex appears to have loosely copied an image from *Witch*, that Cardell added to the end of that section (Figs. 4 & 5).

Never boast, never threaten. Never say that you would wish ill to anyone. If you speak of the Craft, or if any speak of the Craft, say: "Speak not to me of such, it frightens me. 'Tis evil to speak of it."



Figure 4: Extract from *Witch*.

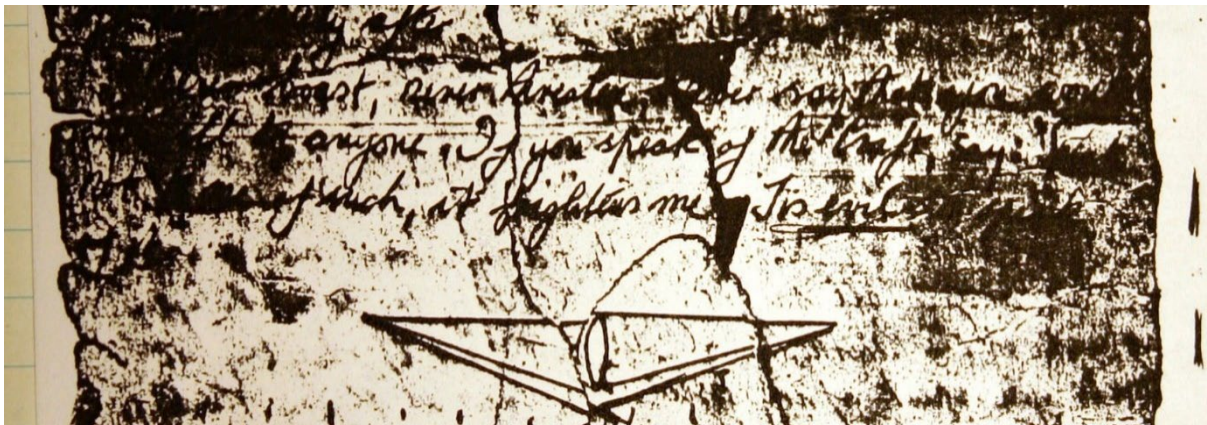


Figure 5: Extract from the *Burnt Book*.

The 'Forming Circle', 'Closing Circle' and 'Consecration of the Salt and Water' sections in Alex's Book are again identical to the ones given in *Witch* and are given in the same order and on the same page, just as found in Cardell's publication.

Interestingly, this trilogy appear together on a single page of the Weschcke Documents along with the Drawing Down the Moon Invocation, that also directly follows this trilogy as presented in *Witch*. This makes it a near-certainty that this particular Weschcke document served as part of Cardell's source material.

That said, It should also be noted that in Alex's book, this trilogy is **not** followed by the Drawing Down of the Moon Invocation, plus Alex has further embellished the circle opening and closings with the invoking and banishing pentagrams of Earth. These are not given in *Witch*, and I think were either added by Alex, whose writings clearly show he had knowledge of magic with a more ceremonial flavour. Alternatively, it may well be that he knew of the use of the pentagram at those points, from his practices with 'Medea', Pat Kopinski or other witches. The invoking pentagram does appear on

another Weschcke Document entitled 'Forming The Circle' – though that one did not make it into *Witch* and neither is it in the Burnt Book.

Other things found in Alex's early BOS, that are also identically or near-identically, seen in *Witch*, are the Amalthean Horn invocation, The Charge, Of Spells, The Witches Rune, The Eightfold Paths and its image, the Cakes and Wine, To Gain The Sight, The Spring Equinox, May Eve - 'Bealtine', The Summer 'Solsis' (this misspelling is also seen in Alex's book), August Eve, Candle Game, Autumn Equinox, Halloween, and The Scourge and The Kiss. It should also be noted that there are only six Sabbats given in *Witch*, but the Burnt Book does contain all eight.

The Amalthean Horn Invocation further supports *Witch* as being a source for Alex. Both the version in *Witch* (Fig 6.) and the version in Alex's Burnt Book (Fig 7.), are missing the same line: 'When other gods are fallen and put to scorn.' I think it very likely this is an error made by Cardell when typing it up as the two versions of Amalthean Horn found in the Weschcke collection, do contain this line.

INVOCATION.

