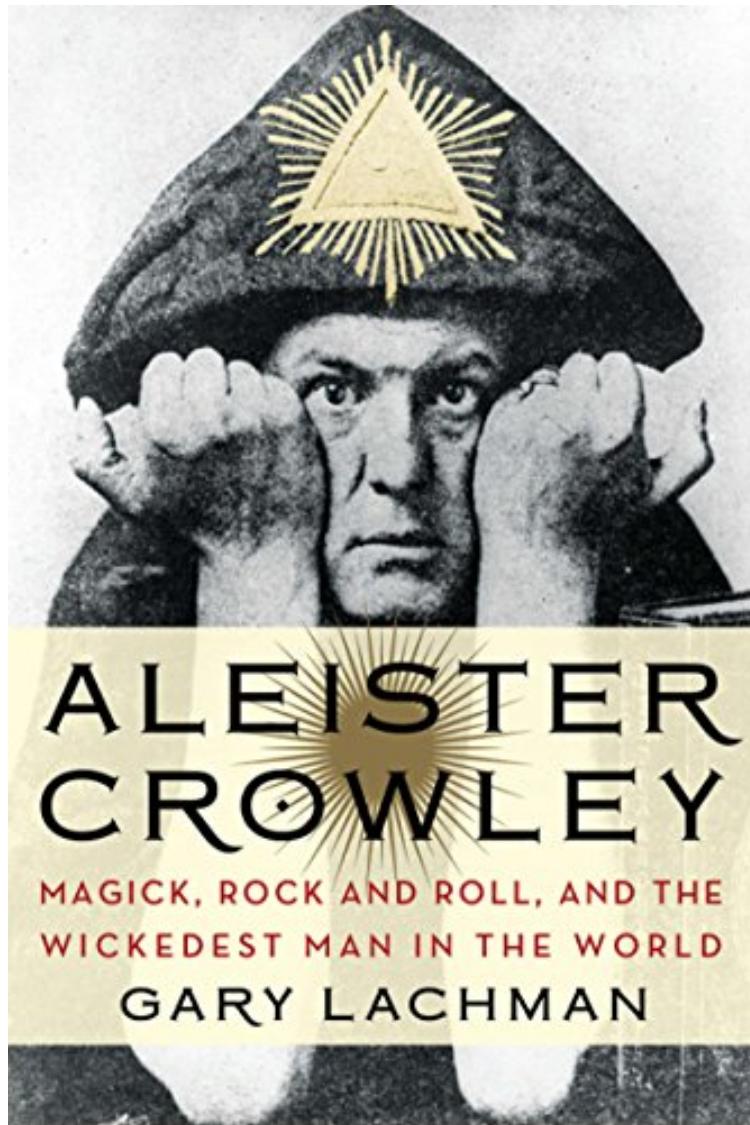


(Download pdf) Aleister Crowley: Magick, Rock and Roll, and the Wickedest Man in the World

## Aleister Crowley: Magick, Rock and Roll, and the Wickedest Man in the World

Gary Lachman

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**Gary Lachman : Aleister Crowley: Magick, Rock and Roll, and the Wickedest Man in the World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Aleister Crowley: Magick, Rock and Roll, and the Wickedest Man in the World:

27 of 29 people found the following review helpful. Not the usual Crowley bio!By Walter FiveGary Lachman has done it again, with another outstanding occultists biography!It is always most interesting when a Writer and Biographer outside of the "bubble" of Thelemic Philosophy and Art writes on Crowley. Not drinking the Kool-Aid of

