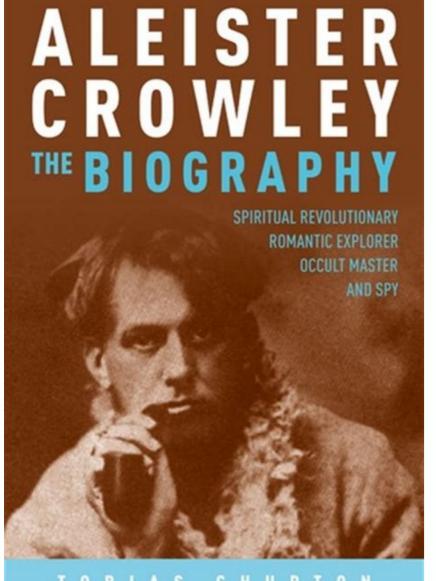


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TOBIAS CHURTON INCLUDING PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED LETTERS AND RESEARCH

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Tobias Churton, Aleister Crowley: The Biography (London: Watkins Publishing, 2011), 496 pp., £19.27 (cloth), £14.99 (paper).

Henrik Bogdan and Martin P. Starr, eds., Alcister Crouley and Western Esotericism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 432 pp., 460 (cloth), £22.50 (paper).

Born to a life of Victorian privilege, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was a talented chess player, an accomplished mountaineer, and a prolific poet and painter. He was also an infamous Pagan occultist, the self-proclaimed "Prophet of the New Aeon," and an individual dubbed "the wickedest man in the world" by the tabloids of his day. Love him or loathe him, Crowley was one of the most influentia Britons of the early twentieth century, as evidenced by his election to the position of history's seventy-third "Greatest Briton" in a 2002 BBC poll. Although the new religious movement that he founded, Thelema, has a membership well below 100,000, Crowley's wider influence over Western esotericism, contemporary Paganism, and the Western counter-culture has been immense. Since his death, "the Great Beast" has become an object of both fascination and revulsion in equal measure. As could perhaps be expected for a figure of such infamy and importance, at least twelve biographers have turned their hand towards exploring his life and times, from the sensationalist early attempts by John Symonds and Daniel P. Mannix to the scholarly, well-researched works of Lawrence Sutin and Richard Kaczynski. Such interest has only intensified in recent years, as is exemplified by both Churton's biography and a new collection of essays.

The most recent author to take up the mantle of Crowley biographer, Tobias Churton (1960–) is both a lecturer in Freemasonry at the University of Exeter's Centre for the Study of Esotericism (EXESESO), as well as an accomplished novelist, screenwriter, and non-fiction writer. Churton has published widely on the subject of Rosicrucianism, Gnosticism, and the Masons' Craft. Upon hearing of his latest literary venture, I wondered what purpose yet another Crowley biography could serve, a concern that Churton was clearly

