



Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast

Colin Wilson

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Poet, Magician, Mountaineer, Polemicist and Pornographer, Aleister Crowley was the most famous, or infamous, name in twentieth century occultism. With his usual flair and style, Colin Wilson brings this complex and enigmatic figure to life and provides an engrossing portrait of the self-styled Great Beast, the man whom the contemporary press dubbed "The Wickedest Man in the World".

The popular image of him as, in the words of Francis King, 'an insatiable sexual athlete, a pimp who lived on the immoral earnings of his girl-friends, and a junkie who daily took enough heroin to kill a roomful of people', has a basis in fact; but there were other, less obnoxious and despicable, aspects of this highly original character. Crowley's greatest legacy is his eclectic occult system: his Magick persists, a potent synthesis of Golden Dawn magic, oriental esoteric techniques, sexual magic, and the all-encompassing Law of Thelema with its two fundamental principles, 'Every man and woman is a star' and the notorious 'Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the Whole of the Law'.

Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast Details

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Author : Colin Wilson

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From Reader Review Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast for online ebook

Maureen says

"There is a feeling that a man who deserts his wife and child and sacrifices a cat and forces his mistress to submit to intercourse with a goat is somehow creating his own bad luck".

Meg says

Aleister Crowley was one messed up dude who loved sex, drugs and conjuring demons. Sure, he was a crazy asshole most of the time, but the world needs a few crazy assholes to accent the droves of mundane assholes that plague this planet. I would have liked to shake his hand...then promptly soak my palm in antibacterial liquid because...well... who know where his hand has been?

Tosh says

The ultimate angry 'outsider' man writing about the ultra inside 'outsider' figure in British aesthetic and social culture. What makes this book interesting is Colin Wilson who by the way is a classic pop culture historian as well as true crime fanatic. This book seems to be the ultimate match-up - the only thing missing is Kenneth Anger and Jimmy Page sitting on one's shoulder while reading this smallish volume.

The book itself is a good introduction to the master magik figure, yet it has that rush to finish on the deadline feel as well. Nevertheless this is a good match up with writer and subject.

David says

Crowley was a certifiable Blakean eccentric who live a life wholly alien to the received social norms of his time, or this time. Worth a look if only for the wonderful courage and foolish displayed by Aleister Crowley and his sympathetic biographer.

Andres says

This is not a bad book by any stretch, but it is a very short one. It really does not do justice to a person as complex as Crowley was. That said, it does have valuable insights and a good chronology of the high (and low) points in the Master Therion's life. I do not agree with every single conclusion the author arrived at, but then again, everyone is entitled to their opinion and at least the facts were stated and available for each to form his own.

If you are going to read just one book on Crowley, though, this isn't the one. There are far better. If you plan on reading more than one, then this one isn't the worst, either, and should probably be in your To Read list.

Erik Graff says

Rick Strong gave me a copy of *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* years ago. I tried to read it, managed about a hundred pages, gave up. What I already knew about the man, some of it from Wilson's own *The Occult*, did not dispose me to expect much. I prefer biographies that are either inspiring or at least about world-historical individuals and their times. Crowley, it seemed, was neither.

Looking for books beyond the pale, beyond those already in my own library and within the ambit of my usual reading, I asked a friend for a recommendation, was given several and picked this biography and a couple of Iain Banks novels to read over holiday. Wilson's Crowley seemed a safe, short introduction to subject. Whatever Crowley's flaws I'd enjoy a reminder of Wilson's grand optimism.

And that is what this book delivered. Wilson, a specialist on the matter of flawed genius in the cases of criminals of various sorts, presents what may be the most generous portrayal of Crowley possible. Even then, it was hardly an inspiring vision. Wilson allows that his subject was accomplished in several regards, among them some of his writing, his yoga, his (often manipulative) "charm", but also admits to his very many flaws, treating Crowley like an arrested adolescent locked into perpetual rebellion against authority and incapable of real care for others.

Still, in Wilson's opinion, there was something there: Crowley was on to something. Naturally, what Crowley apprehended was what Wilson has been pushing throughout his career, namely that humans have great potentials which are rarely realized. This is framed in reference to neo-Kantians like Schopenhauer and Fichte and in terms of modern existentialism in the concluding chapter.

Choosing Aleister Crowley as a case study for arguments in favor of Abraham Maslow's psychology of health would seem a contradiction, and one is suspicious that the author took him as his subject because his contemporary popularity would lead to sales, but there is certainly reason to consider the interaction of exceptional persons with their social environments--to reconsider what Wilson terms "outsiders" seriously. What characterizes them? What creates them? How have they been regarded by those around them? What causes some to become exceptional criminals, others failures incapable of survival? As ever, Wilson's treatment of Crowley is written with some mind to persons with the potential to become like him. As ever, Wilson diagnoses the disease as in part the result of circumstance, as in greater part the result of bad decisions.

This is not a great book. One gets the impression that Wilson has simply summarized his subject's life without any original research, working entirely from Crowley's publications and from secondary sources, interspersing the narrative with occasional asides representing his own opinions and interpretations, ending with a summary epilogue of such interpretation. The editing is terrible, mistakes appearing throughout, the whole book giving the impression of being a rush job.