Crowley hero-worship allows Mr. Lachman to even-handedly review the uncovered facts and new theories of other recent Crowley biographers, and his position in Rock Music as Blondie's "Gary Valentine" gives him unique insight into Crowley's influence on Popular Music and Modern Culture. Not as detailed as Richard Kazynsky's "Perdurabo", Mr. Lachman's biography will be a good alternative for the level-headed reader. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. The not-so-great BeastBy Gary OppenhuisA refreshingly realistic retrospective on the life and afterlife impact of Aleister Crowley. Rather than yet another Crowley biography focusing on his esoteric accomplishments, Lachman provides a cautionary view of the effects on both self and others that a life of extremes can produce. 20 of 20 people found the following review helpful. A Sober Look at a Great Mystic Gone WrongBy Cryptic CounselorI'm not sure where I first stumbled upon the figure of Aleister Crowley. Perhaps it was in Modern Magick: Twelve Lessons in the High Magickal Arts, which I stumbled upon in a used book store one day when I was 18. Or perhaps it was shortly after that in the writings of Anton LaVey, or Disinformation.com, which was a wondrous portal to all things mysterious and forbidden for a teenager in 1999. But from my first encounter with Crowley's larger-than-life persona, I was hooked. Do what thou wilt, indeed. Over the next several years I'd build a collection of Crowleyana- his novels, his "collected works", Magick Without Tears, Liber Aleph Vel CXI: The Book of Wisdom or Folly, in the Form an Epistle of 666, the Great Wild Beast to His Son 777, Being the Equinox, Vo, his "translation" of the Tao Te Ching: Liber 157 (The Equinox, Vol. 3, No. 8), and finally, to top it all off, "the big blue brick" Magick: Liber ABA, Book 4 and a complete set of The Equinox: The Official Organ of the A. A.- The Review of Scientific Illuminism, Vol. 1, Nos. 1-10. I read biographies by Israel Regardie and Gerald Suster; and related materials by Thelemic authors like Lon Milo DuQuette and James Eschelman. Living at home with my parents while I went to college I never felt in much of a position to actively take up a practice of ceremonial magic, though I'd follow some of his yoga instructions from time to time. Crowley was my guru. I defended his honor wherever he'd come up; to me, he was Nietzsche applied - the closest any human being has come to being an *ubermensch*; a re-valuator of values who created the creed that was warping the world into the New Aeon. My own experiments in Thelema were always inconclusive. I could never truly give in to excess; I dabbled on the sidelines. I could never keep up a ceremonial magic practice for long before some life event would disrupt it. I thought perhaps I was too undisciplined; or too repressed; or too lazy; or too poor. But eventually I realized that as good as Thelema sounded on paper, like communism, it wouldn't work in reality- at least my reality. Lachman's book reveals that it didn't work very well for Mr. Crowley either. Detailing his life from childhood through death, and then tracing his influence through popular culture up to today, Lachman's book makes a compelling case that Crowley was a charismatic, sociopathic near-genius who makes for interesting reading, but is ultimately not worthy of emulation or admiration. The first half of Crowley's life was exciting, romantic, full of promise and achievement (as well as some failures and tragedies, as well as almost inhuman profligacy); the second half was, if not a descent into madness, at least a descent into stagnation, decay and squalor as Crowley tried to continually pursue an ideal that was not worthy of his talents and gifts. The young Crowley- brilliant, handsome, tirelessly driven, inspired, intrepid, and self-absorbed, gave way to the old Crowley- a dirty old man, a smelly bore, boor and boar given over to drug addiction and living in penury. It's surely not coincidence that his life takes a dark turn after his fortune runs out. In fact, I'd say that Crowley ultimately comes, under Lachman's eye, to look like the ultimate spoiled trust fund brat- a man who never learned to care about or understand other people because he never had to, and likewise never learned to manage money, understand commerce or politics beyond a very superficial and detached level, or understand how ordinary people lived- which made his desire to give the Law to All futile. An independently wealthy aristocrat (or, in his later years, con artist who could fleece gullible devotees) could freely follow his true will; those of us in wage slavery do not have such a luxury. One thing that makes Lachman's book unique, however, is that while most Crowley biographies are either written by devotees of the occult who want to defend Crowley, or skeptics who think he was a pure fraud, Lachman is- like Colin Wilson before him in *Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast* - a believer in many of the realities of the occult who nonetheless finds Crowley a poor exemplar. His most eye opening revelation, for me - as a former Crowley admirer - was that Crowley's picture he paints in his own writing (as well as that of Regardie), of being horrified by the Thelemic revelation he received in the Cairo Working and not wanting to believe it; of being a rationalist and a Buddhist; of not wanting to start his own religion... is all patently false. Crowley had, since his early 20s, aspired to be a prophet or religious founder; his rationalism and Buddhism was betrayed by his actions, which were purely in accordance with his "Thelemic" philosophy from an early age; in Thelema, he found the perfect excuse to do his will- his will being whatever he wanted it to be. For many years I bought the lie that there was a "true will" distinct from base desires; when it should have been obvious from Crowley's conduct that this "true will" hypothesis is flawed at best. The collapse of Crowley's life after he gives himself license to do anything he wants should not be inspirational- and it isn't. While other biographies glossed over his later years and the effects that he tended to have on the people around him, Lachman doesn't shy away- the alcoholic and insane wives and mistresses; the disillusioned former students committing suicide; the dead children, dying as victims of their father's neglect as he lived in haze of drugs, mysticism and narcissism are all on display. When compared to the adventure of his youth, it makes for grim and sobering reading. If Lachman's book has any weaknesses, it's that he often brings up threads of Crowley's story out of nowhere- ones which were

