

Polyester Purgatory

by Robert Salley

Hotel bars.

Public Relations agents
would call them lounges.

You can count the loneliness by the faces.

Worn out women

are widowed by dreams.

They line the bar beside me.

Talking about themselves and estranged children,
while rubbing necks and wrists,
searching for the pulse.

Breath stale from cigarettes and martinis.

They tongue fuck their olives

and I see my mother lowering wet eyes behind theirs.

Passing blood red lipstick

are marvelous tales of reaching for the stars,
but coming up short at the moon.

The bartender stands without a whisper.

So silent... so stoic.

