

The Dining Room

It was so still in the room, filled with mirrors, men, women, flowers,
Touched with narcotic beauty. The old brain luxuriated: I have come to this.
I have arrived at an incomparable setting for my finest hours.

Born in the tropics, reared in the north, knowing too much rain and drouth,
I sit among these other seasoned and resourceful travellers,
Our old percussion dimmed to bringing silver to the mouth.

We have reached the ribbon, finished somehow in the race.
The woman opposite me must have run ten thousand miles—
No perspiration there: You will not see the massive mileage in her face.

We were, of course, making up our language all along the road
With only the vaguest fantasy, far-off, of mirrors, flowers,
Where one could count on perfect translation that did not violate the code.

Why was the room so still then, so full of dying fall?—
The tables were centered with rigid masks of flowers;
Poured like blood into the glasses, wine was terminal—

I cannot say, except, speaking for the brain, one wanted far too much—
Look at that man, that woman, awake, and dozing in the mirror,
While fate is running somewhere wildly on the road with just their vision as a
crutch.

—*Charles Edward Eaton*