

The following are from Green Alps, a volume that was never issued. It was going to be published by Leonard Smithers, the leading pornographic publisher of the day. However, it was never issued, since the sheets were destroyed at a fire. Only part of the page-proofs survive in a unique copy at the Warburg Institute - for those who require precise bibliographic information, they constitute Yorke Collection G.1 pp 81-107 and dedicatory poem. Unbound. demy octavi slips. It seemd that Crowley was pleased, in retrospect, that the volume never appeared, since on the top of page 95 he was written, "From Green Alps a volume (luckily) burnt at the printers and so dropped."

"A Mathilde" (p.82):

A cruel love, to rend the hoary veil
Of cynic hatred of mankind, and scorn
Of all things virtuous, seeing there is born
Within me now, with strange desire grown pale,
A newer sweetness in the nightingale,
Till I see good again. Thy love has torn
Philosophy's pale texture, and outworn
The sophist's falsehood and the cynic's tale.

A cruel love - I find in Magdelene
Seven angels with the seven devils wed!
I find true love where I had not sought to find
A spirit to reflect my own obscene
And dead desire that scoffed at love - instead
Love comes: we part: I perish: Fate is blind!

Anyone who wishes to investigate the plurality of sexual modes in Crowley, might like to make a comparision between the above and "Mathilde" from the volume "White Stains" (published in 1898 by Leonard Smithers as an annonymous volume. Since it has been published, I won't re-print it now). Similarities in title and echoes within the poems suggest they treat of the same subject - but one is redemptive, the other lustful, physical.

"A Friend...Of Publicans and Sinners" (p.84)

Through ivory gates there flew this dream to me:
My black soul groped at the blind gates of heaven,
Stained with foul longings, with bad deeds for leaven,
And never a hope to lend it liberty,
And groping, grew insane with sheer despair;
When there came one, a spirit more than chaste,
One noble figure, naked to the waste,
Clad in the flashing glories of gold hair.

And she, in woe like mine, "Ah love, with thee
I am one damned, and must here abide
Without the portal of eternal bliss."
The light grew on us, and there came to me
The knowledge heaven was here by her sweet side,
And our twain bodies were one living kiss."

It seems to me that in Crowley's early poetry, we find a continual negotiation, a struggle, as he sought to free himself from the mind-fetters of his Plymouth Brethren upbringing. A reading of his early poetry will provide an interesting psychology of this formative period in his life.

Moving on. Yorke Collection N1, section 2 contains poems from a small manuscript book in A.C.'s hand, headed "About 1898 or earlier". This would make it pretty much the earliest poetry we have of his (discounting the feeble effort at the beginning of "Olla"). They seem to be slightly confused in their sentiments, as if Crowley was new to his sexuality. Following is the earliest account of his early homosexual encounters, which has never been published. Untitled:

He who seduced me first I could not forget.
I hardly loved him but desired to taste
A new strong sin. My sorrow does not fret
That sore. But thou, whose sudden arms embraced
My shrinking body, and who brought a blush
Into my cheeks, and turned my veins to fire,
Thou, who didst overwhelm me with the eager rush
Of the enormous floods of thy desire,
Thine are the kisses that devour me yet,
Thine the high heaven whose loss is death to me,
Thine all the barbed arrows of regret,
Thine on whose arms I yearn to be
In my deep heart thy name is writ alone,
Men shall decipher -when they split the stone.

"The End." (a rondel)

The end of everything. The veil of night
Is not so deep I cannot comprehend.
I see before me yawn - a ghastly sight.
The End.

Love long ago deserted me to wend
His way with younger men. Life spreads a blight
Over me now. I have not now one friend.

There is no hope for me; no gleam of light
To my black path will any comfort lend -
Yet I will meet with smiling face, upright
The End.