Hail.....! From the Amalthean Horn
Pour forth thy store of love. I lowly bend
Before thee. I adore thee to the end,
With loving sacrifice thy shrine adorn.
Thy foot is to my lips: my prayer upborne
Upon the rising incense-smoke. Then spend
Thine ancient love. Oh Mighty One, descend
To aid me, who without thee am forlorn.

Figure 6: 'Invocation' (Amalthean Horn) from *Witch* (1964).

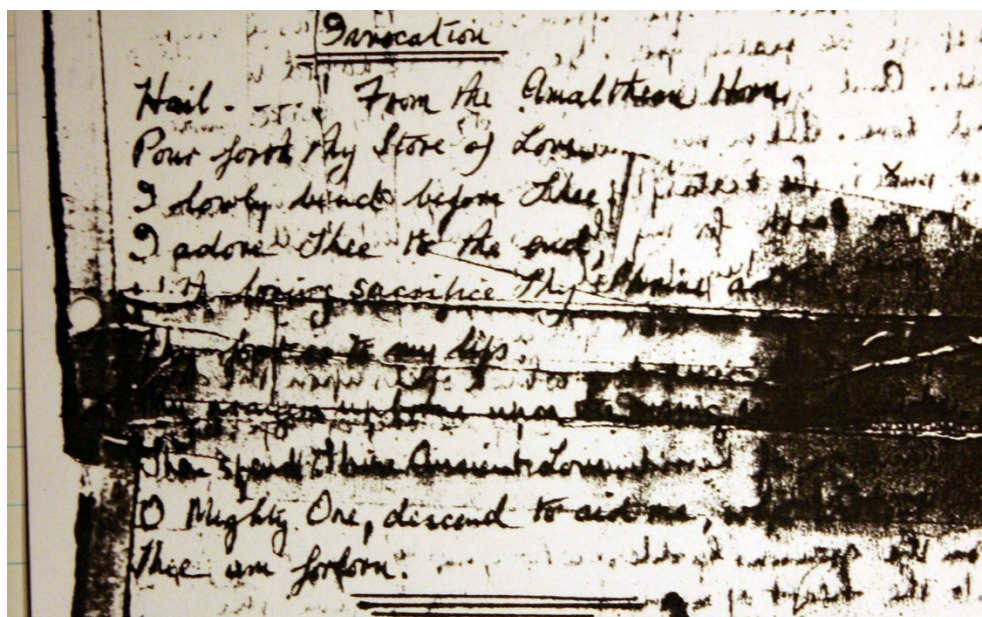


Figure7: 'Invocation' (Amalthean Horn) from Alex's 'Burnt Book' (1964).

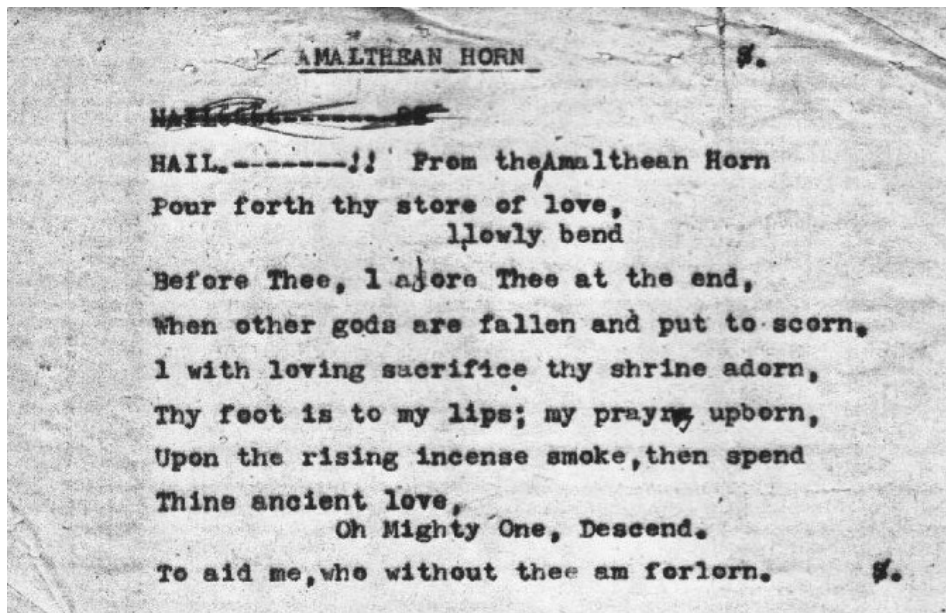


Figure 8: Amalthean Horn from the Weschcke Documents, circa late-1950s.

