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Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, Volume 26, Number 2, Fall 2007,
pp. 243-267 (Article)

Published by The University of Tulsa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tsw.2007.a232412>



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Sitwell Beyond the Semiotic: Gender, Race, and Empire in *Façade*

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There are several indisputable facts about Edith Sitwell: she was the most successful of Britain's modernist women poets, she was a literary celebrity, she remains a canonical misfit, she remains best known for *Façade*. But the issue of her value has proved far from clear. Sitwell was an established literary presence by the 1920s, publishing poetry, prose, criticism, and journalism as well as giving lectures and readings. Her avant-garde performances and spirited campaigns heightened the sense that Sitwell was, in Leonard Woolf's words, "up to the neck in modernity."¹ This association gained her as much public ridicule as literary clout. Her critical volumes *Poetry and Criticism* and *Aspects of Modern Poetry* positioned her as a serious woman of letters, but by 1932 F. R. Leavis issued his damning pronouncement that "the Sitwells belong to the history of publicity rather than of poetry."² The onset of World War II prompted Sitwell to fashion a poetry of worldly *gravitas* rather than playful innovation, marking a second phase of her career. She became a contender for the poet laureateship as well as a cross-Atlantic performing artist who received coverage in the popular press. As a personality Sitwell was paradoxical, rebelling against traditional gender roles while taking pride in her Plantagenet ancestry. In her youth she savaged the nationalistic pastoralism of the Georgians; later in life she delighted in becoming a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Poet and personality, text and performance, literary and popular, rebellious and conservative: these oppositions have fueled Sitwell's changing critical fortunes for almost a century.

Gender has played a crucial factor in Sitwell's posthumous canonical status. She was the token woman in the British volume of *Chief Modern Poets of Britain and America*,³ my college textbook, but she never appeared on the syllabus. She sunk to "small and eccentric" status in Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair's *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, which claims that her "extraordinary personality" gives the poems "a memorability that they might otherwise lack."⁴ When feminism and poststructuralism reshaped the academy in the 1980s and 90s, the impact on Sitwell's reputation proved mixed. Surprisingly, she receded further into the margins in women's poetry anthologies published in the U.K. In *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Women's Poetry*, for example, Fleur Adcock declared

that Sitwell offered only “entertainment value,” representing her with a single poem from *Façade*. Diana Scott omitted Sitwell entirely from her earlier *Bread and Roses* anthology.⁵ With their dazzling surfaces and rhythmic excess, Sitwell’s signature poems did not conform to the confessional bent of the women’s poetry scene. Yet these same qualities made the poems ripe for revaluation when feminist critics adopted psychoanalytic and post-structuralist theories to reassess anomalous figures like Sitwell and Gertrude Stein. Cyrena N. Pondrom was the first to revalue Sitwell, arguing that the *Façade* poems explore “an interior, subconscious, or dream world” that contrasts with social strictures. More recently, Jane Dowson has praised Sitwell for being “influential in representing and investigating the unconscious,” positioning her at the head of the British avant-garde. Drawing on *Façade*, Holly Laird has stressed Sitwell’s engagement with “the female figure and with sexuality.” Gyllian Phillips has brought to fruition the feminist trend of reading *Façade* through Julia Kristeva.⁶ In arguing for Sitwell’s return to prominence, this body of criticism privileges gender subversion over other meanings—enabled especially by Kristeva’s definition of the semiotic (a disruptive discourse emanating from a repressed, maternal unconscious).

I depart from these key reassessments by moving Sitwell beyond the semiotic while maintaining focus on *Façade*. I agree with Susan Stanford Friedman’s insistence that “moving *beyond* gender does not mean forgetting it,” and so gender remains a key component of my argument.⁷ Yet if Sitwell’s detractors have ignored the ways in which her experimental poetry challenges gender constructs, her feminist defenders have ignored how it intersects with racial and imperialist meanings of the modernist era. Throughout *Façade*, Sitwell employs images of Africans and Asians for comic effect, unsettling English propriety and imperial unity while simultaneously reinforcing racial stereotypes. In particular, the dark, dubious, and colonial figure of the “shady lady” proves paramount in showing how the text’s boisterous women are not always subversive. It would be silly to label Sitwell a racist on the basis of these images, and shortsighted simply to ignore them. As Jane Garrity has explained, British women modernists often “reinscrib[e] the rhetoric of empire even as they resist it,” adopting in their texts “a series of complex, ambivalent, and experimental strategies of identification and disidentification” as Englishwomen.⁸ In Sitwell’s case, several of her *Façade* poems adopt imperialist ideology even as they satirize Victorian and male authority figures. While a few poems employ race to question social norms, the sequence as a whole tends to reinscribe racial stereotypes of the time. After providing an overview of *Façade* and its performance history, I will assess the powers and limits of the Kristevan approaches that rightly returned Sitwell to critical scrutiny. I will then argue for a more flexible, culturally based approach to *Façade*, drawing on both the poems and music for a fuller understanding of the text’s

social meanings. My engagement with race and empire does not diminish Sitwell's canonical importance but rather returns her to the center of modernist practice.

Both literary critics and musicologists see *Façade: An Entertainment* as an English counterpart to the Continental performance texts *Parade* (by Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, and Pablo Picasso) and *Pierrot Lunaire* (by Albert Giraud and Arnold Schoenberg). *Façade*, a collaboration between Dame Sitwell and Sir William Walton, combines spoken poetry and chamber music in a dynamic interplay of stylized images, jaunty rhythms, and witty allusions. Encouraged by Sitwell's brothers, Walton composed musical settings for some of the experimental poems she had begun in 1920, with the aim of creating an avant-garde event. The vocal part of the score appears as if it were an instrumental line, marking the rhythmic values of each syllable (see fig. 1). Tempo fluctuates between *lento* and *allegro*, thus the most rapid vocal sections can prove difficult for reciters to perform—and for audiences to understand. *Façade* was staged with the poet and musicians behind a painted curtain, so that Edith Sitwell recited the majority of her poems through a Sengerphone (a large-scale megaphone). This unprecedented performance technique heightened her notoriety, Pondrom observes, as “the most radical avant-garde poet on the British scene” (p. 204).

One month after the initial performance in the Sitwell brothers' drawing room in 1922, Sitwell published a limited edition of her *Façade* poems; they circulated both on the page and on the stage.⁹ In 1923 the first public performance of *Façade* took place in London's Aeolian Hall, prompting responses that were for the most part dismissive or indifferent. The second public performance in the Chenil Galleries (1926) proved much more successful, and *Façade* was performed three more times in the 1920s. Walton published his score in 1951, which stabilized the performance text as an instrumental fanfare followed by twenty-one poem settings.¹⁰ The piece continues in the music repertoire, recorded most recently by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (with Lynn Redgrave as reciter) and the Melologos Ensemble (with Pamela Hunter).¹¹ Following convention, Sitwell's poems are included in the programs distributed at performances; this accessibility allows the poet's words more than an incidental role. As Victoria Glendinning has noted, “no one who has habitually heard the words and music of *Façade* together can disentangle them . . . even though Edith's poems are not a libretto nor is Walton's music only an accompaniment.”¹²

Early responses to *Façade* found little meaning other than a desire to

7 / Lullaby for Jumbo

The musical score is for the piece "Lullaby for Jumbo" from the opera *Façade: An Entertainment* by Edith Sitwell and William Walton. The score is written for five parts: Bass Clarinet Bb, Alto Saxophone Eb, Percussion (Cym. soft stick), Voice, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 50$. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6. The second system contains measures 7 through 10. The lyrics for the voice part are: "leaves thick-furred As his ears, keep Con-ver - sa - tions blurred. Thick - er than hide Is the". The score includes various dynamic markings such as *mp*, *pp*, *p*, *fz*, and *p*. There are also performance instructions like "Cym. soft stick" and "arco". The score is marked with first endings (1) at the end of measures 6 and 10.

