

**POETRY REVIEW  
SEPTEMBER 1912**

**REVIEW OF *MORTADELLO***

First of all to consider Mr. Crowley, an amazing creature. He refuses to be taken seriously. His bloodthirsty, lecherous play he calls a comedy. It is a riotous farce. Intoxication—of blood, of words, of hysteria, of lust—takes the place of imagination. The play is exciting, but most amusing in its invective:

Thou puny, puking patch,  
White-livered, yellow-bellied wittol!

There are at least a hundred lines like that, and *au fond*, they are the most serious in the play, because the most sincere. At the beginning of the second act there is a couplet for which I am very grateful. It is one which all good critics—all writers indeed—should take to heart:

Now then to sound the core of the apple of our plot,  
Sweet as it was before, there's such a thing as rot.

There is; and there has never yet lived a man incapable of writing it, not even Shakespeare's self, or Goethe, or Shelley. The truth is, I think, that only very little of any man's work can rank as positive achievement, and it is the business of the critic to sift that little from the "rot." There is not a critic with health or leisure enough to perform that office for Mr. Crowley. He has talent, scores of talents, but, seemingly, no power to use, discipline, or develop them. It would be splendid to take him seriously, but then—one cannot. He has abundant humour—a most necessary ingredient in a poet's composition—but that, too, is untamed.

— Gilbert Cannan