

Hotel Cafe

Because their meal is late I ask them “are
You sisters, do you travel much together?”
At this the blonde one grins, tells the other

Softly, as if I wouldn’t overhear,
“Isn’t he a doll?” Then they talk to me —
The dancing they have done on their tour,

The men they have flirted with: George the ex
Soldier who could still jitterbug, Harold
Who was up in the room next door sleeping

Off last night’s wine, their driver with the blue
eyes that filled the room with light whenever
he laughed. After I clear dessert they thank

Me, squeeze my arm as if in invitation.
That night the cafe brims with the scent of them,
Women pretty for their age, longing for

Speech, laughter, smile — touchings that hold people
Together. Later I ask whether someone
Knows who they were. RCAF widows.

I wonder how many dance halls they have filled
Until exactly half empty, listening
For those lives that flew from them long ago.

When I get home my wife does not question
My quiet. We fly tight and naked through
The darkness. I play my old records.

MICHAEL BRADFORD