This invocation has been derived from the poem *La Fortune* written by Aleister Crowley and first published in his book, *Rodin in Rime*, in 1907. Due to its rarity, it is unlikely Gardner had a copy of this book and it is more likely he copied it from its reprinting in *Vol III of Crowley's Collected Works* - also published in 1907. It is near-identical though Crowley's version does not contain the line 'I with loving sacrifice thy shrine adorn.'

When it comes to 'The Witches' Chant', again Alex's version is identical to that seen in *Witch*. There appears to be a typo by Cardell near the end which is replicated in Alex's version: 'As I do will, so **might** it be'. Most Crafters know this ending as 'As I do will, so **note** it be' which makes much better poetic sense than having two incidents of 'might' so close together (Figs 9 & 10). Doreen Valiente was the writer of this poem and several variants exist. With her poetry prowess, I think we can be confident that she would not have had the word 'might' repeated in this way and it is therefore almost certainly a genuine and understandable copying error made by Cardell and duplicated by Alex.

By all the Might of Moon and Sun,
As I do will, so might it be,
Chant the Spell and Be it Done.

Figure 9: Extract from 'The Witches' Chant' as seen in *Witch* (1964).

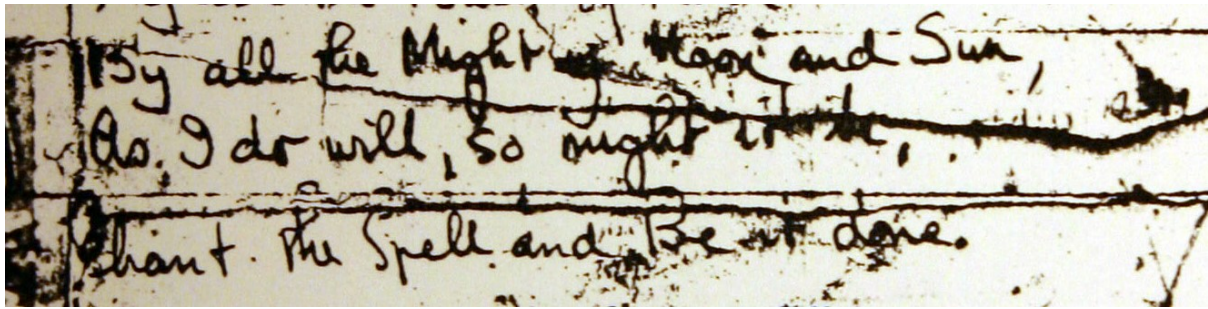


Figure 10: Extract from the 'Burnt Book'.

There is also a striking similarity in Alex's Burnt Book, in his image of the Pentacle, which is also given in *Witch*. In Cardell's booklet, it incorrectly displays an upward-pointing triangle for the First Degree, as too does Alex's illustration. Alex has further chosen to cross **both** the Scourge and Kiss signs; In *Witch*, only one is crossed. This may have been an obfuscation by Alex who deliberately introduced mistakes into his books, both personal and published and is something worth keeping in mind.²² Especially with regards to any comparative analysis you may wish to make for yourself.

Alternatively, I wondered if this may be related to the concept of a 'disguised Kiss', something that I have a vague recollection of my initiator, Charles Clark, mentioning to me, but my memory is hazy on this point. Clark did have a copper Pentacle, with twice crossed 'S's so it may be related to an approach taken by some of the early Wica, perhaps including 'Medea' and Kopinski?²³



Figure 11: Alex's Pentacle in his 'Burnt Book'.

²² Information from Maxine Sanders to author, Dec 2021.

²³ Please get in touch if anyone has come across or knows more on the concept of a 'disguised kiss'.



PENTACLE.

Figure 12: The Pentacle as given in *Witch*.

With regard to the incorrect triangle seen in *Witch*, this may perhaps have been a deliberate obfuscation by Charles Cardell; In his own Old Tradition, the symbol for a woman was the other way round from Gardner's downward pointing triangle.

Looking now at the Second Degree from the Burnt Book, this, like so much else, is near identical again to that found in *Witch*. The latter again bears what I think is another copying error almost certainly made by Cardell. The phrase 'And he taught her all the mysteries and gave her the necklace of rebirth' has been repeated. It is also identically and incorrectly repeated in the Burnt Book.

