

## Façade II

Edith Sitwell

### Came the Great Popinjay

Came the great Popinjay  
Smelling his nosegay:  
In cages like grots  
The birds sang gavottes.  
'Herodiade's flea  
Was named sweet Amanda,  
She danced like a lady  
From here to Uganda.  
Oh, what a dance was there!  
Long-haired, the candle  
Salome-like tossed her hair  
To a dance tune by Handel.'...  
Dance they still? Then came  
Courtier Death,  
Blew out the candle flame  
With civet breath.

### Aubade

Jane, Jane,  
Tall as a crane,  
The morning light creaks down again;

Comb your cockscomb-ragged hair,  
Jane, Jane, come down the stair.

Each dull blunt wooden stalactite  
Of rain creaks, hardened by the light,

Sounding like an overtone  
From some lonely world unknown.

But the creaking empty light  
Will never harden into sight,

Will never penetrate your brain  
With overtones like the blunt rain.

The light would show (if it could harden)  
Eternities of kitchen garden,

Cockscomb flowers that none will pluck,  
And wooden flowers that 'gin to cluck.

In the kitchen you must light  
Flames as staring, red and white,

As carrots or as turnips shining  
Where the cold dawn light lies whining.

Cockscomb hair on the cold wind  
Hangs limp, turns the milk's weak mind...

Jane, Jane,  
Tall as a crane,  
The morning light creaks down again!

## March

Ratatantan, ratatantan, ratatantan:  
The marshal's harrier  
Bites arid fights  
The water carrier.  
Mossed as a druid,  
Under the wall  
Thin waters fall  
And turn into fluid  
Petals of tulips, and hard regalias  
Of lilies and dahlias.  
Then, as they brawl,  
Jupiter leaned from his vast snow cage,  
Cuffed the marshal's harrier -  
Still in a rage he bites and fights  
The wall grown mouldier,  
Where stiff as a soldier  
Stands the breeze,  
Like a handy andy,  
And words they bandy  
Under the dandy  
Dinmont trees.

## Madam Mouse Trots

Madam Mouse trots,  
Gray in the black night!  
Madam Mouse trots:  
Furred is the light.  
The elephant-trunks  
Trumpet from the sea....  
Gray in the black night  
The mouse trots free.  
Hoarse as a dog's bark  
The heavy leaves are furled....  
The cat's in his cradle,  
All's well with the World!

## The Octogenarian

The octogenarian  
Leaned from his window,  
To the valerian  
Growing below  
Said, "My nightcap  
Is only the gap  
In the thrembling thorn  
Where the mild unicorn  
With the little Infanta  
Danced the lavolta  
(Clapping hands: molto  
Lent' eleganta)."  
The man with the lanthorn  
Peers high and low;  
No more  
Than a snore  
As he walks to and fro...  
Il Dottore the stoic  
Culls silver herb  
Benath the superb  
Vast moon azoic.

## Gardener Janus Catches a Naiad

Baskets of ripe fruit in air  
The bird-songs seem, suspended where

Between the hairy leaves trills dew,  
All tasting of fresh green anew.

Ma'am, I've heard your laughter flare  
Through your waspish-gilded hair:  
Feathered masks,  
Pots of peas,  
Janus asks  
Naught of these.  
Creaking water  
Brightly striped,  
Now, I've caught her—  
Shrieking biped.  
Flute sounds jump  
And turn together,  
Changing clumps  
Of glassy feather.  
In among the  
Pots of peas  
Naiad changes—  
Quick as these.

## Water Party

Rose Castles  
Those bustles  
Beneath parasols seen!  
Fat blondine pearls  
Rondine curls  
Seem Bannerols sheen  
The brave tartan  
Waves' Spartan  
Domes (Crystal Palaces)  
Where like fallacies  
Die the calices  
Of the water-flowers green.  
Said the Dean  
To the Queen,  
On the tartan wave seen:  
'Each chilly  
White lily  
Has her own crinoline,  
And the seraphs recline  
On divans divine  
In a smooth seventh heaven of polished  
pitch-pine.'  
Castellated,  
Related  
To castles the waves lean  
Balmoral-like;  
They quarrel, strike  
(As round as a rondine)  
With sharp towers  
The water-flowers  
And, floating between,  
Each châtelaine  
In the battle slain—  
Laid low by the Ondine.

## Said King Pompey

Said King Pompey,  
the emperor's ape  
Shuddering black in his  
temporal cape  
Of dust: "The dust is everything -  
The heart to love  
And the voice to sing  
Indianapolis,  
And the Acropolis,  
Also the hairy sky that we  
Take for a coverlet comfortably." ...  
Said the Bishop  
Eating his ketchup  
"There still remains Eternity  
(Swelling the diocese) -  
That elephantiasis  
The flunkeyed and trumpeting Sea!"