aware of; his book professes to be "The Biography," a definitive

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It is hard to believe that anyone was taken in by Crowley's silly conglomeration of Freemasonry, Knights Templars, Rosicrucians and bits of mumbo-jumbo borrowed from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Full of beans, so to speak, the Beast climbed mountains in Mexico, scoured temples in Ceylon and trekked through Burma, to find his own supply of opium poppies. Churton says that anyone with "a romantic penchant for the strange and bizarre things in life" gravitates towards The Beast sooner or later. Jump to ratings and reviewsThis definitive biography of Aleister Crowley (1875 - 1947), the most notorious and controversial spiritual figure of the 20th century, brings together a life of world-shaking 'magick', sexual and psychological experimentation at the outer limits, world-record-beating mountaineering and startling prophetic power - as well as poetry, adventure, espionage, wisdom, excess, and intellectual brilliance. The book reveals the man behind the appalling reputation, demolishing a century of scandalmongering that persuaded the world that Crowley was a black magician, a traitor and a sexual wastrel, addicted to drugs and antisocial posing, rather than the mind-blowing truth that Crowley was a genius as significant as Jung, Freud or Einstein. Dismiss Thanks! Something awesome is on its way. Back to Top Visit other sites in the Penguin Random House Network The Crowleys were a wealthy family with brewing interests in HampshireThis newspaper decreed that Crowley's novels, poems and pamphlets should be publicly burned. They must have been on drugs. Tobias Churton also gives us a detailed account of Crowley's work as a British spy during World War I in Berlin during the early 1930s and during World War II. By the Seventies, apparently: "he had become an icon of the New Age and the counter-culture, celebrated by The Beatles and by Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin." It is all quite comical except for the fate of Crowley's two wives. This book contains long lists of Crowley's conquests: Sister Achita, who had "a doctorate in pharmacy", Mohammed ben Brahim, "a Tunisian youth" (any port in a storm, I suppose) and Bertha Busch, with whom The Beast enjoyed "the most wonderful **** I've had in years". He adored the drama. His philosophy was sheer Hollywood kitsch. It's more that the pitiful and the susceptible were drawn to his strong personality, mistaking his hyperactive manner for robustness, his eccentricity for originality and his theatrical streak for genuine intellectual strength. Tobias Churton, Watkins Publihsing £25Roger Lewis's new book, What Am I Still Doing Here? There was also a villa in Sicily where Crowley presided over his orgies like a Victorian patriarch. The Crowleys were a wealthy family with brewing interests in HampshireKnown even in childhood as The Beast, Crowley's schooldays in Malvern were traditionally brutal. Loading PreviewSorry, preview is currently unavailable. The result is an intimate portrait that has never before been shown, and one that has great emotional impact. The book contains the first ever complete investigation of Crowley's astonishing family background - including facts he concealed in his lifetime for fear of social prejudice. This information has not been available to any previous biographer. Biography Nonfiction In early 20th-century England, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was considered "the wickedest man in the world." Today he's seen as a prophet, a master of the occult, and a spiritual pioneer-and his reputation just keeps on growing. Heroin and hashish enabled Crowley and his disciples to "receive strange messages" from the Far Beyond. The author has also been in contact with Crowley's grandson, who has vouchsafed rare, previously untold accounts of family relationships. This new biography, written with the cooperation of leading Crowley scholars and including new revelations from Crowley's grandson, displays the full scope of the man's many achievements as poet, explorer, spiritualist, wartime spy, and a thinker as significant as Jung, Freud, or Einstein. They were on drugs. Crowley's erotic abandon was bound up with "chemical experimentation" which is to say that his personal behaviour had a lot to do with his diet of "eggs, fruit, green vegetables and more in your inbox every week. You can download the paper by clicking the button above. Such were his delusions of grandeur one of Crowley's aliases was Count Vladimir Svareff and, after graduating from Cambridge, he bought a castle near Loch Ness. It is the belief of Tobias Churton that a perverse "hatred of bourgeois attitudes" is what motivated Aleister Crowleys were a wealthy family with brewing interests in Hampshire. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he discovered he was sex mad ("48 hours without sex dulled the edge of his intellect") so he had girls delivered to his door each morning "like the milk". Churton does his best to argue that Crowley was "a serious and original thinker" who devised "masterly techniques for expanding consciousness". This is utter baloney. Bertha must have been in two minds about that. Crowley liked his creature comforts and his zany posturing would fit in well with upper-class dilettante life. Churton has enjoyed the full co-operation of the world's Crowley scholars to ensure the accuracy and plausibility of his riveting narrative. If Crowley "learned" astrology, tarot and kabala," dressed in a wizard's robes and came out with demonic conjurations, it was for one reason only: an elaborate means of getting laid. Though Crowley may well have "speculated on sexual union with elemental or astral beings" and claimed that "the sex instinct is linked to the divine ecstasy that may be obtained through meditative practices", more to the point is that he liked to get his hands on "big, strong, heavy, muscular women, preferably with moustaches". There were plenty to be found. Even though "she went into the study and waited for me," she later "stabbed Crowley with a carving knife". Rose Skerrett died in an asylum of "chronic alcoholic dementia", Marie de Miramar ended up in Colney Hatch Mental Hospital, believing herself to be the daughter of George V and Queen Mary. Unlike other commentators, I don't think Crowley drove people insane. is published by Coronet on October 13Verdict: 4/5 Crowley lived off family money for as long as he could and, when the inheritance expired, tried to raise funds by suing everyone for defamation of character. QUICK VIEW Add to bookshelf VIEW Add to bookshelf Get the latest updates from Tobias Churton And go from well-read to best read with book recs, deals and more in your inbox every week.

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