Interestingly in both *Witch* and in the Burnt Book, the final section of the Second Degree ends with several more lines. These are not in the original Weschcke version, but it's possible there was a variant form of this particular document. This is something we see within the rest of the Weschcke Document collection; it has two different versions of the Eight Ways, Forming the Circle and The Charge so it's reasonable to think that there could have been variants of other rites as things were tweaked and refined.

Another thing the Burnt Book has in common with *Witch* are seen in the Scourge markings that are given. The ones in Alex's book are identical to those depicted on an image of the scourge drawn by Charles Cardell and shown in *Witch*. Though it could be argued here that Alex had seen them in real life through his interactions with other witches.

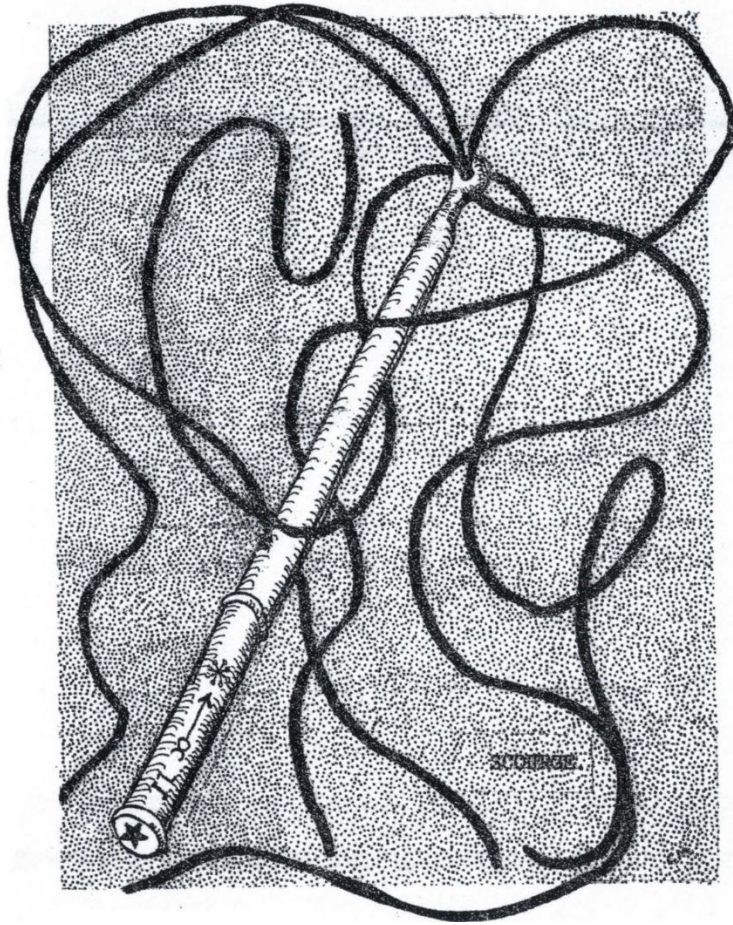


Figure 13. Charles Cardell own picture of the Scourge from *Witch*. The image is signed 'CM' – the initials of his original name, Charles Maynard, which he continued to use on his artwork.

Now, this story changes a little when it comes to two of the three, degree rituals, for it is here where we most notably find some significant departures from *Witch*.

In the Burnt Books First Degree, there is a strange use of the word 'Bledsian' instead of 'Blessed'. Bledsian is an old English version of 'to bless'. This particular section continues with various archaic sounding words that reflect the correct modern English usually spoken, though several of them do not seem to be true old English words. This could be an example of Alex changing things to make them look more archaic (something that Gardner also did), though Alex only did this with one part of the First Degree.

As seen in the Kopinski letters, Alex appears to have received a first degree from 'Medea', so it is likely that she or Kopinski would have been the source for Alex's First Degree material in the Burnt Book. With regards to the archaic words, I did also wonder if there was once a document that had the peculiar Old English section in it by Gardner and which now no longer survives, that perhaps, 'Medea' and Kopinski were using?

In the First Degree given in *Witch*, Cardell has actually missed out a line of the five-fold kiss and this has **not** been replicated in the Burnt Book. This, combined with other significant differences not seen in *Witch's* First Degree, supports the idea that Alex had a copy of this particular ritual from elsewhere.

When it comes to the Third Degree rite in Alex's book, this again is noticeably different to that given in *Witch* and it is evident that Alex, or someone associated with him, had a significantly different version of this rite, or more experience with the words spoken and various actions performed, for these are not given in their entirety in *Witch*.

