

August 11, 1959

Mr. Gerald B. Gardner, Director
Museum of Magic and Witchcraft
Castletown
Isle of Man, British Isles

Dear Mr. Gardner:

Having read three of your books, The Meaning of Witchcraft, Witchcraft Today, High Magics Aid, and knowing of you, as perhaps the foremost scholar in the field today, I am writing you concerning one particular aspect of witchcraft upon which I have been unable to get any information.

I have a fairly extensive library of occultism, including all of the works of Aleister Crowley, Dion Fortune, S. L. MacGregor, Mathers, A. E. Waite, and most of the works of Israel Regardie. In William Seabrook's Witchcraft, Its Power and Influence Today and in his No Hiding Place, he refers to the usage of a witches cradle. None of the other works explained provide any information on this article and I am hoping that you can cast some light on this apparent mystery and recommend reference works that refer to its usage. Another aspect of William Seabrook's research, and I wonder if you would comment upon it, is the use of bondage, that is, physical restraints to heighten a subject's sensitivity to telepathy and clairvoyance.

Your books primarily refer to the existence of witchcraft covens in the British Isles, but I have heard persistent rumors of covens in the New York area. I wonder if you have any knowledge of this locale and other areas in the United States.

Thanking you very much for your reply and hoping that I may be of service to you in some way in the future. I am

Sincerely yours,

Carl L. Weschcke

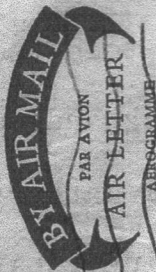
The Witches' Mill
Castletown

Isle of Man

14.8.59.

Dear Mr Weschche

I have read Seabrooks "Witchcraft" and I also have wondered at his mention of a "Witches Cradle" I have asked many of the older witches, and none of them had ever heard of it. But I have vaguely heard of a German instrument of torture, called a witches cradle at times, I have seen one, at Nuremberg I think. It was like a big heavy wooden cradle. but it had spikes on the inside. I was told people were stripped naked, bound tightly, put into it, and rocked backwards and forward. (it was big enough for them to roll over and over.) I gathered it was an ordinary instrument of torture, but I should imagine, that it is possible when the Witch Persecution was on, that they might use it regularly on all people accused of Witchcraft, and it might get the name of the "Witches Cradle" And it is possible that some people might make an amateur Cradle. In Seabrooks case I think it was a horrid old woman who tortured her daughter in some such device. But I have not read his "No Hiding Place" which you speak of. Could my explanation fit his description there? I think Seabrooks experiment was very sound. The Eskimo Shaman always use it. And, there are various stories of wonderful Magic Books which could only be read when you had an iron band on your forehead. This I think points to knowledge of this. Vis that pressure on certain parts produce results. I have only heard stories of Witch Covens in New York since that play and film "Bell Book and Candle" came out. and I thought it simply is that some



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Mr Carl L. Weschoke

100 South Wabasha St.

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G. B. Gardner

Sender's name and address

The Witches Mill

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AN AIR LETTER SHOULD NOT CONTAIN ANY
ENCLOSURE; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

AUG 17 1959

had made one up because of this. Though of course there's no reason at all why there should not be Covens in America, but I would have expected them to be in the Country rather than in N.Y. The fact is. Covens are usually family affairs, or two or three families at most. The knowledge and

practices are kept as a family affair, simply because they don't want outsiders to know of the naked dances etc. this in practice means that they intermarry to a great extent. with the usual results. I should be very interested to know if they really are any Covens in the States. There was an article in a New York paper (they tell me) about a year ago, about the Movey, Bell, Book, and Candle. In which the writer tried to find witches in New York. He found one who told him she was a witch, (but was an obvious fortune teller, another he met in a train, reading a book called "Witches Today" "" who "strung him along" That she was a witch. he also found third, who they say didn't give much evidence. But the article they saw gave the impression that there were flourishing Covens there, possibly this may have started the story you heard. By the way, can you tell me what Seabrook said in "No Hiding Place" as he may say something which would confirm, or else prove my theory about the "Witches Cradle."

Yours sincerely

G. B. Gardner

August 18, 1959

Mr. G. B. Gardner
The Witches Mill
Castletown
Isle of Man
England

Dear Mr. Gardner:

Thank you very much for your prompt letter in regard to Seabrook's witches cradle.

I know the torture instrument to which you are referring, but am quite sure that Seabrook's reference is to some other instrument. In his Witchcraft Its Power in the World Today, page 73, he does refer to the witches cradle in association with books "dealing with the obscure sadistic-masochistic element in medieval sorcery." The description is that it was something "suspended by heavy chains from the ceiling was a life-sized contrivance of wood, with blackened leather straps-- as perverse a device as twisted human ingenuity ever invented." In No Hidding Place, he describes the beginning of his experiments while living in Rhinebeck, New York, he says: " We made a cage similar to the one the Manchu princess who turned Taoist saint had been imprisoned in for twenty years. We even built a witch's cradle. And never, when things got going, was there any dearth of young apprentice witches."