Figure 1. Opening measures to “Lullaby for Jumbo” from *Façade: An Entertainment*, by Edith Sitwell and William Walton. © 1951 Oxford University Press. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

shock the audience. What does one do, for example, with the sonic excesses that begin "Country Dance": "That hobnailed goblin, the bob-tailed Hob, / Said, 'It is time I began to rob'"? Or with these nonsense rhymes and rollicking rhythms: "Something lies beyond the scene, the *encre de chine*, marine, obscene / Horizon / In / Hell / Black as a bison"? (*Façade*, pp. 55, 68). Such semiotic sounds have often eluded Sitwell's critics. Many have concluded that the *Façade* poems amount to little more than nonsensical child's play. For example, Blake Morrison has sneered that "children may perhaps enjoy some of her rhyming or assonance or mention of geese and goblins and foxes."¹³ Writing with appreciation for Sitwell's privileging of sound over sense, Marnie Parsons has concluded that Sitwell's reader becomes so "inundated by an ocean of sounds, a rising and falling tide of rhyme" that she might ideally "have gills, perhaps, or sport a shell."¹⁴ Sitwell herself seems not to have expected her audience to react to her poems with effortless auditory pleasure. She maintained that the *Façade* poems were serious "inquiries into the effect on rhythm and on speed of the use of rhymes, assonances, and dissonances, placed at the beginning and in the middle of lines, as well as at the end, and in most elaborate patterns."¹⁵ Given her description of her own work, it can be little surprise that many critics have taken the poems seriously only in terms of their technique.

A key advantage of Kristevan analyses of Sitwell is their ability to disable problematic hierarchies of sound and sense, meaning and nonsense, adult and childish, serious and playful, and, by implication, masculine and feminine. Kristeva's semiotic also offers a framework for engaging rhythms and rhymes that can seem nonrepresentational. We see some of this productive work in Walter Bernhart's recent discussion of the *Façade* poem "Lullaby for Jumbo," which he uses to determine "the semiotic status of kinetic processes in poetic rhythm." As we see in figure 1, Walton's slow-tempo segmentation of the poem produces a "gentle see-saw motion" of 6/8 time, mimicking the alternation of short and long sounds in a lullaby.¹⁶ Bernhart's emphasis on maternal rhythms (lullabies, rocking) recalls Kristeva's theory of semiotic discourse: a repressed, maternal language of an unconscious, preoedipal state that attaches the infant initially to the mother's body. Entering language—and thus signification and meaning—through the father, the child then passes over from the maternal semiotic into the paternal symbolic order. For Kristeva, "Language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother," although the semiotic and symbolic are "*two modalities*" that prove "inseparable" within "the signifying process."¹⁷ Kristeva insists from the outset of her career that no discourse can be exclusively semiotic or symbolic, and so even the most acoustically experimental of Sitwell's poems would signify something.

While the semiotic has proved indispensable in reviving interest in Sitwell, it proves less successful in engaging the nonsubversive aspects

of *Façade*—especially when they inflect women characters. This critical impasse appears most clearly in Gary Day and Gina Wisker’s important essay, “Recuperating and Revaluing: Edith Sitwell and Charlotte Mew,” which was the first interpretation to link Sitwell’s “seemingly nonsensical, sing-song verse” with Kristeva’s theory of the semiotic. Arguing that the “post-structuralist climate” of the 1990s proved ripe for a wholesale revaluation of Sitwell’s work, Day and Wisker discuss the linguistic frolic of *Façade*’s most famous piece, “Sir Beelzebub”:

When
Sir
Be-elzebub called for his syllabub in the hotel in Hell
Where Proserpine first fell,
Blue as the gendarmerie were the waves of the sea,
(Rocking and shocking the bar-maid). (pp. 107-08)

The poem’s “dazzling surfaces,” repeated sounds, and “incantatory effect,” they assert, highlight “the primacy of the signifier in the constitution of meaning.”¹⁸ “Sir Beelzebub” also delivers parodic puns on Alfred Lord Tennyson, who is “crossing the bar” toward a group of “temperance workers” wishing to “trip up the Laureate’s feet” (his proper comportment and his staid metrics). As Day and Wisker point out, this poem contributes to Sitwell’s larger “debunking of Victorian culture” in her early work. But when they discuss a *Façade* poem that reinforces “patriarchal perceptions” of women (“Waltz”), these critics claim that “the technical experiments of the verse ultimately come to nothing” (pp. 67, 71). Here we see the risks of relying on the semiotic as a hermeneutic tool for *Façade*: it cannot explain linguistic play that does not transgress the dominant culture.

Gyllian Phillips’s reading of *Façade* proves most flexible both in its use of Kristeva and in its discussion of linguistic and gender instability. Phillips cautions against pushing interpretation too far toward the semiotic end of the linguistic spectrum, noting that Sitwell’s poems “play on the *edge* of nonsense,” and that Walton’s music “is not free from connotation” (p. 72, my emphasis). This understanding of semiotic sounds is well attuned to Kristeva, who pronounces that “no text, no matter how ‘musicalized,’ is devoid of meaning or signification; on the contrary, musicalization pluralizes meanings” (p. 52). For Phillips, the oddly fused images of “Lullaby for Jumbo” evoke a metaphorical elephant-as-“sleeping patriarch” who loses his power (p. 71):

Jumbo asleep!
Grey leaves thick-furred
As his ears, keep
Conversations blurred.
Thicker than hide

Is the trumpeting water;
Don Pasquito's bride
And his youngest daughter
Watch the leaves
Elephantine grey . . . (pp. 40-41)

Like other *Façade* poems, this “semiotic murmur” opens up meaning through a rich entanglement of visual and rhythmic registers (p. 69). Phillips touches on the performance text’s dark others by noting the clichéd castanets that reinforce Don Pasquito’s “Spanishness,” and by suggesting that the number “Long Steel Grass” might be read in terms of race and colonialism as well as gender (pp. 70, 72).¹⁹ Although she does not pursue these meanings in her analysis, they inform my position that *Façade*’s Africans and Asians often prove more fixed than fluid, and its geography more colonial than fantastical. To move Sitwell beyond the semiotic, we must shift our critical locus from the unconscious to the national imaginary.

A good place to begin recovering *Façade*’s array of racial images is in Frank Dobson’s curtain design for the first performance (see fig. 2). In the center appears a large female face with African features (wooly hair and wide nostrils); it was painted half red and half white on the actual curtain, layering racial signification with harlequinade. During performances Edith Sitwell’s Sengerphone protruded from this figure’s mouth. More clearly African is the smaller mask of a man’s face through which Osbert Sitwell sometimes read poems. Harold Acton’s account of an early performance confirmed that this face was of “a blackamoor.”²⁰ At one level, Edith’s and Osbert’s recitations from behind these masks made *Façade* a modernist form of minstrelsy, especially in the three poems that voice black characters. Susan Gubar has noted “the major role racial ventriloquism played in poetic experimentation” of this period, beginning with Vachel Lindsay’s 1914 poem, “The Congo.”²¹ British performances used the Dobson curtain until 1928, and later curtains commissioned by the Sitwells did not contain such racialized figures.²² But as we shall see, race still figures in the performance text of *Façade*—especially in the poems.

