

## PLEASE BARGAINING

i remember bargaining with god  
as a child: "if you please  
let me have this or that,  
i won't ask for anything ever  
again (for a long time)."

sometimes these deals transpired:  
a broken window went unnoticed  
or a serious lie was believed.  
sometimes they were partially  
delivered: a walk as opposed to  
a strike-out or a hit  
in the big game.

this nonsense was always  
so humiliating -- like borrowing  
money from an older brother.  
just one more reason to be glad  
to have transcended the limitations  
and superstitions of childhood,  
though, i must say  
that if you give me  
the girl in that lingerie ad,  
i'll never ask for anything  
ever again.

## PARTY FAVOR

it was a typically gloomy affair:  
little groups of intimates  
gathered in mutually exclusive clusters,

so the hostess (who'd invited me  
for just such an occasion)  
asked me to liven things up.

"hey listen everyone," i said  
drunkenly, "there's enough despair  
and sadness in the world already."

people immediately began to resent  
my interruption. i could feel  
them snapping shut like clams.

"what i mean to say," i stammered,  
"is that the hostess has asked me to  
tell you you're all fucking bores."



a roar of unified outrage swept  
like a rumor of v.d. through the room,  
and i was shown roughly to the door.

the next day the hostess called  
to thank me: the party  
had been a huge success.

#### I LIKE CRITICS

i like critics (this is  
my first published poem)  
they tell me which books  
to detest without reading,  
which films i'll like  
and maybe see.

i like poetry contests,  
and film festival prizes.  
i like n.e.a. grant judges.  
i trust, respect, and admire  
editors everywhere: i believe  
in their sound judgment.

critics have helped me  
to become a better poet:  
of course i'll subscribe  
(i've enclosed a little extra,  
also a photo of my wife  
in the shower).

this is my submission,  
my art.  
judge it well.

#### A PERFORMING SEAL

After years of love, patience, and reward-motivation  
training, he had finally taught a seal to understand  
human language and commands, and to perform so many  
human functions as to make the seal the principal  
celebrity of the entire circus menagerie. People would  
come for kilometers around to see the seal compete with  
chimpanzees in gymnastics, or do such tricks as "eat  
lobster newberg with a knife and fork while dressed in  
an expensive evening gown," or "drive a porsche around