It would seem to me that in view of the context in which he refers to the cradle, it was not specifically an item of torture, but more, rather, have been some kind of device for holding a body in restraint while, being suspended off the ground; that he had enthusiastic volunteers, that no injury was involved as would be the case with a device with sharp spikes. I am very anxious to find out what Seabrook's cradle actually was because of the possible connection with the study of bondage that I am doing. Should I succeed in contacting someone who had seen his cradle, I will definitely let you in on the solution to the mystery.

The rumors of a witch coven in New York City that I mentioned preceded the delightful little movie, Bell, Book, and Candle by some time. I also ran across an isolated case of "Voo Doo" as follows : my friend, while working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art observed a student who visited the museum quite regularly who had a twisted and shrunken left arm. Meeting an acquaintance of this student, she was told a story that, of course, cannot be guaranteed as being authentic, but which credited the malformed arm to the vengeance of a "woman scorned" who

had used a doll, sticking pins in its arm until her feelings were assuaged.

Do you know of any witchcraft or magical practices or rituals that might be considered to involve bondage ~~and~~ⁱⁿ any way similar to Seabrook's experiments with the girl tied in the Eskimo ~~Shaman~~^{Shaman} position or in the leather mask with her senses blanked?

I would appreciate very much hearing further from you and again thank you for your courtesy in trying to satisfy my question about the witch's cradle.

Sincerely yours,

Carl L. Weschcke

The Witches' Mill
Castletown

Isle of Man

24.8.59.

My dear Mr Weschcke

What you quote is very interesting to me. Actually one of the Witch secrets is that restraint will produce powers. But I have taken oaths, and can't break them. But actually, the witches I know haven't anything exactly as described. As it does not hang from the Ceiling. When I read Seabrook's book I was puzzled, as he describes it as as perverse a device as twisted human ingenuity ever invented. I thought this meant it was a torture instrument. Witches have talked of it, and all were puzzled. The witch thing is beautifully comfortable. I can see that if it was slung on chains it might be more amusing. But in these degenerate days, poor witches have to work where they can. All they have is usually very light, so it can be packed up and moved quickly. Anyhow, I will ask some of them, if they think slinging would improve matters. I have never heard of any use of a leather or other mask to blank the senses. But, actually, the face is usually pressed into a pillow or something, for this purpose. I have never heard of the Shaman position being used. (I think they were rolled in skins and bound round, looking like a sausage.) Have you read any of my books. Witchcraft Today or The Meaning of Witchcraft?. I explain that to raise power, you have to be naked.

I would very much like to know whether Seabrook had stumbled on the real secret. If you know how to raise power, and how to "Form the

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Sender's name and address: G.B. Gardner

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ENCLOSURE; IF IT DOES IT WILL BE SURCHARGED
OR SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

"Link", the "Witches Poppet" works all-right. But the "Witch Law" is you may never use the "Power" to harm anyone. (Its not they are more ethical, Simply they have been through the persecution. when nine million people were tortured to death for witchcraft.) and they dont want another. As you cant work alone, and everything has to be talked over, as to whether it will harm anyone, before it may be done. And, headquarters are clair, voyant. if anyone did get up to anything. theyd all be down stamping on their necks at once. and. "They gave you the power, and they can take it away." Thats what people are affraid of. Do tell me when your book will be out, as I am very intrested in this question.

Yours sincerely
G.B. Gardner

G. B. Gardner

P.S. In this Museum we have two "Witches Poppets" which worked. But, they were used in Blackmail cases. The people blackmailed had been to the police, and lawyers, and done all they could. Witches normaly wont inter-fear with people outside the Craft. but they liked these people. And they harmed noone. They simply prevented them harming others. In both cases the Poppet was bound round so the original could not move in the matter, and his lips pinned together so he could not speak in the matter. And they couldnt. "I am quite sure if the cord had been put round his neck and he was told to stop breathing, he would have. I also have Australian pointing bones. and Keris Magapahit. In all cases the victim does not know, what has been done. though he may guess, when things happen. Yours G.B.G.

ankles of the person seeking initiation. I wonder if you think that this bondage, and the blinding, might be purely symbolical in effect, or have a physiological value as well.

Various novels and tales refer to a 'witches cradle' or a 'magic cradle' as causing the transformation of a man, and sometimes of a woman, into a horse. I wonder if you have any knowledge of this and would suggest the origin of the idea.