Interestingly, the version of the Third Degree in *Witch* is identical to the one in the Weschcke document collection, complete with the \$ and S indicator marks and I think Cardell almost certainly had a copy of that particular Weschcke.

In summary, whilst there is much in the Burnt Book that is identical or, near-identical (allowing for reasonable copying errors and minor whimsical changes) to *Witch*, there are some significant departures; most notably seen in two of the three degrees. This suggests and supports the idea that there was a syncretic process going on and Alex was drawing from several sources to create his first Book of Shadows. Acquiring magical material from other sources seems to have been something Alex felt compelled to do. In a very literal sense, he had stolen two valuable occult books, Mathers' *The Key of Solomon* and A. E. Waite's *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*, from Rylands library in 1962, whilst working there as a book duster.²⁴ All this said, there is little doubt that a significant part of the Burnt Book appears to have been copied from *Witch*.

Given the evidence seen in Kopinski's letter and the content of *Witch*, we can see what has almost certainly happened here. This further demonstrates that the ramifications of the publication of *Witch* had far-reaching consequences beyond what we may at first have expected.

Someone else who noticed the similarities between *Witch* and this 'Burnt' Alexandrian Book of Shadows was Doreen Valiente. Somehow, perhaps either directly from Alex or possibly via the witch Derek Taylor, another witch, Kevin Carlyon, ended up with the 'Burnt Book' and sent a copy of it to Doreen Valiente. In a 1990 letter to Carlyon, Doreen wrote:

I must thank you too, very much, for the photocopy of the Alex Sanders manuscript of the 'Book of Shadows,' which arrived safely....

I have been examining the Sanders photocopy with much interest, because as John Whalebone says in his article, I was intrigued to see the faithful copying of the spelling mistakes, for example 'Solsis' for 'Solstice', which occur notably in the version of the Gardnerian 'Book of Shadows' which was published in that very nasty little book, WITCH, by Rex Nemorensis (Charles Cardell), shortly after old Gerald died in 1964. There are quite a number of other resemblances, too; and I thought what a glorious joke it would be if the very book which set out to destroy the revival of witchcraft in this country had actually succeeded in giving Alex Sanders the basis of the Alexandrian version!²⁵

Doreen, was as perceptive as ever, though I do feel objectively she wasn't quite right with regard to Cardell's attempt at destroying the 'revival of witchcraft'. He considered that such a path shouldn't be shouted about in the way it was at that time, through what he considered as the disdainful British Press. Charles certainly had his own perspective on things, and I feel it was a valid one for someone as secretive as he was, about his own magickal path. Both Cardell and Gardner had their own form of Witchcraft, but their approach, promotion of, and practices were quite different.

²⁴ For more info please see Grevel Lindops article 'How the King of the Witches Dusted the Books: Alex Sanders at the John Rylands Library', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 2018.

²⁵ *Beltane Fire*, Autumn 1999. Date of letter, 18th June 1990. I have been unable to find the John Whalebone article mentioned – please get in touch if you have it.

Cardell had also earlier identified parts of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows as having come from Leland's *Aradia*, which I think is almost certainly what prompted Charles to self-publish what was the first ever reissue of *Aradia* since 1899, just a few months prior to *Witch*, at the end of 1963.²⁶ As such, I think this was actually Cardell's first and more veiled, literary assault on Gardner and his Craft.

I hope I have given readers some food for thought and I can only urge anyone interested in the full story behind Charles Cardell, Ray Howard and the Head of Atho, to seek out a copy of *Here Be Magick*.²⁷

I want to end with a beautiful quotation taken from Charles Cardell's 1963 quirky publication *Witchkraft*.²⁸ This is something he publically wrote a couple of times and I feel it was core to his personal spiritual beliefs and magickal path.

Look with your eyes [at] the sunlight on the hills, touch with your hands the softness of a bird, listen to insects chirping in the grass, taste with your tongue the food that Nature grows, and when the incense of the morn creeps in your heart, know then these Magick ways alone will bring you life.

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²⁶ C. G. Leland, *Aradia*, (Dumlecott Magick Productions, 1963)

²⁷ This can be done directly with me through my website <https://www.thewica.co.uk/> or through Thoth publications <https://www.thoth.co.uk/>

²⁸ Recently reissued by Wishan Books: <http://wishanbooks.org/>