

Jukebox Playing Forward Tunes for Backwards Folks

in the bar
the pool tables
are 6 feet
not ten
so you feel
like a pigmy
picking
fruit
reaching over the
8 ball
like it was
some rotten
plum

and the
felt
is some
awful
pink color
that stays
with you
even
after
you close
your eyes

the tables
take quarters
like whores

the cues
are all
warped
and you're
lucky if
you can
find one
that doesn't
wobble
like some
jerk

with one
leg
shorter
than the
other

the jukebox
might
as well
be playing
recordings
of a garbage
compactor
because
the man
with the most
dimes
likes
progressive
rock music

and the bartender
wipes down
a glass
because he
wants to
look busy
on a Tuesday
night

“I’m telling you,
our songs better
come on soon or
I’m splitting!”
my friend tells me

the music
reminds
you of
what time
you’re in

what undoubtedly

different times
they are

because without
that music
you could
be in
any bar
in any time

not much
has changed
about bars
over the years

there are still
the regulars

a few punched
out women
who held
their cigarettes
like pacifiers

the dukers

only the music
shackled you
to your place
in time-

the boys
with bad
taste
leave

all of us
sigh
in relief
for their
songs must
be up

the juke
is mulling over
its choices

you can hear
the pitch
of the needle
leave the record

and then the
long, sweet
silence
that you
felt it a crime
to breath
during

and finally
the first
note
of timeless
benevolence
pours
out of its
speakers

some raspy voiced
crooner singing
about car manifolds
and 24 hour diners

and the crack
of the cue ball
into the 12
and the swish
of the imitation leather
pocket
reminds you to forget
what time it is

and to order another
drink

bourbon, ginger ale, soda water, and a lemon peel

get blue chock on your
trousers

and sit around
the table
next to a digital
fireplace
to discuss
the future-

life is
easy to
talk about
when it's
good.