November 6, 1960

Mr. Gerald B. Gardner
The Witches' Mill
Castletown, Isle of Man
England

Dear Mr. Gardner:

You may remember that we had some correspondence a little more than a year ago with reference to William Seabrook's "witches cradle."

I have just read and enjoyed Mr. Bracelin's biography and study and thought I would again write you and ask if you might have run across any further information as to what the witch cradle Seabrook refers to might be, or if the 'witch thing' you mentioned in your letters might be slung from chains as described by Seabrook.

In Appendix I of your The Meaning of Witchcraft you mention the binding of the Witch Goddess and the use of the cord which had bound a corpse to secure Second Sight. In reference to my question of relating physical bondage and the blinding of the senses as with a mask you note that pressure applied to certain parts of the body 'produce results.'

Do you think that Seabrook's use of bondage and masks to produce clairvoyance might relate to this use of pressure points (as some forms of hypnosis do) or to a sort of enforced concentrating of powers within the body? Or, and possibly related to either suggestion, might the bondage and masking be first a means of relaxing both mind and body, and then a sort of symbolical setting for turning the attention inward?

In High Magic's Aid you describe the witches' initiation ceremony as including the binding of both the wrists and

ankles of the person seeking initiation. I wonder if you think that this bondage, and the blindfolding, might be purely symbolical in effect, or have a physiological value as well.

Various novels and tales refer to a 'witches bridle' or a 'magic bridle' as causing the transformation of a man, and sometimes of a woman, into a horse. I wonder if you have any knowledge of this and would suggest the origin of the idea.

I had hoped to be in England this Fall, and of course to visit The Witches' Mill, but I purchased a very lovely and quite isolated farm where I expect to build a year 'round residence next year and this expenditure made a British excursion a little too much of a luxury at this time.

I wonder if in London there are many dealers in magical type equipment that I might contact.

I will appreciate any help you can give me in reference to my research project and look forward to visiting the Isle of Man in a year or so.

Sincerely,

In Appendix I of your The Meaning of Witchcraft you mention the binding of the Witch Goddess and the use of the cord which had bound a corpse to secure Second Sight. In reference to my question of relating physical bondage and the blanking of the senses as with a mask you note that pressure applied to certain parts of the body 'produce results.'

Do you think that Gebrook's use of bondage and masks to produce clairvoyance might relate to this use of pressure points (as some forms of hypnosis do) or to a sort of forced concentrating of power within the body? Or, and possibly related to either suggestion, might the bondage and masking be first a means of relaxing both mind and body, and then a sort of symbolical setting for turning the attention inward?

In High Magic's Aid you describe the witches' initiation ceremony as including the binding of both the wrists and



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Dear Mr Weschcke

The darned trouble is, While I have no knowledge of the use of any Witches Cradle as Seabrook describes, I can quite imagine something of the sort being made and used. But, while Seabrook describes something which looked horrible, it would only be used very gently by any of the craft. The trouble is. I am not permitted to say what this is for.

But, I may say, I think the use of a cord which had bound a corpse is only an old superstition, which might have effect by suggestion. But, that pressure applied to certain parts of the body does produce actual results, which I think are more than suggestion, but I can't be certain on this point.

I do know, that for some people at least, This gives a feeling of rest and contentment, amounting to actual mild pleasure, but whether this is only by suggestion or not, I am not sure. But, again for some people, it is certainly a means of relaxing mind and body, and I think a real method of turning the attention inward.

I know of legends of a "Magic Bridle" which can turn people into horses. I think they are just superstitions, which may have come from the Church story, of Saints, etc, putting their girdle on a Dragon etc and taming them. Of course, under hypnosis, someone may have put a bridle on someone and told them they were a horse, and they believed it. because they were already familiar with the legend.

I don't know of any dealers in Magical equipment in London. There was Ivor Mackey, of no 3 Thackery St. High St Kensington, London. who used to deal in magical equipment. 2nd hand, when he could get it. (He had a 2nd hand furniture store.) ^{He is gone now.} I take it, you mean what I mean by magical equipment not conjuring. I enclose a card which may be of some use. I think he is a good workman, but haven't seen any specimens of his work. There is a man named Cardell, who advertised, he would make you magical equipment, he wanted £137/- for a magic Bracelet. and he would do no business by post. You had to pay him five pounds to speak to him, and, give him drawings of what you wanted. People thought he was mad. and, no one was ever fool enough to

pay £5/- to speak to him. or £137/- for a £1/10/- bracelet.

In Aliester Crowleys time, there were two people who used to make things for Magicians. but the war seemed to sweep them away. Witches make their own Tools, also, the only Magician who is worth anything. I told Bracelin about him and he is mentioned in his book. he makes all his own equipment. Anyhow, I look forward to seeing you sometime over here.

Yours sincerely

G. B. Gurnea