STUDY GUIDE 05B

Material from: Pasi, M. (2003). The neverendingly told story: Recent biographies of Aleister Crowley. *Aries*, *3*, 2.

1.  Know whether or not it is true that, a century after **Yeats’** **letter**, moral boundaries seem to have shifted to such an extent that Crowley does not seem to attract the same kind of **public** **damnation** that was levelled at him during his lifetime. Know whether or not Crowley figured in 2002 in a top-100 list of “**greatest** **Britons**”, based upon a BBC poll. Know whether or not, whatever one’s judgment upon his morality and behavior, Crowley obviously did have some **literary** and **intellectual** genius.

2.  Know whether or not Crowley, independently from his achievements or failures in other fields, should be considered, as far as the history of **Western** **esotericism** is concerned, as an important and **influential** author. Know whether or not Hutchinson, in fact, had found the **Scotland** **Yard** **dossier** on Crowley, of which many suspected the existence, but no one had as yet seen. Know whether or not Symonds had at his disposal all that was needed in order to produce a **definitive** **biography**.

3.  Know whether or not Symonds was the first biographer to write on Crowley. Know whether or not Symonds’ assessment of Crowley appears **tendentious** and **one-sided**. Know whether or not all three biographies considered here are the result of **patient** **research**, involving several years of work in each case. Know whether or not, among the three biographies reviewed here, it must be said that **Booth’s** is the most disappointing, at least from a strictly **scholarly** point of view. Know whether or not, when Booth briefly discusses the relationship between **Nazism** and the **occult**, he surprisingly adds that “the **Gestapo** even maintained their own black magical **lodges**.”

4.  Know whether or not Crowley left **Germany** in 1932, returning to **England** and not leaving the country again until his death in 1947. Know whether or not two aspects have been treated with considerable sensitivity by Sutin: Crowley’s **homosexuality** and his relationship with **Christianity**. Know whether or not the Crowley depicted by Sutin is much less self-confident, both in his religious and sexual choices, than the one described in **earlier** **biographies**. Know whether or not Sutin rightly dismisses Crowley’s “**irrefutable**” rational arguments for proving its **authenticity**, pointing out – if need be – that they convince only those who wish to be convinced from the **beginning**.

5.  Know whether or not Sutin seems to suggest in various places that Crowley was influenced by original **Tantric** practices or ideas, and that the origin of his **sexual** **magic** is to be found **here** as much as in Theodor Reuss’ O.T.O. teachings. Know whether or not Sutin seems uneasy (much like Booth and Kaczynski, it must be said) with **classical** **culture**.

6.  Know whether or not the authors [of the reviewed works] share some **common** **characteristics**: they are all based in the United States; they are in **close** **contact** with, or members of, the Caliphate O.T.O., whose archive is naturally one of their main **research** **facilities**. Know whether or not Kaczynski provides an excellent list of **manuscript** **collections** that hold material related to Crowley, which is obviously of great **practical** **use** for the student.

7.  Know whether or not Kaczynski seems sometimes **insecure** when he discusses occultist organizations or groups, such as the Golden Dawn, the O.T.O., Crowley’s A\A\, and the Stella Matutina. Know whether or not there is any evidence that William W. **Westcott** or Annie **Besant** were ever **members** (or even "supporters") of the O.T.O. Know whether or not Kaczynski shows a tendency to present Crowley’s activities, and discuss them, in a way that is most **favorable** for him. Know whether or not, regarding **animal** **sacrifices**, the only reason Kaczynski offers appears to be the fact that, in his eyes, these “**rumors**” are too “**wild**” to be credible.

8.  Know whether or not, on **controversial** points Crowley’s statements should not be taken as **decisive**, and **further** **evidence** should always be looked for. Know whether or not Kaczynski is right in remarking that there was probably some real **religious** **sentiment** behind Crowley’s poems. Know whether or not Crowley was a man of strong **passions** and whether “**hate**” was certainly one of them, and “**blasphemy**” (in the specific context we are referring to) one of its effects. Know whether or not **secret** **societies** were banned in Italy only in 1925, two full years after Crowley’s **expulsion**.

9.  Know whether or not it is true that Crowley was certainly not seen as a concrete **danger** by Mussolini’s regime, but rather as an embarrassing **nuisance** to get rid of as soon as possible. Know whether or not, according to Sutin, the **negative** **publicity** of Crowley’s presence in Italy, while British tabloids were **attacking** him relentlessly, was viewed by the Fascists as reflecting **poorly** upon their regime.

10. Know whether or not Sutin is the only one of the three biographers to **drop** **Symonds** and his secret societies theory altogether, tackling the matter **afresh** the way it should have been. Know whether or not we need more studies on specific aspects of Crowley, and whether any **general** biography will ever be able to answer all questions concerning him. Know whether or not it is true that perhaps it is time to **move** **on**, from a neverendingly told story to a search for as **yet** **untold** **stories**.

​