

## *Pool Dementia*

by Matt Shnackenberg

i lean close  
to the warm felt  
cradling  
my stick,  
whispering secrets  
only my balls  
can hear,  
but they never talk  
back,  
and i know  
that they're  
ignoring  
me.  
they stick together  
in snobbish  
little  
cluster-fucks  
or jump cackling  
off the table  
to bark my impotence  
to the world.  
smug  
little hardheads,  
ignoring  
the college education

i've spent  
for their selfish  
entertainment,  
chuckling  
maliciously  
off the cue.  
the cue ball  
is the worst of all,  
little traitor,  
little thief,  
little backstabbing bastard  
ducking down  
another hole  
to nuzzle  
in my rival's  
greedy  
baby powder  
hand.  
i try  
taking the rack  
with me  
to counseling  
to salvage the love  
i know

is there,  
but somehow  
the shrink  
always thinks  
that i'm  
the one to blame  
the one who's being  
unreasonable.  
and the medications  
he prescribes  
all look like pool balls.  
but i swallow  
them  
and stare  
at the empty green,  
my stick  
limp  
in my hand,  
and my arm  
dead,  
and i know  
that down in the slot  
they're  
talking about me.