

**DAILY INDEPENDENT
SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND
11 APRIL 1934**

MAGIC OF TWO KINDS

BLACK RITES DENIED

MAN CLAIMS LIBEL BY WOMAN AUTHOR

VILLA CIRCLE

Black and white magic were discussed during an action for alleged libel in the High Court yesterday.

The plaintiff, Aleister Crowley, an author, was questioned about poems and books he had written which counsel held to be indecent.

Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of "Beast 666" and "Master Therion" (the Great Wild Beast) designations from the Apocalypse.

"It only means sunlight—666 is the number of the sun, and you can call me 'Little Sunshine,' " he added.

The defendants to the action were Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers.

JUSTIFICATION PLEA

Mr. Crowley alleged that passages in the book imputed that he practiced black magic, and he said this was a libel upon him.

The defence was a plea of justification.

Opening the case for Mr. Crowley, Mr. J P. Eddy said there was one passage in the book which was a piece of mere vulgarity—"typical of the book," he added, "and I do not propose to embarrass the jury by making any reference to it."

Plaintiff inherited a large fortune and devoted to poetry, art, travel, and mountaineering. He had climbed the Alps and walked across the Sahara.

For many years he had been interested in magic, and had always fought against black magic. The magic in which Mr. Crowley believed was that which stressed the will.

In 1920 he started a little community at a villa in Cefalu, Sicily, for the purpose of studying that form of magic.

"ROOM OF NIGHTMARES"

Mr. Crowley's bedroom was described as "the room of nightmares" because of the fantastic frescoes on the walls. But that had nothing to do with black magic.

A passage in the book stated that Mr. Crowley "had a temple called the Temple of Thelema, at Cefalu, where he was supposed to practice black magic." The passage went on:—

One day a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. There was also a goat there. This all pointed to black magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.

Mr. Crowley, counsel added, denied the suggestion that he supplied the information to Miss Hamnett, who was at one time a student of his.

In evidence, Mr. Crowley said that when he was young he rebelled against the "general atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren," in which sect he had been brought up.

He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and inherited between £30,000 and £40,000. He had studied the religions of the world and had been interested in black magic since 1897. He met Miss Hamnett two or three years before the war and employed her in the painting and decoration of his studio in London.

CEFALU HOUSEHOLD

The Cefalu villa was known as the Abbey of Thelema, and in 1920, when he first went there, there were four people. Others came in and out, but there were never more than eleven.

He would describe them as a household, and the guiding principle of the household was good manners.

In 1922 a young man named Raoul Loveday came to the villa and stayed there until his death in 1923. His constitution had been weakened by an accident. While jumping from a college at Oxford he was impaled on a spike, where he hung for over two hours before relief arrived. He lost a lot of blood and he never regained his health.

"Nor did the life he was leading in London before I rescued him do much to improve his health," said Mr. Crowley.

Each person in the household at Cefalu had a certain duty connected with the house.

"Visitors came from all parts of the world for the purpose of learning what I had to teach," he added. He agreed there were various forms of magic "As there were different forms of prize fighting and wrestling," he said.

"I approve some forms of magic and disapprove others."

Mr. Eddy: What is the form you disbelieve?—That which is commonly known as black magic, which is not only foul and abominable, but for the most part, criminal.

"In many cases," he added, "black magic is an attempt to commit crime without incurring the penalties of the law. The almost main instrument of black magic is murder, either for inheritance or for some other purpose, or in some way to gain personality out of it."

Is murder of children associated with black magic?—It is most common. Alleged black magicians have been condemned to death. I say black magic is malignant. It is evil in its purpose and means, or both.

Did you ever practice black magic at Cefalu?—Never.

Mr. Crowley denied that he told Miss Hamnett the things of which he complained in the book. No baby mysteriously disappeared. A goat was kept for milking purpose, but the inhabitants were not frightened by it.

"The inhabitants," he added, "were all my very good friends."

CEREMONY ALLEGATION

Mr. Eddy then put to Mr. Crowley the following particulars in the defence:—

Every day after tea the plaintiff performed a ceremony known as Pentagram. The plaintiff entered robed into a room decorated with cabalistic signs, and seated himself on a throne before a brazier containing a charcoal fire, around which were hung sacrificial knives and swords, and surrounded by a magic circle.

The adult inmates were required to attend, and when all were assembled the plaintiff rose from his seat and, taking one of the swords from the side of the brazier, held it pointing to the altar while he intoned an invocation in a strange language. Following this, he would walk over to members of his congregation and utter a further incantation whilst resting the point of the sword on his or her forehead.

The plaintiff then proceeded to execute certain dances, lashing himself into a frenzy, brandishing his sword, and leaping the magic circle.

That, said witness, was not an accurate account of what was done at Cefalu.

Mr. Eddy: Was there any throne?—There were chairs.

Were there any sacrificial knives?—No.

What is the Pentagram?—It is a ceremony which invokes God to afford the protection of his archangel.

