Written by Michael Koopmans
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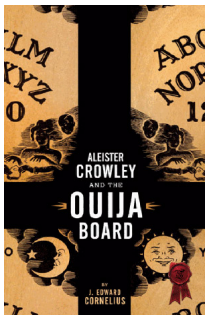
What do one of history’s most infamous and influential occultists (pictured left) and a “game” found on toy-store shelves across the nation have in common? Author J. Edward Cornelius provides some answers in ALEISTER CROWLEY AND THE OUIJA BOARD, while still managing to provide the knowledge an ordinary individual needs to properly use the board to communicate with other worlds.

The book’s first half goes into great detail concerning the history of the Ouija, whose origins date back as far as 1100 B.C. This section at times reads like a textbook, listing facts pertaining to the board’s original owners and describing how it changed hands numerous times due to financial crunches and disagreements—all leading up to its eventual purchase by Parker Brothers and becoming a staple at virtually every youngster’s sleepover party. Dry or not, this section is immensely interesting and informative, raising hopes that the same care and attention will be paid to the book’s co-star.



Aleister Crowley is a fascinating figure, with a past shrouded in darkness and mystery. Most of the references to the occultist contained within these pages, however, rely on quotes and paraphrasing, which is unfortunate for those expecting more of a history lesson on his life and times. It seems the author’s focus is more geared toward jumping right into Crowley and his disciples’ views regarding the board, as well as his use of astrology, magic and tarot to invoke spirits and the like.

The remainder (basically the book’s second half) is dedicated to explaining, examining and dissecting the meaning of the Ouija’s shape, features and configuration that help unlock the wonders (and dangers) of the lower astral plane. Also discussed in great detail are facts and

theories involving the communication process between the living and the dead. The spirit’s meaning, the various planes of existence, the elementals and the many worlds beyond are all touched upon, while ghosts are exposed as simply repetitions of a tragic moment caught between planes. While this volume is intended for beginners looking to get their planchettes wet, the author periodically uses technical terms without bothering to explain them, rendering unfamiliar readers lost.

To some it’s either a child’s plaything, to others a tool of Satan, while still others see it as serious means of conjuring otherworldly beings. The fact is, the Ouija board will always be blanketed in mystery and hearsay tales of terror. The idea of connecting this topic with the always-provocative name of Aleister Crowley is tantalizing, but ultimately fails to meet expectations. On the other hand, ALEISTER CROWLEY AND THE OUIJA BOARD still manages to deliver its goods in just 172 pages, which means this little monster can be breezed through quickly. Although I don’t intend to attempt any of the ceremonies or guidelines outlined within, I put this little gem back on my shelf with a sense of accomplishment and an understanding of how someone reading it not just for entertainment value alone will pull a lot more from its content than this reviewer.

Originally published back in 2005 by Feral House, this book managed to stay in Fango purgatory for five years. But like most restless spirits, it has been conjured back up now. So head on over to the publisher’s official website and snag yourself a copy of this little monster, or check out Amazon.com for a substantial discount.

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