Curiously, several of Sitwell’s more traditional defenders have emphasized her images of blackness and shadows while ignoring their often obvious racial inflections. Assessing Sitwell’s development in 1947, Kenneth Clark spoke of “an occasional black shadow of sound” in *Façade*. John Lehmann followed suit, commenting that “one cannot help noticing how often, through the images, the dark side of life is portrayed.” James D. Brophy argues that Sitwell’s overarching motif of an “Empire of Shade” gives even the *Façade* poems a complexity akin to the Metaphysicals and the Symbolists. In his

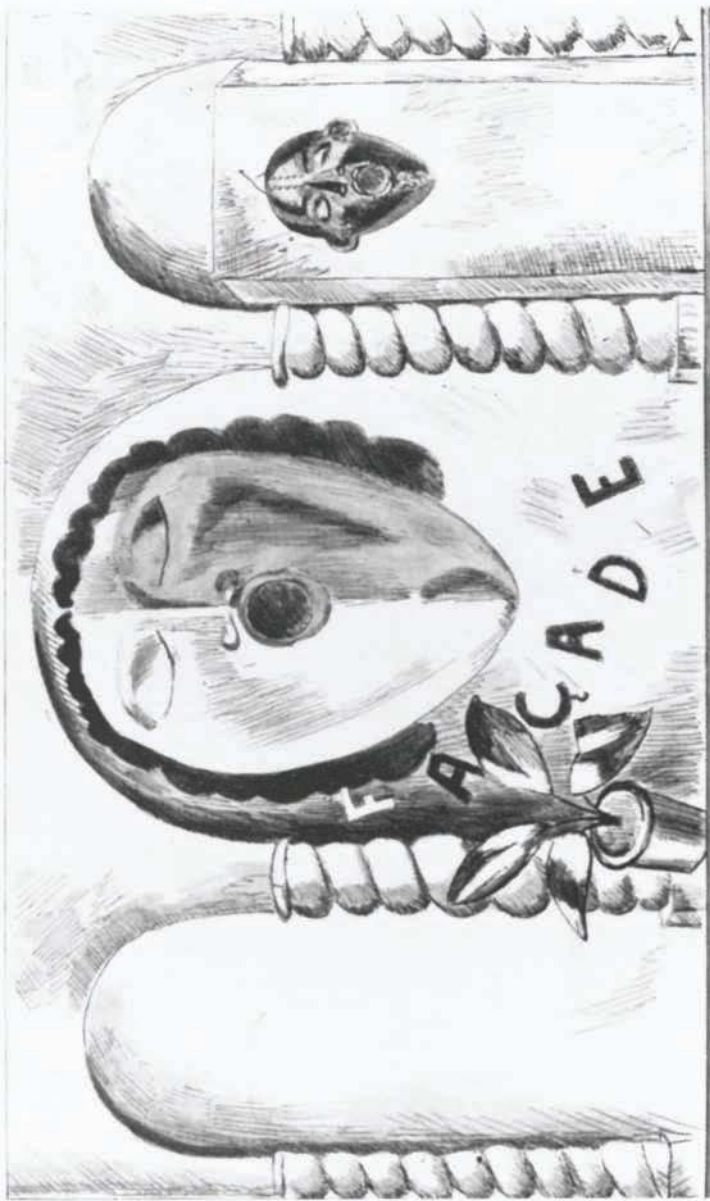


Figure 2. Frank Dobson's curtain design for the original production of *Façade*, which appeared in *British Vogue* in 1923. Courtesy of Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

musicological defense of *Façade's* performance text, Paul Driver argues that its occasional "moods of pathos and darkness" should prompt us to give "a new complexion" to this underappreciated "modernist classic."²³ Of course, tropes of darkness and blackness in English literature do not always denote race. Sitwell herself described *Façade's* "darkness" inconsistently, using the term to mean musical tonality, dissonance, animality, menace, or nothingness (*Canticle*, pp. xiv-xxv). But surely the dark imagery in poems depicting people of color demands our critical attention. With its Hottentots, "turbaned Chinoiserie," "Negro cocktail-shaker," "Black Mrs. Behemoth," and "Negress" Lily O'Grady, *Façade's* figuration of Britain's dark others proves neither abstract nor nonsensical. Moreover, these characters from Africa and Asia are intricately linked with British geopolitics of the 1920s, particularly a "zenith" of expansionism during which, Garrity explains, "the British empire held territorial possessions (colonies, dominions, and protectorates) on all five continents, covering about one-quarter of the globe and comprising a population of some 400 million individuals" (p. 14). While I do not deny the humorous and even subversive aspects of *Façade*, my reading emphasizes the critically ignored imperialist meanings that prove Sitwell's importance to accounts of modernism and race. My analysis furthermore shows how female gender rebellion in her poems plays differently across racial lines.

Since the publication of Walton's score, *Façade* has opened with three numbers that situate it in the context of Britain's naval and imperial power: "Fanfare," "Hornpipe," and "En Famille." The poems in the last two of these three also establish the sexualized racial tropes that occur sporadically throughout the text, especially the excessive and potentially threatening "shady lady." "Fanfare" and "Hornpipe," included in the initial private and public stagings, now function as a performance unit. While their playful musical allusions undermine Britain's imperial majesty, the poetic text of "Hornpipe" also constructs colonial others even as its "non-sense-verse imitation undermines the authority of high cultural tropes," as Dowson puts it (p. 107). In "Fanfare," a short instrumental number, Walton alludes to the eighteenth-century song "Rule Britannia" in a dialogue between alto saxophone and trumpet. These prominent parts carry the central melodic lines while the piccolo, clarinet, and cello mostly trill. "Fanfare" ends expectantly with a vibrating snare drum, which segues loudly into "Hornpipe" with a rhythmic allusion to Britannia. As the other instruments enter, Walton undercuts naval pomp with the merry romp of a sailor's jig. At this point Sitwell's words enter the performance text, perching Queen Victoria atop the ocean waves:

Sailors come
To the drum

Out of Babylon;
 Hobby-horses
 Foam, the dumb
 Sky rhinoceros-glum
 Watched the courses of the breakers' rocking-horses and with Glaucis
 Lady Venus on the settee of the horsehair sea!
 Where Lord Tennyson in laurels wrote a gloria free,
 In a borealic iceberg came Victoria . . . (pp. 8-9)

Like Walton's musical allusions to Britannia, Sitwell's recurring imagery of oceans, sailors, and admirals both undercuts and reinforces the naval power behind British imperial conquest and commerce. As Michael North notes, the Washington Naval Conference of 1922, which dislodged Britain's naval supremacy, and the emergence of the Irish Free State effected "a decisive shift in the rationale behind the British Empire and a new need to enunciate its reasons for being."²⁴ Sitwell's surreal maritime images intersect with this questioning and reasserting of British imperial power. For example, her fused image of ocean waves and parlor furniture ("settee of the horsehair sea") blurs boundaries between home and abroad.

