



POOLROOM

I have seen the Gypsy's ivory
Careen around the rails
Watched the furrowed brow of Jesse James
As misses turned to wails

Glimpsed the flash of white and gold
From the lips of Detroit Slim
As his twenty two ounce partner
Kept rigid faith with him

I have seen Joe Canton's sidestroke
Make Abie Rosen tremble
Heard the hush of folded money
Where faceless hats assemble

Rolled fifteen numbered planets
Across a sky of cushioned green
Watched practiced eyes get narrow
At bank shots rarely seen

I have seen the awe on faces
Necks turn for fuller view
As Fats dogged easy runouts
And Irish chalked his cue

Watched youth's hand falter
At age's cunning test
Heard endless toothless muttering
Of Greenleaf at his best

I have seen the best of dump games
When side bets stood no chance
And men with idle dollars
Pay for the hustler's dance

I have felt the fingers of grey morning
Turn darkness into day
Watched the upturned hilt of sunlight
Drive the blinking hats away

By DAVID HARTMAN