

"according to the palmists, the lines of the left hand are incised unalterably at birth, while those of the right hand are modified by our actions and environment and the life we lead."

THE SITWELL FAMILY

American College for Girls  
Tuesday, March 27th, 1951

Intro:

This is a very large subject and I can only touch on the highlights. Question the class on what they already know of the three.

The autobiography of Sir Osbert Sitwell Title with meanings:

1. Left Hand, Right Hand (whole title and first vol.)
  2. The Scarlet Tree...the blood stream..circulatory system
  3. Great Morning....his youth (we all have our great morning)
  4. Laughter in the Next Room (Father's remark..left out)
- A fifth Vol. just appeared called Noble Essences sketches of famous people he has known intimately,...but this is not strictly speaking a part of the autob.

*Brief quotes of opinions in literary world.*

Characteristics: Fine English...revelation of the characters of his family and surroundings...interests... a picture of a vanishing world.... Victorian sympathetic pictures of his sister and brother  
Indictment of his father's tyranny. *Humor.*

Tell briefly of the story of the autob.

<sup>1860-1943</sup>  
Father Sir George Sitwell      Mother Lady Ida Sitwell      1625  
aristocratic ancestors...rich people...home at Renishaw  
in Derbyshire, in the coal country of England...summer  
home in Scarborough...great houses of his relatives..  
servants...an army of them.

Edith Sitwell..1887      Osbert Sitwell 1892      Sacheverell  
Sitwell 1897      the bond between them.

Miseries of his childhood and youth...largely due to not being understood...queerness of his sister... hatred of school...  
the First World War... before this father had bought a castle  
in Italy MONTEGUFONI 1909      *see 3 Rebels - against*  
*parents; codes; era.*

As they grew older the interests of the three:

All of them poets...all experimental  
art critics.. especially Sacheverell  
great lovers of music especially modern music  
All prose writers as well...Edith 2 biographies...  
Sacheverell one biography and other prose works,  
and Osbert short stories and autobiography  
*+ bio. of Dickens*

Bio = E - a poet  
O - a novelist  
S - a musician

2,

Today will speak principally of Osbert and Sacheverell as Edith needs a period to herself.

A long list of works ...difficult to choose what to tell about. Roughly, Edith the most exotic, Sacheverell, the most learned and likewise difficult to understand, and Osbert, the most versatile ...

Quotation from:

Sacheverell's poetry...

The Moon

At Breakfast

Osbert:

Mrs. Hague poem

From Great Morning p. 39 p. 72 and 75

If time (which is doubtful..Edith's Colonel Fantock)

On Thursday will speak of Edith Sitwell's works and play on the victrola part of her famous recital with music called Façade.

Edith Sitwell...a strange imaginative girl, misunderstood by family and relatives...championed by her 2 brothers...  
 Blonde...very tall...6 feet ..dresses strangely and eccentrically...an original genius, if she is a genius.  
 Writes...variety of things...prose and Poetry  
 Poetry very strange and experimental.

Her Poetry

some of it fairly easy to understand, but much is very experimental. She talks about the thickness and thinness of words...words that cast shadows..ground rhythm...musical cadences.. The best known of these poems put together in what is known as the Façade.

Façade

Quote Osbert in Laughter in the next room: Page 208 ssq.

*First perf. in drawing room Carlyle Square  
 " Rubic's perf. - June 12, 1923*  
 Edith says of these poems: They are abstract poems, that is they are patterns in sound.. Virtuoso exercises in technique of extreme difficulty.

The music. William Walton a friend of the 3 Sitwells, who spent hours with Edith composing the music to go with her voice. A curtain, an aperture and a megaphone with a hidden orchestra.

First comments on performance in 1923

Later enthusiasm.

Now you will hear a few exerpts. Polka and Waltz Foxtrot and By the Lake Black Mrs. Behemoth (elephant) reason does not enter...emotion and delight evinced by sound

Aubade

musical announcement of Dawn read first....then Edith's comments and then read again.

Colonel Fanstock

this is much more comprehensible...explain contempt for the class of regular army men.

Edith edited Wheels a poetry anthology from 1916-21

BOOKS BY THE SITWELLS

(necessarily partial)

Edith:

The Mother and Other Poems	1915
Elegy on Dead Fashion	1926
Gold Coast Customs	1929
Alexander Pope	1930
The English Eccentris	1933
Aspects of Modern Poetry	1934
I Live Under a Black Sun	1937 a novel
Look! The Sun	1941 anthology
English Women	1942
Fanfare for Elizabeth	1946
A Notebook on William Shakespeare	1948

Collection of poems called The Canticle of the Rose 1917-1949  
A book on Victoria

Osbert:

Argonaut and Juggernaut	1919
Who Killed Cock Robin?	1921
Out of the Flame	1923
Triple Fugue and Other Stories	1924
England Reclaimed	1927
The Man Who Lost himself	1929
Dumb Animals and Other Stories	1930
Dickens	1932
Miracle on Sanai	1933
Penny Foolish	1935
Those Were the Days	1938
Two Generations	1940
A Place of One's Own	1942
Autobiography.....	1943-50
Death of a God..stories	1949
Escape with me	1940
Open the Door	

Sacheverell:

Southern Baroque Art	1924
German Baroque Art	1927
Mozart	1932
Canons of <del>Great</del> <sup>Giant</sup> Art	1933
Dance of the Quick and the Dead	1936
Narrative Pictures	1937
Old Fashioned Flowers	1939
Poltergeists	1940
Valse Des Fleurs	1941

A friend has compared the Sitwells..a writing family with the Brontes who all wrote but I think this far fetched. What they have in common is that they both lived in the north country in England ,both suffered from a tyrannical father, both loved art and life. But their differences were greater... The Brontes were poor,unknown, wrote in secret, had had few educational advantages and knew almost no people except the humble folk of Haworth and vicinity and a few school friends and teachers. The Sitwells were rich and travelled, had great educational advantages, were not obliged to work in secret though their efforts got no sympathy from their elders and were the heirs of much property. Just to compare the vast roominess of their three great homes in Renishaw, Scarborough and Italy with the poor little cramped parsonage at Haworth, is almost ludicrous. One effect of the tyrannical father was to bring the sisters and brothers together. They all doted on each other and the Sitwells still do.

**Boğaziçi Üniversitesi**

**Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi**

Kişisel Arşivlerle İstanbul'da Bilim, Kültür ve Eğitim Tanıtı

**Scott Ailesi Koleksiyonu**



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