

NICE

is not a fart sealed in a thermos.
It is not a rubber dropped in the collection plate at church,
or a dong drawn in the coach's yearbook smile.

Nice is a dog that wags its tail, doesn't smell, and doesn't bite;
a cat that comes to you and, when you pat it, purrs.
Nice is what the people next door were

when they gave me a squirtgun for my birthday,
but weren't, drunk and fighting, Friday night.
Nice describes their daughter Katie, dressed for Sunday school,

but not spreadeagled on my bunkbed, showing me her "thing."
At least that's what my mommy said.
Nice is a mommy's favorite word,

along with "selfish," "bad," "ashamed," and "hands-and-knees."
Nice can be a disease; if you catch it, egg some old lady and run.
The same way ancient Egyptians worshipped the Sun,

the middle class worships the Nice.
It is the Grail which guides their lives toward Readers Digest and the Junior League,
away from boogers on the tablecloth, and eating toe-cheese.

Nice is underarm deodorant, lack-of-panty-line, no-jiggle-bras,
tampons with "hands-off" applicators and names like "Rely," "Concern," "Stay-Free."
Nice is what every vagina prays to be.

It's scented soap, tuxedos, black ties, thank-you notes, "chubby" instead of "fat," and "blow your nose" for "snot."
It's what most poems are, and mine consistently are not.

It isn't picking scabs, or picking up herpes, crabs or AIDS.

It isn't girdles on the clothesline, or a "Hershey Highway" down the middle of your underwear.
It is not the expression "Hershey Highway."

It is male understatement for a perfect ass,
an affliction of guys who finish last,
arrival of your tax refund on time.

It is not pursuing cash (though cash-in-hand is always nice),
or the feeling when the phone rings during sex,
or when Jehovah's Witnesses knock at your door, flaunting
their niceness like an open sore.

Nice is what a civilized war's supposed to be.
Told that Nice is a resort in Southeast France,
it is not nice to think of nude sunbathers, but hard
not to.

When a boss says "nice job," beware the trap-door in the
bedrock of his gratitude.
When a woman says "nice guy," he is putting her to sleep,
but not with him.

Webster's states that "nice" derives from a word meaning
"stupid; lazy; dull."
It would have been nice to know that years ago.

I could say more about this subject, this blatant turncoat
word,
(this worm in Monarch's clothing; pinhead who would be
King)
but I'm afraid that it would not be very

FURTHER DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

I'm at the Odium in Hollywood, watching
a double bill: Gorky Park and Angel.
Two old ladies — one red-haired, the other, blue —
take seats behind me, loaded down with popcorn and Pepsi.

Lee Marvin, Gorky's villain, stalks on screen, lethal
and haughty.
"He's such a crumb," Blue says, admiring.
"He's a crumb in real life is what I hear," says Red.

Now we see the contraband sables,
all teeth and fur and snarl, leaping around