

Mrs. So-and-So, Upstanding

What a pleasure, and a privilege  
to visit you once again, Mrs. So-and-So,  
and to stare unembarrassed  
at your elegant dress, yellow dahlias at the bosom,  
dahlias yellow in the hair,  
standing so at your ease,  
yet somehow sustaining the immense  
coat, or cape, half falling off; and you  
with that look of polite surprise,  
lips compressed, eyebrows arched ---  
dear lady, excuse me, my scrutiny's improper,  
but what a pleasure.

And how intriguing to find a photograph of you  
six years later, in the garden,  
rising out of the yellow blooms,  
smiling squinting into the sun ---  
to scrutinize  
the same quest, the same avidity.

And now, just passing through the foyer  
on the way to the dining room  
you pause ---  
you are here, you stand before me, Caroline de Bassano.  
Time has been kind to you, I see,  
the memory of dahlias still clings.  
But you stand, a little nervous, impatient,  
glancing off to where  
even now the guests are sitting down,  
wondering where the Marquise can be.  
Duck breast salad, the first course, to be followed by  
trout, caught just today from our river  
by little Anton with the Marquis  
---- so,  
on your way.

No surprise, when we heard,  
it was 1938, time closed in,  
you were  
Ninety-one years old.



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