Shooting Pool

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shooting pool

we went as often as we could,
and stayed as long as we could afford.
a couple of crumpled ones and fives
were all it took to keep us off the streets.
for a few precious hours,
we knew safety behind closed doors.

at first we didn’t really know
how to form a proper bridge
or the detailed rules of the game.
just the simple knowledge
to sink the eight ball last.

many hours and many more dollars later,
after school nights and winter months
came and gone, we knew the game
like a mother knows her child:

we knew the electric hum
of the overhead lights,
the soft green felt, drawn skin tight over a slab of slate.
we knew the fifteen balls by color,
    pattern, and number
and the dusty smell of blue chalk.
we knew terms like “english,”
“cheese,”
and “walk the lawn.”
above all we knew the rhythmic feel of shooting pool
that makes everything seem
as if in slow motion,
and a single cue stroke,
soft as a lover’s kiss,
sends certain responses
to the mind,
so that time slows down,
and the world seems
to fade away to
nothing but the sound
of a ball,
dropping
into
a
pocket.