

# Tychy ~ Original Fiction and Illustrations – Literary Criticism with Cojones – Edinburgh in the Twenty-First Century.

## Tychy@ the Fringe: Now We Are Pope.

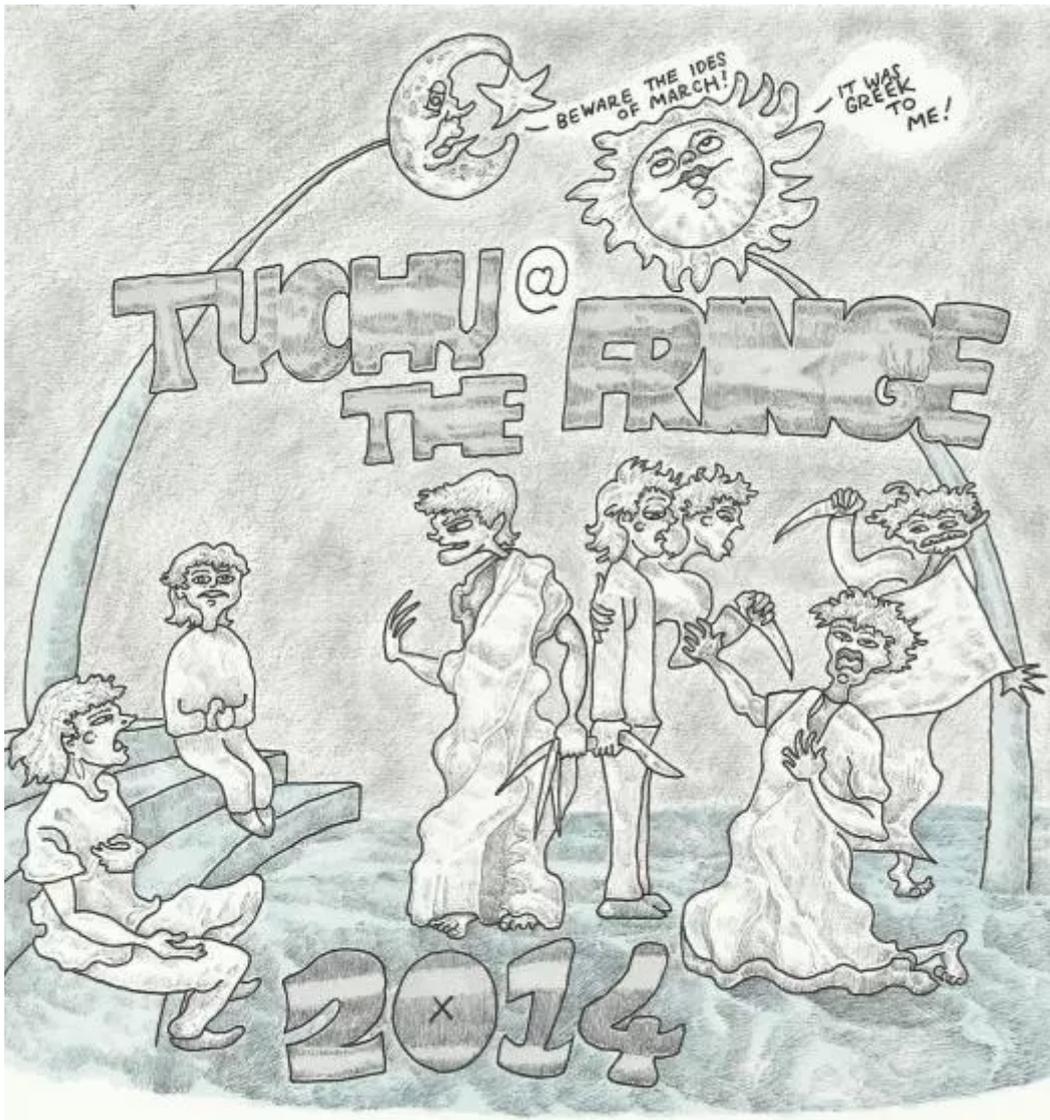
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POSTED BY TYCHY IN FRINGE REVIEW