Yet despite its obvious satire of Victoria ruling the waves, the poetic text of "Hornpipe" maintains Britannia's body through its central opposition between the "cold" island seat of Empire and a "hot" African island of degenerate colonials. The racial polarity of white and black undergirds this geography as Victoria observes an African man and woman from her icy throne:

New-arisen Madam Venus for whose sake from far
 Came the fat and zebra'd emperor from Zanzibar
 Where like golden bouquets lay far Asia, Africa, Cathay,
 All laid before that shady lady by the fibroid Shah. . . . (pp. 9-10)

As Garrity explains, "the distinction between Britain's 'white' and 'tropical' empires was a key feature of cultural imperialism both at home and in the colonial context, reinforcing strict racial boundaries and confirming white prestige and power" (p. 14). In this case, Zanzibar does not simply provide Sitwell with an end rhyme. Declared a British Protectorate in 1890, this major trade center between Africa and India remained important to Britain in the early twentieth century. Zanzibar proved newsworthy in Sitwell's day because its Sultan was made an Honorary Knight Commander for service during the Great War. In the same month that *Facade* was performed privately in 1922, Zanzibar was invited to join the East Africa House for the British Empire Exhibition. In "Hornpipe," Zanzibar functions as the antithesis of Queen Victoria's "borealic iceberg," sending up Victorian frigidity while reinforcing African stereotypes that are hardly subversive. Because of its heterogeneous population of Africans, Arabs, and Persians, Zanzibar appeared to many British observers as a hotbed of

licentiousness. This colonialist perception persisted in the modernist era. Citing an earlier condemnation of the island, a 1913 *Times* article characterized it as a “cesspool of wickedness” that proves “a fit capital for the Dark Continent.”²⁵ Thus Sitwell’s “fat and zebra’d emperor from Zanzibar” signifies the hedonistic, bestial African of Britain’s geopolitical imaginary. He is also a suitable companion for *Façade*’s first and foremost shady lady.

Previous critics have not noted that “Hornpipe” figures both a Classical “Lady Venus” (attended by the Greek sea-god Glaucis) and a grotesque “New-arisen Madam Venus” (attended by Zanzibar’s emperor and the equally dubious “fibroid Shah”). These two goddesses are linked through images of revelry but differentiated through racial markers so that the latter becomes a colonial other. No “lady,” Sitwell’s Madam Venus draws dark men’s heated adoration and Victoria’s icy censure. Silencing the instruments for nearly four full measures, the entrance of this black Venus seems initially to threaten the reign of Britain’s imperial Queen as her African and Arab courtiers lay “far Asia, Africa, Cathay” at her feet. At the same time, however, Sitwell’s epithets “shady lady,” “Madam,” and “minx” connote dubious sexual meanings that become clearly raced in the culminating lines. Accompanied by a prominent snare drum roll, an outraged Queen utters her condemnation of Madam Venus:

Queen Victoria sitting shocked upon the rocking-horse
Of a wave said to the Laureate, “This minx of course
Is as sharp as any lynx and blacker-deeper than the drinks and quite as
Hot as any hottentot, without remorse!”

For the minx,
Said she,
“And the drinks,
You can see

Are hot as any hottentot and not the goods for me!” (pp. 11-12)

In and of itself Sitwell’s word “black” may simply mean “immoral,” but one cannot ignore the specifically African meaning of “Hottentot.” Sitwell knew and cited Charles Baudelaire’s work, and so would have been familiar with his impure “Vénus Noire.” She likely knew of Josephine Baker’s Paris performances, which sometimes employed the stage name “Black Venus.”²⁶ Together, Queen Victoria and Madam Venus reflect the complexities and contradictions of British imperial discourse. While the frosty Queen erupts in heated outrage, her “hot” rival seems coolly unaware of this tirade. Victoria distances herself racially (and morally) from the Hottentot, but their imperial ties emerge in Sitwell’s final image of the African woman as rejected “goods.”

Given the bestial epithet (lynx), allusions to promiscuity, and racial markers, Sitwell’s disruptive “shady lady” surely alludes to the Hottentot Venus who, as Sander L. Gilman has argued, “served as the emblem of

black sexuality during the entire nineteenth century.”²⁷ Taken from Cape Town in 1810, Khoi-Khoi tribeswoman Sara Baartman was exhibited in Picadilly, Bartholomew Fair, Haymarket, and Manchester. Her owner-agent, Hendrick Cezar, would sometimes have Baartman emerge from a cage and obey commands like a tamed beast. In 1814 Cezar and his “Hottentot Venus” left for Paris, where he sold her to an animal trainer. Baartman was also examined privately by Georges Cuvier and other scientists, who sought to confirm their theory that African women’s genitalia provided the missing link between humans and apes. After Baartman’s death and dissection, Cuvier compared her anatomy to an orangutan’s.²⁸ Thus we cannot claim, as Bette Richart did in 1959, that Sitwell’s ability to “reconcile Venus with the ape” signals her “comic invention” as an artist.²⁹ She draws from Victorian and modernist racial stereotypes even as she mocks Victorian prudishness and gender roles.

Hottentots figured widely in popular culture of the early twentieth century. Broadway and vaudeville star Marie Cahill performed “The Hottentot Love Song” in her 1906 hit musical *Marrying Mary*; the song features a “Hottentot, from a climate hot” who courts a Zulu maid: “If my skin ain’t white, I’ve a heart that’s right, an’ it’s all for you.”³⁰ Rachel Blau DuPlessis has shown the influence of Cahill’s earlier “Under the Bamboo Tree” on T. S. Eliot’s racial ventriloquisms.³¹ After debuting on Broadway in 1920, Victor Mapes’s *The Hottentot* became a Hollywood film the same year as *Façade*’s Aeolian Hall performance;³² the play was staged in London during the year of the Chenil Galleries performance, 1926. At one level, then, Sitwell’s use of the Hottentot figure (and Africans more generally) signals her desire to be modern.

Those few critics who consider Sitwell in discussions of modernism and race tend to cite briefly her 1929 volume *Gold Coast Customs*. A decidedly less playful text than *Façade*, this long poem compares the decadence of upper-class British society with Ashanti cannibal rites. Gubar positions Sitwell as a latecomer to what she terms “the Boomlay BOOM” poetry ushered in by Vachel Lindsay in “The Congo” (p. 139). Such poetry employs “ersatz African rhythms produced with standard English lexicons” (p. 139), as well as “nonsensical hilarity . . . [and] anarchic incomprehensibility” (p. 143). Parts of *Façade* intersect with Gubar’s characterization of modernist poems “emphasizing sound at the expense of sense” (p. 143), but neither its poems nor its music attempts to perform the pseudo-African rhythms that prove central to her analysis. DuPlessis mentions Sitwell only in passing, and North omits her entirely. And yet Sitwell not only performed racial ventriloquism in *Façade* but also displayed an earlier interest in Africans (and African Americans) in her 1918 volume *Clown’s Houses*. Its poems include “Black Coffee,” with the racially charged phrase “black as any nigger, and as hot,” and “Minstrels,” about a “negro band.”³³

Sitwell's contemporary Noel Coward picked up on *Façade's* racial meanings in his parody volume, *Chelsea Buns*. Attributed to Hernia Whittlebot, a Sitwell spoof from his stage show *London Calling*, Coward's verses lampoon both her sound play and her racial tropes. His "Theme for Oboe in E Flat" concludes: "Dark—round— / Suggestive beads of sound. / Zebubbah zebubbah, / Tweet Tweet," while "Misericordia" figures a female speaker who would "Beat syncopated passion as a coon."³⁴ In short, race was a recognizable aspect of Sitwell's early poetry. Reconsidering this neglected work can prompt new understandings of modernist artists' engagements with Africa—and other colonial geographies—during the late phase of British imperialism.