familiar to me from much previous reading, but might leave a newcomer unawares. It's not as thorough a biography as either *The Great Beast: The Life and Magick of Aleister Crowley* or *Perdurabo, Revised and Expanded Edition: The Life of Aleister Crowley*, but both are weighty tomes that probably go into more detail than necessary. If you want to understand Crowley through a less critical and more forgiving eye, *Regardie's The Eye in the Triangle: An Interpretation of Aleister Crowley* is still probably the best destination. Lachman's book goes into detail about how Crowley impacted modern pop culture and its culture of thelemic excess; though much of the book's final chapter feels like it was cribbed from Lachman's own *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius*. Overall, however, this may be the most "balanced" look at Crowley ever written- a book that takes him at his word, and finds his word wanting. Recommended to all enthusiasts of occulture, and a cautionary tale for would-be supermen who think they can be a law unto themselves- Crowley was probably more willful, smarter, more charismatic, and richer than you'll ever be- and he still died a failure. His life is a warning, and not an example to be followed.

This definitive work on the occult's "great beast" traces the arc of his controversial life and influence on rock-and-roll giants, from the Rolling Stones to Led Zeppelin to Black Sabbath. When Aleister Crowley died in 1947, he was not an obvious contender for the most enduring pop-culture figure of the next century. But twenty years later, Crowley's name and image were everywhere. The Beatles put him on the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The Rolling Stones were briefly serious devotees. Today, his visage hangs in goth clubs, occult temples, and college dorm rooms, and his methods of ceremonial magick animate the passions of myriad occultists and spiritual seekers. Aleister Crowley is more than just a biography of this compelling, controversial, and divisive figure; it's also a portrait of his unparalleled influence on modern pop culture.

Clocking in at 394 pages jam-packed with in-depth information, factoids, anecdotes and insights from the first sentence to the last. A historical biography through and through, Lachman's book is meticulously researched and it is quite easy to believe that the author, like a professor well-versed in their subject, could analyze and extrapolate at much greater lengths. The oft touted declaration of Crowley as the Wickedest Man in the World, may well have been overblown in its own time, but it's certainly not an individual with whom it is easy to empathize. As detestable as he is, there is an undeniable fascination in his exploits, and Lachman seems the perfect man to deliver them. The Examiner; Gary Lachman has become an increasingly prolific engine of literate, well-written, and clear-headed books about esoteric history and occulture. Erik Davis, author of *TechGnosis*; Thinking outside the box, Lachman challenges many contemporary theories by reinserting a sense of the spiritual back into the discussion. The Examiner; Leonard Shlain, author of *Art Physics and Alphabet* versus the Goddess; About the Author; Gary Lachman is one of today's most respected writers on esoteric and occult themes. His books; including *Swedenborg*, *Jung the Mystic*, and *Rudolf Steiner*; have received international acclaim. A founding member of Blondie, Lachman has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He lives in London.