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**Portrait of an Eccentric Author
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"The Beast" by Daniel F. Mannix—published by Ballantine Books—is a biography of Aleister Crowley and it is also a study of a diseased mind. Mannix's first writing on this subject appeared several years ago in True Magazine. This gives you something of an idea of what the book is like.

Aleister Crowley called himself the Great Beast, after his mother told him he was the great beast prophesized in Revelations. He was a poet writer, painter, practitioner of black magick (as he liked to spell it); he founded his own religion and was a sex maniac and a drug addict. For several decades his name was a synonym for evil in England—even during the second world war, Lord Haw-Haw suggested that the British might let Crowley celebrate a Black Mass in Westminster Abbey in an effort to stop the bombings.

There are several errors of fact concerning Crowley's younger years in this book. I suspect they were drawn from "The Confessions of Aleister Crowley," an autobiography written in 1930. Only two volumes of the five that were written were published.

Much of Crowley's life was concerned with magic—especially the sex magic form he manages to come up with. Mannix avoids the subject of magic as much as possible, and his treatment is particularly poor. He doesn't understand what he has read on the subject, about Crowley or anyone else, and his discussion of magic are extremely naïve and often he becomes condescending, as if he were explaining the entire subject to a rather retarded child.

Mannix also resorts to tricks to enhance his subject. He grossly exaggerates the demonstrated mental powers of one of Crowley's followers. Mannix describes him as "a brilliant mathematician" and quotes an impressive title of a paper, which any competent mathematician could have produced.

As to "The Beast," if you are interested in an unusual subject, you will find that it might be worth the time and

trouble to read it. If, however, you are interested in a good biographical treatment of Crowley, I would recommend "The Great Beast" by John Symonds.