The third number in *Façade's* opening cluster moves to Asia, a part of Britain's geopolitical imaginary more closely connected with Sitwell's personal sense of style. Set in China, "En Famille" continues "Hornpipe's" naval imagery and racial tropes while satirizing British national and imperial unity. The poem's conflation of patriarchal, national, and colonial "family" yields more plural meanings than the fixed boundary between English and African in "Hornpipe," enabling some degree of gender subversion. But "En Famille" hinges on the appearance of another shady lady. Orientalist distinctions between self and other are both reinforced and unsettled in the performance text, reminding us that Orientalism itself can be, in Lisa Lowe's words, "simulated and then troubled, counterfeited and then ironically mocked."³⁵

In "En Famille" Sir Joshua Jebb and his daughters function, at one level, as representative Europeans whose empire "contains the Orient in its military, economic, and above all, cultural arms," to use Edward Said's succinct phrase.³⁶ But while the paternal Admiral seeks to maintain this imperialist embrace of China, his daughters wish to succumb to its reputed allure. Although critics have mislocated the poem's setting as the English countryside, Sitwell clearly establishes the family in Chinese tea fields (Bohea is a black Chinese tea):

In the early springtime, after their tea,
Through the young fields of springing Bohea,
Jemima, Jocasta, Dinah, and Deb
Walked with their father Sir Joshua Jebb—
An admiral red, whose only notion
(A butterfly poised on the pigtailed ocean),
Is of the peruked sea whose swell
Breaks on the flowerless rocks of Hell.
Under the thin trees, Deb and Dinah,

Jemima, Jocasta walked, and finer
Their black hair seemed (flat-sleek to see)
Than the young leaves of the springing Bohea;
Their cheeks were like nut-meg flowers when swells
The rain into foolish silver bells. (pp. 13-15)

Sitwell uses images of Asian tea and spices to mark the daughters' first filial transgression. As David Porter points out, tea drinking was associated with insubordinate femininity and "potentially subversive sexuality" in eighteenth-century England,³⁷ an era with which Sitwell felt herself especially attuned. Of course tea drinking had become quintessentially English by Sitwell's time, and yet the Bohea in "En Famille" imbues the Admiral's daughters with Chinese attributes. As they walk through the tea fields, their "flat-sleek" black hair resembles that of Asian women and their cheeks lose an English pallor, resembling "nutmeg-flowers." A nutmeg tree also appears in Sitwell's early poem, "The King of China's Daughter." This spice is native to Indonesia's Banda Islands, two of which were among Britain's earliest colonies.³⁸ As the poem continues, Sitwell's Asian imagery marks both her resistance to the constraints of English propriety and her recirculation of Orientalist tropes.

Walton's score calls for a much slower tempo than the frenetic pace of "Fanfare" and "Hornpipe," pairing melodic flute and legato violoncello rather than beginning with trumpet and percussion. This musical shift not only varies the mood but also suggests the languid character that the British (and Europeans more generally) attributed to the Chinese. According to the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, for example, "the Chinaman's whole philosophy of life disinclines him to change or to energetic action."³⁹ To the early twentieth-century British, the Chinese seemed an odd amalgam of exoticness, passivity, and corruption.

In fact, the Eastern decadence that the English Admiral perceives in Myrrhina, on whom his daughters wish to call, proves most alarming to him. These rebellious girls employ Orientalist tropes in imagining their desired visit:

"We should now stand in the street of Hell
Watching siesta shutters that fell
With a noise like amber softly sliding;
Our moon-like glances through these gliding
Would see at her table preened and set
Myrrhina sitting at her toilette
With eyelids closed as soft as the breeze
That flows from gold flowers on the incense-trees." (pp. 15-17)

While the name "Myrrhina" may bring to mind the Classical Greek figure Myrrha (mother of Adonis), the Middle Eastern variant proves most

pertinent here (in which Myrrha was daughter of an Assyrian king).⁴⁰ Moreover, the myrrh tree itself is native to Arabia and Asia. Rather than “the submerged psychic world” that Pondrom sees in Myrrhina’s domain (p. 212), I find an Orientalist image of gold-flowered incense trees; their opulence intersects with China’s figuration as “a bacchanalian fantasy of a pleasure garden of the senses” in early modern Europe, as Porter notes (p. 12). Walton’s orchestration complements Sitwell’s Orientalism through its drowsy and discordant flute line, rolled diminished fifths in the bass clarinet part, and a continuous wire brushing of the cymbal. Myrrhina may represent a more “diffuse sensuality” than the Hottentot Venus’s, to borrow Pamela Hunter’s term,⁴¹ or she may be a prostitute, as Laird argues (p. 88). But she is clearly an Asian shady lady; like the Hottentot Venus, Myrrhina inhabits a “hot” climate and draws imperial censure.

Sir Joshua Jebb signifies imperial and patriarchal power throughout “En Famille”; his name alludes to a British military engineer and surveyor of prisons.⁴² In Walton’s score, pizzicato cello and snare drum punctuate descriptions of the Admiral’s stiff naval comportment, for example “roaring” the nautical command “Avast” (which means “stop”). Shocked at his daughter’s attraction to Myrrhina, the Admiral fears they will “go native.” Hastening to reinforce the racial boundaries they have troubled, he counters their resistance with a racially polarized outburst that becomes comically overblown, like Queen Victoria’s in “Hornpipe.” Walton’s score incorporates a snare drum roll to introduce this tirade, which begins by censuring Myrrhina’s failure to display proper table manners and “cross her T’s.” As the tempo accelerates, out tumbles the Admiral’s hysterical fear of the Asian other:

“In short, her scandalous reputation
Has shocked the whole of the Hellish nation;
And every turbaned Chinoiserie,
With whom we should sip our black Bohea,
Would stretch out her simian fingers thin
To scratch you, my dears, like a mandoline;
For Hell is just as properly proper
As Greenwich, or as Bath, or Joppa!” (pp. 18-19)

Myrrhina is even too scandalous for Hell, it seems. In the text’s closing measures, the Chinese become both stylized Orientals (“turbaned Chinoiserie”) and bestial menaces (“simian fingers”). Walton’s percussion part incorporates Chinese block during this recitation, with a cymbal stroke at the words “scratch you” to emphasize the perceived threat. The daughters’ insubordination threatens to tear asunder not only the Admiral’s own family, but also national and imperial unity itself. So much depends upon tea, T’s, and Empire.

“En Famille” triggers an “intermittent opening-out of meanings,” to borrow Driver’s suggestive phrase (p. 5), because it comes closest to troubling boundaries between imperial self and colonial other in *Façade*. While the patriarchal Admiral is clearly a satirical figure, his view of Myrrhina’s Oriental decadence intersects with that of his daughters, to whom Sitwell appears sympathetic. Moreover, Myrrhina’s “thin” fingers and “soft” eyelids suggest those of Sitwell herself. These distinctive features would become part of the poet’s iconography in numerous portraits by artists as diverse as Cecil Beaton, Stella Bowen, Roger Fry, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Sitwell declared in the press that she was “as highly stylised as it is possible to be,”⁴³ and her penchant for rich brocades and colorful turbans added an Oriental flair to her look. Sitwell’s combination of sartorial and poetic *chinoiserie* complicates the relationship between imperialism and subversion in *Façade*. By wearing turbans in London, Sitwell expressed her nonconformity to both traditional gender roles and reigning Georgian aesthetics. Porter notes that the feminine coding and “aesthetic transgressiveness” of *chinoiserie* allowed women gothic novelists to fashion from it “gestures of literary defiance and experimentation” (p. 244). These remarks apply equally well to Sitwell’s early poems (especially *Façade*), which accrued Orientalist meanings because of their exoticism and stylization. For example, Stanley Kunitz singles out “her Orient” as well as “Primitive Africa,”⁴⁴ while Clark refers to *Façade* as “her Chinoiserie poems” (p. 9).

