

ODE TO EDITH

MUSIC: 'ANANTA' BY GIUSTO PIO (flurry of gentle piano notes followed by a soft drone which continues underneath throughout)

Interviewer: Dame Edith, the world outside your own circle of friends tends to think of you as being remote, eccentric, forbidding and rather dangerous, now perhaps that's a false impression, and I want you to tell me face to face what sort of person you really are. Now first your appearance, which everybody knows - why did you devise the very personal style of clothes which you wear so often?

Edith: Well because I can't wear fashionable clothes. You see I'm a throwback to remote ancestors of mine and I really would look so extraordinary if I wore coats and skirts, I would be followed for miles and people would doubt the existence of the Almighty if they saw me looking like that.

MUSIC: 'ANANTA' DRONE

MUSIC: 'ROCKY MOUNTAINS' BY WENDY CARLOS (ominous sounding smoothly shifting synth chords)

MUSIC: 'ANANTA' DRONE

Edith: Something was said about me that I was as ugly as modern poetry, seems to me to have nothing to do with ones work at all.... Ugly as modern poetry... Ugly as modern poetry...

MUSIC: 'STINRG QUARTET NO. 8 IN C SHARP MAJOR (ALLEGRO MOLTO)' BY DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (frantic fast strings building up to driving rhythmic crescendo)

MUSIC: 'ANANT'A DRONE

Interviewer: Now in recent years I suspect that you really have become a member of the establishment, although you enjoy your...

Edith: Oh no I've not!

Interviewer: You've not?

Edith: No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no.

MUSIC: 'ANANTA' DRONE

Interviewer: Well now I want to take you back to your childhood. Is it true, it's always said, that you had an unhappy childhood?

Edith: Extremely unhappy

Interviewer: Is it in fact true that both your parents disliked your appearance as a child?

Edith: Er, my father, I don't think my mother bothered about it. My father loathed it. He liked people covered with curls and quite frankly rather common. You see he'd married a lady and it hadn't gone very well so of course he didn't want any more ladies about.

Interviewer: And is it true that he tried to change your appearance, that he had recourse to plastic surgery?

Edith: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What happened about that, tell me.

Edith: Well, it was very dreadful, I don't want to talk about it.

Interviewer: Alright. Were you, as part of this unhappy childhood, were you punished or were you teased, what was the particular form of torture?

Edith: Er, well I think they resorted to everything which could possibly humiliate or hurt me.

MUSIC: 'ANANTA' DRONE

Edith: Extremely unhappy.

MUSIC: 'PREFACE BY FKA TWIGS (quiet 'ah' singing, then wavering synth notes with a deep beat underneath)

Edith: You see I'm descended from the most queer and remote sources. On one side my maternal grandmother is descended straight from the Red Rose Plantagenets, and on another side I'm descended from an errand boy who walked barefoot from Leeds to London and built up a large fortune. Well I'm extremely proud of his having walked barefoot from Leeds, I think it's magnificent.

MUSIC: 'IMPROVISATION' BY OLIVIER LATRY (energetic, fast, rhythmic organ music)

Edith: Well until my brothers were born, my only companions were birds. I loved the wild birds, but my pet birds, there was a peacock you see, and he and I loved each other very much.

MUSIC: 'SWEATERS (SAM GENDEL REMIX)' BY LAURIE ANDERSON (sporadic beat, electronic whistling, pulsing synth sound) CONTINUS UNDER:

Edith: We would then walk round and round the garden, as you might say arm in arm, my arm around his neck, I was four years old. And I was asked why I loved him so and I said, "because he's very proud and has a crown and is beautiful." And then my father got him a wife, with his usual tactlessness, after which he never looked at me again and my heart was broken.

MUSIC: 'ANANTA' DRONE

Interviewer: All your professional life I have the feeling that you have been campaigning, you've been crusading either against something or for something, now what has the campaign been against?

Edith: Always for something

Interviewer: What's it been for then?

Edith: For any kind of new great work which was coming along, I mean we have after all found and helped a good many great artists in various arts. We really have you know. And against cruelty, against injustice, against snobbery.

MUSIC: 'SPIRITUAL ETERNAL' BY ALICE COLTRANE