≈ 2 COMMENTS

### Tags

Arbery Productions, Christopher Annus, Edinburgh Fringe, Frederick Baron Corvo, Frederick Rolfe, Hadrian the Seventh, Martin Foreman, Spaces on North Bridge, Stories Toto Told Me, Theatre Review



Over at theSpace on North Bridge, Martin Foreman's "Now We Are Pope" provides an example of that rare, exhilarating sort of Fringe theatre which has assumed added value as historical research or literary criticism. One has to read an awful lot of literature before they finally reach Frederick Rolfe, the eccentric author and fantasist who styled himself as "Baron Corvo." Rolfe lived a life of poverty and scraped together a handful of rather mad books before dying in Venice in 1913. DH Lawrence got the measure of Rolfe when despairing in 1925 that, "It is all so amazing, that a man with such insight and fineness, on the one hand, should be so helpless and just purely ridiculous, when it comes to actualities." But as *Tychy* has previously explored, "in beating a path for gay fiction through flamboyant experimental prose Rolfe would almost certainly influence the pioneering novels of Ronald Firbank and anticipate Jean Genet's free-flowing *Our Lady of the Flowers*." Despite the thinness of the literature, Corvo remains a worthy and an absolutely fascinating subject to study.

Yet Rolfe's story is difficult to dramatise, not least because he had managed to infuriate everybody he met, usually within short periods of time. His is necessarily a one-man show since, throughout his life, nobody else had ever stuck around for very long. Christopher Annus plays Rolfe with the required woe and petulance. He is apparently stranded on stage with all of his worldly possessions (probably excluding the rented furniture) – a few decrepit books, a pillow, and a chamber pot. He is due to have a heart attack within the next fifty minutes and here he is rolling his final cigarette. Of course, being Rolfe, he is too incompetent to have a light, and so he even messes up his final cigarette.

He looks back over his life and everybody who has betrayed him. Toto, the peasant boy whose childish stories feature in Rolfe's first book, is never mentioned, indicating that Rolfe was more prone to cherish grievances than to remember those who he had loved. The play does not take a hard line on Rolfe's ephebophilia, which some in a Fringe audience might consider to be straightforward paedophilia. This Rolfe mostly evinces a wistful celibate desire for boyish companionship.

But with a programme which anticipates the attendance of "Rolfe devotees," Foreman's show is not necessarily intended for an average Fringe audience. It is instead a literary curiosity and perhaps it would provide a solid briefing on Rolfe's character for the historian of literature. "Now We Are Pope" is, however, the second of three thematically-interconnected plays which Foreman has brought to theSpace, so there might be more to the play if it is experienced as part of this pageant.



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## thoughts on “Tychy@ the Fringe: Now We Are Pope.”

### 1. said:Martin Foreman

August 20, 2014 at 10:25 am

Hi,

Thanks for your thoughtful review of my play. Just to clarify one point... the play, which is mostly based on his writings, underlines the point that Rolfe was definitely not a paedophile (he explicitly says “no, not the young ones, no matter how they pester me”). He was attracted to teenage youths who had definitely reached sexual maturity and had absolutely no interest in pre-pubescent children. If he had been a paedophile I would have written a very different play.

Martin

### REPLY

#### o said:tychy

August 20, 2014 at 4:03 pm

Indeed, and I hope that by using the term ephebophilia this comes across. I'm sorry if I have been unclear – some people, these days, casually define paedophilia as a general attraction to under 16 year olds. I guess I was acknowledging that there are different degrees of tolerance on these questions.

I don't want to give the impression that Rolfe's sexuality is the most interesting thing about his writing or your play. It has been a privilege to see his character represented on stage and best of luck with the rest of the performances.

**REPLY**

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