

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."

FROM FANS
SIGHTING
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