

HANGING UP THE (KID) GLOVES

In which the Artist (doggerel-ly) renounces the Muse having beaten his penurious pen into an appendage .44 Magnum, the better to persuade the Philistines that he is no longer foreman material.

I.

No big deal. At most, maybe: 'FLEDGLING POET FLIES THE COOP', a dozen self-effacing lines near 'FRED TO WED JACKIE O?'; someone else's photo and a sentence that begins, "Shedding wings like tears, the madman . . . . (exits via *T.V. Times*). My name spelled wrong, they say I quit. Would this be a case of the writer writ?

A pity. Poets, like ambition, should be made of sterner stuff; fuelled by Fellowships should know (as those who've *learned* the dance) what's Wright from wrong, Hope from "dope and charity". Sold short by those 'beasts on the floor of the Bourse' my Poseidon, poetry, staggers: boom to bust. Far North of Writer's Week I bite the dust.

But why? Was I not as precious as the rest? No-one could understand me, isn't that enough (and who mastered the empty parenthesis like me)? Why, I could'a bin up with Adamson & the New Elite, right there with the Americans, baby, & the nouveau cliche, my ampersands as curly, my lower case as neat, my rhythms as antithetic to the slap of fascist feet.

(Oh yes, my politics conformed, I kept the faith: poetry for the people, mainlined in Paddo pads, poetry by committee, readings by incense-light, and for sheer mainstream inconoclasm witness my "Dying is the safest way to travel", and "In the river the fish are tired" or (to quote my objet d'art), "Do not go gentle into that rude tart.")

II.

Grown Janus-sly, the joke  
(O bitter clown) presents  
his tipsy hat and bell  
to hide bald grief, resents  
the gesture of farewell  
from this sententious bloke.

The humour is that I  
believed that honest is  
as honest does (and Art  
as rather Theirs than his  
whose paper-hatted heart  
parties on the pie

I baked as simple bread  
for mutts as poor as me).  
The industry grows fat,  
professors quake with glee.  
Poetry, you rat ----  
better dead than read.

Like all we say, the truth  
is more and less besides:  
I simply saw the best  
googlied silly by the wises  
the worst lobbed down (the Rest  
applauding from the Booth).

Beyond all that, sad men  
who war with words, make war  
when best they should make peace.  
Their proverb is the whore  
of those whose vested 'peace'  
-- by sword -- indulges any pen.

As well, it seemed damned cheek  
to dish up witty wines  
when most would opt for soup.  
"Bullets! Shove the hearts & minds!"  
the sarg said to his troops  
far North of Writer's Week.

III.

So I am cleanly rid  
of that absurd albatross, the need  
to stage (hey presto! My own entrails, no less!)  
the 'great grey green greasy' crowdpleasing spectacle  
of animated peristalsis.

I'm going underground, back  
to the private sector. You'll find me  
arranging loans to billionaires, thumbdowning  
some baby-kissing mayor's incumbent hopes  
or coolly brokering the deadlocked convention  
and coming out with the compromise candidate  
wrapped clear around my right ring finger  
profusely promising platitudinous platforms  
of patronised poetry.

Don't call us, we'll call you.

*Coda*

*In silky dark the knife glides home,  
the bullet smacks softnosed  
into resisting flesh.*