Empire and race prove foundational to *Façade* not only in terms of its performance sequence but also in terms of its performance history. Four new numbers that featured dark-complected characters entered the nascent score during the years 1923-28, when Hottentots were in vogue. Two of these, “A Man from a Far Countree” and “Four in the Morning,” voice men of African descent who long for cross-racial romance. “Black Mrs. Behemoth” and “Popular Song” feature more shady ladies, one racially ambiguous and one of African descent. Space does not permit a fuller discussion of these poems, but suffice to say that they also contribute to the “dark side” of *Façade*.

In the slow-tempo “A Man from a Far Countree,” Sitwell represents cross-racial desire through three contrasts between “black” and “gold.” Describing himself as “black and not comely,” the speaker first utters his longing for “Rose and Alice,” whose hair is like an elusive “golden palace.” The poem’s second contrast proves slightly less fixed, in that a man “black as the darkest trees” can acquire wealth (“swarms of gold that will fly like honey-bees”); yet his rootedness to his color denies him the mobility of his money. In Sitwell’s final image, the speaker recodes his blackness as “a

lovely tree" in which "golden birds" will sing (pp. 50-51); here the colors cohabit without blending. That these mutations take place in a single sentence furthers the ambiguous status of race relations in this poem. Is Sitwell ultimately resisting or reinforcing African/English dualisms? Unlike the Emperor from Zanzibar in "Hornpipe," this black man is not an animalistic and decadent figure. He seems more along the lines of an older (and more sexualized) version of "The Little Black Boy"; Sitwell, in fact, echoes Blake's images of trees, lambs, black, and gold. Desiring romantic rather than platonic relations with whites, the speaker's mournful, culminating "oh!" both adds dramatic poignancy and reinforces stereotypes about cross-racial desire.

If the "Man from a Far Countree" is rooted in his blackness, the central figure of "Four in the Morning" inhabits a kind of racial Limbo, engaging in what Driver terms a "rootless questioning" (p. 6). Because he is a ghost, this black character can cross the racial divide to pursue his object of desire. Walton's score conveys a suitably ghostly mood, opening with pizzicato cello and "chill bass-clarinet tones" (p. 6). Sitwell's opening lines color the main character in ways that both displace and reinscribe social hierarchies:

Cried the navy-blue ghost
Of Mr. Belaker
The allegro negro cocktail-shaker:
"Why did the cock crow,
Why am I lost
Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd?" (p. 64)

"Navy-blue ghost" depicts both "pure" blackness and a bartender's uniform. The allusion to the cock's crow connotes betrayal, and Mr. Belaker will indeed breach propriety by desiring white women of divergent stations. He initially pursues a nursemaid: "As I raced through the leaves as white as water / My ghost flowed over a nurse-maid, caught her" (p. 65). In a longer version of the poem published in *The Canticle of the Rose*, Sitwell elaborates on what is hinted at in the performance text: "White is the nursemaid on the parade. / Is she real, as she flirts with me unafraid?" (p. 37).

While Mr. Belaker "flows over" the servant who apparently reciprocates his desire, he can only peer in at the Spanish princess:

Watch the Infanta's gown of silk
In the ghost-room tall where the governante
Whispers slyly fading andante.
In at the window then looked he,
The navy-blue ghost of Mister Belaker,
The allegro negro cock-tail shaker,
And his flattened face like the moon saw she,
Rhinoceros black yet flowing like the sea. (pp. 66-67)

"Four in the Morning" links Mr. Belaker with the Infanta in three ways. First, her "governante's" sly, fading whisper insinuates some complicity in the black man's voyeuristic access to her charge. Second, the ensuing measure of castanet in the percussion plays on the Infanta's Spanish nationality while also referring back to the castanets that accompany earlier references to Mr. Belaker. Equally subtle, the Infanta's reciprocal gaze at her admirer's "flowing face" echoes his "flowing over" the nursemaid. All of these tropes give his "navy-blue ghost" a mobility lacking in *Façade's* other black men. Mr. Belaker's face also blurs white/black dualisms because it is both moon-like (white) and "rhinoceros black," heavenly and bestial. Of all Sitwell's contributions to the performance text, this one proves most innovative in terms of both social configurations and sound devices.

If critics have ignored the race of *Façade's* most boisterous women, those few who acknowledge the text's black men limit their significance by reading them through biographical accounts of Sitwell's childhood at Renishaw Hall. Hunter makes a rather curious connection between Mr. Belaker and Henry Moat, the white valet who served Sitwell's father, because his drunkenness "gave his face the dark ('negro') blue tinge." Hunter does see the "man from a far countree" in broader terms; he becomes for her a universal figure of the "social outcast," either "the black slave on the Renishaw tapestries or the black-faced miner outside the grounds" (p. 73). In a passing comment on Sitwell's "exotic" influences, Kevin McBeath speculates that she may have shared her brother Osbert's "memory of a wretched Negro beggar selling flowers" in a resort town the family frequented (p. 35). Stephen Lloyd's analysis ventures into popular culture, considering the figure of "the Black-a-moor" in the *Strewelpeter* collection of children's stories that Sitwell named as an influence on her early poetry (p. 31). Generally speaking, Sitwell's recent critics have relied overmuch on psycho-biographical interpretations to gloss her early poetry. While it is true that Sitwell's childhood and children's culture more generally figure into *Façade*, focusing exclusively on these aspects suppresses both the racial politics and modernist bent of their blackface minstrelsy.

Sitwell's black men accrue fewer negative meanings than the excessive dark women who reinscribe some of the racial tropes more apparent in the Hottentot Venus and Myrrhina. "Black Mrs. Behemoth" and "Popular Song" feature characters who seem to threaten white women but become rather ridiculous in the end. These numbers return the scene of *Façade* to the colonial geographies of Asia and Africa.

In "Black Mrs. Behemoth," the racially ambiguous title character enters the text in ominous fashion, accompanied by accented, fortissimo chords and snare drum. The trumpet sounds more prominently here than in many numbers, suggesting the heavy stomping of an immense, enraged woman:

In the room of the palace
Black Mrs. Behemoth
Gave way to wrath
And the wildest malice. (p. 42)

Given the poem's repeated use of the word "black" in a sequence that opens with the Hottentot Venus, we should engage the network of meanings that extend beyond the darkness of her anger. As a descriptor, "black" intersects with Sitwell's other African characters and with Rudyard Kipling's infamous Gunga Din, who is Indian; both races figured heavily in British constructions of colonial others. In addition, the word "behemoth" connotes a hippopotamus, joining the network of wild animals that Sitwell links to people of color (zebra, lynx, monkey, rhinoceros). Mrs. Behemoth's traits contrast dramatically with the pale "court lady" she attempts to lure into her "shady" domain, continuing the black/white dualism that structures much of *Façade*:

Cried Mrs. Behemoth,
"Come, court lady,
Doomed like a moth,
Through palace rooms shady!"
The candle flame
Seemed a yellow pompion,
Sharp as a scorpion;
Nobody came. . . . (pp. 42-43)

Sitwell's subtext of threatened whiteness continues with the analogy of the moth's fatal attraction to the flame. Walton's music shifts to pianissimo and lighter instrumentation when Mrs. Behemoth speaks her three lines, employing a discordant flute part that recalls Myrrhina's appearance in "En Famille."

