

observing the girl upon the strand,  
the moment that confirmed his commitment  
to the priesthood of art  
over that of religion.

i guess i made that choice  
a long time ago also.  
and whatever my priestly talents might have been,  
not to mention my obvious limitations  
as a poet,  
my engagement with beauty at the ymca  
is a good indication  
that i made the right decision.

#### BANGERS

the day before thanksgiving  
there's this story on the news  
about the misguided genetic engineering  
of turkeys, how they're being fattened  
to the point where their legs can't support  
enormous breasts of the coveted white meat,  
and, if not caged securely, they literally  
fall on their faces.

what's more, they can't even breed  
by natural intercourse anymore.  
the hens have to be artificially inseminated.

the shocking thing, though, is that  
a representative of the british poultry board  
comes on to defend the practice with an  
ingenious glance over his shoulder at the feminists:

he says it's actually much kinder to the hens  
this way, because the toms are notoriously  
aggressive and ungentle in their lovemaking.

i'm sure the day is not far off  
when human males will only be raised  
for their potential as sausages and mc nuggets.

#### I'M SURE HAROLD IS GRATEFUL

i always wince when some writer tells me  
he's "given" his work to some editor to publish.  
"yeah," they say, "i decided to give that poem  
(or story or book) i was telling  
you about to harold."

i notice that harold is usually the person they figure will have the hardest time, for personal reasons, rejecting it. they've taken, in other words, the path of least resistance, done their damndest to minimize their chances of rejection.

i guess i shouldn't expect them to say, "yeah, i submitted my work to harold because he owes me a favor" or "because he's too nice a guy to turn me down" or "because i was scared shitless of my work being judged with any modicum of objectivity, impartiality."

i know that's too much to ask, but, please couldn't we just find some other way of phrasing it, some formulation that will remove the implication that we're a bunch of fucking philanthropists?

#### SARTRE MISUNDERSTOOD

i frequently hear people saying, "in the words of jean-paul sartre, 'hell is other people.'" actually sartre never said that: a character in his play no exit did. and the three characters trapped together in that little room are all in what sartre would have called mauvaise foi, or "bad faith." they are, in other words, trying to deny their freedom, their responsibility, and to blame their lives on other people. they don't want to admit that hell is a state of their own making, and that while their self-deception may make them hellish for others to deal with as well, it all starts in the inferno of their own self-absorption.

marlowe's faust learned this;  
so did goethe's.  
so, of course, did sartre.

#### DOWN TIME

my father would leave me in the car outside henner and bennett's bar and grill while he went inside for a few drinks