

"you know, when you were taking
english 459, i knew all the time
you were getting the answers
from the pretty, longlegged, skinny,
blackhaired girl,
who always sat next to you in the back row.
i knew it because i was going out with her."

i'm not bluffing,
and he doesn't bother to deny it.

he does a good job of maintaining his composure,
even admits he was doing quite a bit
of cheating in those days
and that he figured there wasn't that much
to be learned in school anyway.

"not if you never crack a book," i say.

later he says, "why didn't you flunk me?"

"three reasons," i say: "first of all,
hardly anyone, including me, was flunking anyone
in those days; secondly, i figured it was no skin
off my ass; but most importantly, i considered
the evidence inadmissible."

THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT

when my daughter does something praiseworthy,
such as counting to five for the first time,
we clap for her
and she claps for herself.
loudly, joyously, unabashedly,
she applauds her accomplishment.
you and i are not allowed
to lead the cheers for ourselves.
we are supposed to be unaffected
by our successes, practically oblivious to them.
it is considered the worst of form
to sing one's own praises, to toot one's own horn.

then again, if we were allowed to lead our own cheers,
we might discover that
there wasn't all that much to cheer for anyway.