In the closing lines, the title character's excessive blackness is contained and rendered inert when no one responds to her threat. The "young spring wind" extinguishes the candle and then migrates to "flat Coromandel / Rolling on!" (p. 43). Echoing Edward Lear,⁴⁵ Sitwell's end rhyme for "candle" shifts the poem's location from a British or European palace to a colonial domain—the southeast coast of India. Black Mrs. Behemoth may no longer be a menace, but Britain certainly felt threatened by her competitors' colonial holdings in the years between the wars. As Stephen Constantine has noted, the British government's "prevailing occupation" was "maintaining, utilising and developing Empire links and resources," including "the preservation of imperial control over India."⁴⁶ Ghandi's Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22 exacerbated these anxieties about Asian Empire. Yet we must note that Walton's light, pianissimo ending in the performance text hardly suggests an imperial march to India.

Rather, “Black Mrs. Behemoth” relies mostly on the racial stereotypes surrounding its central character for its dramatic effects.

“Popular Song” presents a shady lady who takes on excessive trappings of whiteness. This third-to-last number of *Façade* is a tonally complex, cautionary tale with a doubly colonial protagonist: Lily O’Grady is both black and Irish. Racial stereotypes and British geopolitics prove important in a poem that punishes its central figure for putting on airs. The performance text of “Popular Song” opens with jazzy instrumentation and a jaunty beat, complementing the reciter’s rapid-fire delivery of Sitwell’s poem:

Lily O’Grady,
Silly and shady,
Longing to be
A lazy lady,
Walked by the cupolas, gables in the
Lake’s Georgian stables,
In a fairy tale like the heat intense,
And the mist in the woods when across the fence
The children gathering strawberries
Are changed by the heat into negresses . . . (pp. 91-92)

Donning a green (Irish?) satin “gown with tucks” and carrying a “fol-de-rol / Parasol,” Lily O’Grady performs a dubious ladyship. Sitwell reveals halfway into the poem that she is “a Negress black as the shade” (pp. 93-94), so this character’s “depth and range of meaning” prove more specific than the universal “emblem of mortality” that Brophy sees (p. 145). Lily O’Grady’s race and nationality, rather than her death by water, generate the text’s social meanings.

English, African, and Irish tropes play off one another in “Popular Song,” creating both comical and disturbing effects. To heighten her satire, Sitwell locates this poem in the English countryside so that her shady lady can disrupt the pleasant pastures of Georgian poetry and national identity. As Garrity has noted, idealized popular images “associated national character with ancient pastoral virtue that linked the countryside with authentic Englishness” during the interwar years (p. 2). Like the Hottentot Venus and Myrrhina, Lily O’Grady generates intense heat; in her case it blackens the local English girls into “negresses,” recalling the darkening of the Admiral’s daughters in “En Famille.” As “Popular Song” continues, its slippages between black and white do not prove parallel. Although the children’s skin changes color, they remain “gold-haired” and are likened consistently to Classical female figures. But Lily O’Grady cannot maintain her racial facade. Proving more grotesque than Classical, she runs “like the nymphs” when an amorous “dog-haired” satyr chases her into a lake. She becomes at last the “lazy lady” that she desired to be, remaining in the lake’s “deep shade.” Presumably, the black Irishwoman should have stayed

in her place. The demise of *Façade*'s final shady lady proves central to the lighthearted tone of the performance text, even as the poem's culminating lines shift from her fallen state to the fallen Roman empire: "Now Pompey's dead, Homer's read, / Heliogabalus lost his head" (pp. 92-99). During the time of *Façade*'s initial performance in 1922, the British empire had not fallen but was definitely starting to shrink; Egypt achieved partial independence, and the Irish Free State was declared.

Façade circulated in British culture during a decade that saw the establishment of the Empire Development Parliamentary Committee (1920), the Empire Development Union (1922), the Imperial Economic Conference (1923), the Empire Games (1924), and the Empire Marketing Board (1926). The latter organization, the EMB, promoted a policy of imperial preference by "bringing the Empire alive" through mass publicity. Thus many who attended the London performances of *Façade* in 1926 and 1929 would have been familiar with EMB posters for the "Buy British" campaign, the "Calendar of the Fruits and Vegetables of Empire," Empire jigsaw puzzles and Christmas cards, and the popular recipe for the King's Empire Christmas Pudding (comprised of such ingredients as South African raisins and Jamaican rum). One of the EMB's first films, the 1929 feature *One Family*, raised this pudding to unintended parody by depicting a boy traveling the globe to find the necessary ingredients; Kipling worked on the script (Constantine, pp. 203, 211, 205, 216). Poetry was also called upon to maintain the "façade" of British imperial unity. In a 1926 letter to the *Times*, a representative of the EMB called upon readers to submit "quotations from English prose or verse" that might be suitable for posters promoting "Empire trade, traffic, and development."⁴⁷ As we have seen, many of Sitwell's *Façade* poems parody the Empire's efficacy at the same time that they reinforce the racial stereotypes that helped to maintain it. I agree with Garrity that "little attention has been paid to how British women modernists identify with, repudiate, and interrogate the legacy of empire" (p. 13) and would add that women poets are especially ignored in this context.

As I see it, two tendencies in literary studies have made Sitwell long overdue for a reassessment informed by race and empire as well as gender. First, the avant-gardism of *Façade* would seem to render it immune to historical and cultural interpretations. In his close reading of the year 1922, North critiques "the preservation of something called 'modernism' in intellectual amber, something whose purported insulation from the cultural world into which it was introduced is now retrospectively accomplished by critical consensus" (p. 11). In 1922, *Façade* first sounded its "noise like

amber" (p. 16 of the "En Famille" number), entangling experimental techniques and racial formations, witty parodies and colonial geographies. New modernist studies would profit from revisiting Sitwell and Walton's performance text. If modernism was mischaracterized as being divorced from the "cultural world," women's poetry has been misconceived as always resisting the dominant culture. This second factor in the critical reception of *Façade*—and Sitwell more generally—has led to the privileging of gender subversion at the expense of nontransgressive social meanings, especially in those analyses based on Kristeva's semiotic. Sitwell's name may have been "synonymous with progressive poetics" in the 1920s, as Dowson puts it (p. 90), but as with male modernists, her stylistic innovations do not always guarantee progressive politics. In the case of Sitwell's shady ladies, feminist critics have ignored the fact that their *race* proves as crucial as their gender to the text's unsettling of British cultural norms, and more crucial than gender to their excessive behavior. Sitwell's autobiography insists that "the audience is meant to laugh" at *Façade*,⁴⁸ but its rhythmic laughter does not always prove subversive. This most infamous of Sitwell's texts has taken on renewed significance in the new century. In Oxford's latest anthology of British poetry, edited by Keith Tuma, four of the five Sitwell selections come from *Façade*.⁴⁹ Bernhart's and Phillips's Kristevan-based analyses comprise two of the three essays published on Sitwell in 2002. If we include more cultural contexts in our approaches to *Façade*, Sitwell will no longer be a canonical misfit.

NOTES

¹ Leonard Woolf, "The World of Books," *The Nation & The Athenaeum*, 18 April 1925, p. 76.