Mr. Crowley denied that it was an obscene invocation or that animals were sacrificed and he invited people to drink their blood.

“PUBLICLY DENOUNCED”

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (cross-examining): Are you asking for damages because your reputation has suffered?—Yes.

For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.

Did any paper call you the monster of wickedness?—I don't remember which papers.

Have you from the time of your adolescence openly defied all moral conventions?—No.

You were at Cambridge from 1895 to 1898?—Yes.

There you became interested in magic?—Yes.

In 1898 did you get yourself initiated into a secret order called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn?—Yes.

The society was devoted to the practice of magic, he added. He had written a number of books and many poems.

Mr. Hilbery: Is it true to say that practically all your works are erotic in tendency and grossly indecent in expression—It would be entirely untrue to say anything of the kind. I have published a collection of 52 hymns which are highly praised in the Catholic Press.

Have you published material which is too indecent to be read—too indescribably filthy to read in public?—No. I have contributed certain pathological books entirely unsuited to the general public, and only for circulation among students of psycho-pathology.

Were you finally expelled from Cefalu by Fascists?—Like Mr. H. G. Wells and many other distinguished Englishmen, my presence was not desired by Mussolini.

In 1929 in Paris did they refuse to grant the renewal of your identification cards so that you had to get out of France?—Yes.

They wouldn't have you there?—A discharged employee was blackmailing me and used his pull with the Stavisky gang, or whatever it was, to get me out.

Mr. Hilbery then referred to a number of passages in Mr. Crowley's book "The Confessions of Aleister Crowley."

Mr. Crowley agreed that there were no statements in the book that were false, though there might be inaccuracies. "To err is human," he observed.

You say in the book that you were a remarkable child?—I must have been.

You assert that you had the distinguishing marks of a Bud-dha at birth?—Yes. I have some of them now.

EROTICISM DENIED

Your magic is like your poems, a mixture of eroticism and sexual indulgence—It doesn't involve anything of the kind.

Is the gratification of your own sexual lusts one of your principal interests and pursuits?—No.

He agreed that he was the author of "White Stains".

Mr. Hilbery: Is that book of indescribable filth?—This book is a serious study of the progress of a man to the abyss of madness, disease, and murder.

Isn't it full of indescribable filth?—There are moments when he does go down into all those abominations, and it is a warning to people against going over.

You have made a sonnet of unspeakable things, haven't you?—Yes.

Would you care to put into plain language the subject matter of those poems?—I have given it.

"White Stains" is described as "being the literary remains of George Archibald Bishop, a neuropath of the Second Empire?"—Yes, I think only 100 copies were printed and were handed to some expert on the subject in Vienna.

Was that done because you feared there might be a prosecution if they were published in this country?—It was not.

You know it is an obscene book?—I don't know it. Until it got into your hands it never got into any improper hands at all.

TECHNICALLY OBSCENE

Mr. Hilbery: Is it technically an obscene book?—Yes. Technically, I think it is, and I should not write a book like that to-day. In describing a disease you have to describe it in proper terms.

Do you agree that it would be quite impossible to paraphrase what these poems were really about in open court?—These subjects were all for the clinical wards, mental hospitals and such places.

Do you think the sonnet is a particularly suitable form to employ when the book is for clinical purposes?—I should not do it now. At that time it was the only form of expression I had. That was my preternatural innocence.

Mr. Justice Swift asked the jury if they wanted to see the book, "White Stains."

The jury intimated that they did not.

Mr. Hilbery referred to another book "The Soul of Osiris," and suggested that it was highly sexual.

Mr. Crowley's reply was that what he had written was "portrayed in the language God has given me for the purpose."

Mr. Hilbery: Is what I have read indecent?—But you have read it out of its context. It is legitimate in literature to describe the innermost feelings of a robber or murderer or of a man whose is being tortured in mind. The law has laid it down that art had nothing to do with morals.

USE OF HIS GIFTS

May we assume that you have followed that in your practice?—My view has nothing to do with it. I have always endeavoured to use the gift of writing which has been vouchsafed to me for the benefit of my readers.

Mr. Crowley objected to the use of the word "sex," and said that if one looked for it one could find something indecent in the Bible, the works of Shakespeare and Swift, and down to Thomas Hardy.

Mr. Hilbery read a stanza from a poem entitled "Madonna of the Golden Eyes," and suggested that it was highly sexual and highly indecent.

Mr. Crowley: I cannot see that it is indecent. It is an expression of passion such as you find in Romeo and Juliet.

Mr. Justice Swift: Would you by chance call it blasphemous?

Mr. Crowley: I don't understand. Madonna does not refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is an ordinary term used by a man speaking to a lady.

In regard to another of his publications, Mr. Crowley denied that his portrayal of a clergyman was a mockery of the Christian point of view.

"I am exposing Black Mass," he declared.

The hearing was adjourned until to-day.