

OBJECTS

I. **Madam Schaparelli's Birdcage**

She kept it mounted high against the satin draperies :
a golden birdcage, its wooden pieces pierced and sculptured,
its tiny wire bars more fragile than the threads embroidering
her Aubusson with pale, gently pornographic Fragonards.
She kept it, a Baroque pendulum, riding upon the breeze
she made when whispering through the room.

But no birds perched upon the inner clockwork of the cage,
no trained canary singing, nor even jungle parakeets
speaking seldom, like ancient green and yellow crystal radios,
and especially no gross crow or parrot to hone their bills
on cuttlebones and spot the sandalwood with seeds and waste.

No birds sat silent or singing within the cage, because, she said,
it was too fragile, being old, Rococo, made for some King Louis :
to decorate the endless hallway of his mistress' home.
It was too fragile to hold a bird, and thus it served no use,
nor any function, swinging silent and golden so she might just
touch it like a delicate, frosted palace with no princess
prisoned in its tower, and pass on to tea, secure with knowing
that it would be there still, when she returned
to close the drapes against the violet sunset.

David Ossman