² F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation* (1932; rpt., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 73.

³ Gerald DeWitt Sanders, John Herbert Nelson, and M. L. Rosenthal, eds., *Chief Modern Poets of Britain and America*, vol. 1, *Poets of Britain*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

⁴ Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair, eds., *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 449, 450.

⁵ Fleur Adcock, ed., *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Women's Poetry* (London: Faber, 1987), p. 8; Diana Scott, ed., *Bread and Roses: An Anthology of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Poetry by Women Writers* (London: Virago, 1982).

⁶ Cyrena N. Pondrom, "Influence? or Intertextuality? The Complicated Connection of Edith Sitwell with Gertrude Stein," in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 204-18, 211-12; Jane Dowson, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939: Resisting Femininity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 96;

Holly Laird, "Laughter and Nonsense in the Making and (Postmodern) Remaking of Modernism," in *The Future of Modernism*, ed. Hugh Witemeyer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 80; Gyllian Phillips, "Something Lies Beyond the Scene [Seen]' of *Façade*: Sitwell, Walton and Kristeva's Semiotic," in *Literature and Musical Adaptation*, ed. Michael J. Meyer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 61-78. Subsequent references to these works will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁷ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 18.

⁸ Jane Garrity, *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 2-3. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁹ Edith Sitwell, *Façade* (London: Favil Press, 1922).

¹⁰ Sitwell and William Walton, *Façade: An Entertainment* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951). Subsequent references to the *Façade* poems are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹¹ Lynn Redgrave, reciter, *Façade, Books I and II*, by Walton and Sitwell, dir. David Shifrin, cond. Joseph Silverstein, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Arabesque Recordings, Z6699, 1997; Pamela Hunter, reciter, *Something Lies Beyond the Scene: Façade, The Complete Version, 1922-1928*, by Walton and Sitwell, cond. Silveer van der Broeck, Melologos Ensemble, Discover International, DICD 920125, 1993.

¹² Victoria Glendinning, *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), p. 72.

¹³ Blake Morrison, "Queen Edith: On Edith Sitwell," *Encounter*, 57, No. 5 (1981), 92.

¹⁴ Marnie Parsons, *Touch Monkeys: Nonsense Strategies for Reading Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 149, 150.

¹⁵ Sitwell, *The Canticle of the Rose* (New York: Vanguard, 1949), p. xii. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁶ Walter Bernhart, "Iconicity and Beyond in 'Lullaby for Jumbo': Semiotic Functions of Poetic Rhythm," in *Form Miming Meaning: Iconicity in Language and Literature*, ed. Max Nänny and Olga Fischer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1999), pp. 162, 159; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, *The Portable Kristeva*, ed. Kelly Oliver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 104, 34. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁸ Gary Day and Gina Wisker, "Recuperating and Revaluing: Edith Sitwell and Charlotte Mew," in *British Poetry, 1900-50: Aspects of Tradition*, ed. Day and Brian Docherty (New York: St. Martins, 1995), pp. 68-69, 66. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁹ The alternate title for "Long Steel Grass" is "Trio for Two Cats and a Trombone."

²⁰ Acton qtd. in Stephen Lloyd, *William Walton: Muse of Fire* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2001), p. 40; subsequent references to Lloyd will be cited

parenthetically in the text.

²¹ Susan Gubar, *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 139-40; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²² Sarah Bradford et al., *The Sitwells and the Arts of the 1920s and 1930s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 92, 95, 79. Gino Severini's design for the 1928 performance incorporated figures from the *commedia dell'arte*, which also appear in his frontispiece to the 1922 book publication of *Façade*. John Piper's design for the 1942 performance depicts a dreamy landscape with a ghostly, white-bearded mask in the center.

²³ Kenneth Clark, "On the Development of Miss Sitwell's Later Style," *Horizon* 16, No. 90 (1947), 9; John Lehmann, *Edith Sitwell, Writers and Their Work*, No. 25, rev. ed. (London: Longman, 1970), p. 17; James D. Brophy, *Edith Sitwell: The Symbolist Order* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 121; and Paul Driver, "'Façade' Revisited," *Tempo*, 133-34 (1980), 6-7. Subsequent references to these works will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²⁴ Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²⁵ See "The Control of Zanzibar," *The Times*, 1 July 1913, p. 7e.

²⁶ See Cheryl A. Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 105.

²⁷ Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 112.

²⁸ Gilman, p. 112. For more information on Baartman's exhibitions in London, see the news article "Bring Back the Hottentot Venus," *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 15 June 1995. For a comprehensive account of her life, including her influence on the British press and music hall, see the documentary film, *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus*, dir. Zola Maseko, 1998.

²⁹ Bette Richart, "Dame Edith's Art," *The Commonweal*, 27 February 1959, p. 566.

³⁰ Benjamin Hapgood Burt and Silvio Hein, "Marie Cahill's 'Hottentot Love Song'" (New York: Joseph W. Stern and Co., 1906), p. 5.

³¹ Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Genders, Races, and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry, 1908-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 103-04.

³² *The Hottentot* was made into a film titled *Hottentot* in 1923 and 1929 and was remade again as *Polo Joe* in 1936. The most famous remake, *Going Places* (1938), featured Louis Armstrong as the groom who coaxes a racehorse to victory.

³³ Sitwell, *Clown's Houses* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1918), pp. 8, 20. Sitwell drew the title "Black Coffee" from one of Aubrey Beardsley's drawings.

³⁴ Noel Coward, *Chelsea Buns*, attributed to Hernia Whittlebot (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1924), pp. 44, 37.

³⁵ Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 9.

³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 156.

³⁷ David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe*

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 193-95; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

³⁸ John Seabrook, "Letter from Indonesia: Soldiers and Spice," *The New Yorker*, 13 Aug. 2001, p. 60.

³⁹ See the online site for the 1911 edition, <<http://29.1911encyclopedia.org>>.

⁴⁰ Edward Tripp, *Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology*, formerly titled *Crowell's Handbook of Classical Mythology* (New York: Meridian, 1970), p. 156.

⁴¹ Pamela Hunter, introduction and commentary, *Façade*, by Sitwell (London: Duckworth, 1987), p. 73.

⁴² See Kevin McBeath, "Façade 'A Noise like Amber,'" in *William Walton: Music and Literature*, ed. Stuart R. Craggs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 47; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴³ Sitwell, qtd. in Elizabeth Salter and Allanah Harper, eds., *Edith Sitwell: Fire of the Mind* (New York: Vanguard, 1976), p. 107.

⁴⁴ Stanley Kunitz, "From Queen Anne to the Jungle," review of *The Collected Poems of Edith Sitwell*, *Poetry*, 37, No. 6 (1931), 341.

⁴⁵ See Edward Lear's poem "The Courtship of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò," in *A Nonsense Anthology*, ed. Carolyn Wells (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1902), pp. 100-03.

⁴⁶ Stephen Constantine, "'Bringing the Empire Alive': the Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 192; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁷ This letter, with the header "Posters for Imperial Trade," appeared in *The Times* on 3 November 1926, p. 13, col. E. As an example of poetry that inspires poster designers, L. S. Amery cited Blake's "Thou hast a lap full of seed, / And this is a fine country, / Why dost thou not cast thy seed, / And live in it merrily?"

⁴⁸ Sitwell, *Taken Care Of: The Autobiography of Edith Sitwell* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 139.

⁴⁹ Keith Tuma, ed., *The Oxford Anthology of Modern British and Irish Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).