

THE PRETENDERS,

some satirical couplets

“No quarrel a knight ought to take
But for the truth or for the common’s sake.”

(Very old saying)

Politics is now a simple matter:

not to guide but to divide and conquer,

entertain, not strive to serve the truth.

It is our failure to provide the youth

with a dimension of belief, that leads

to cheap devotions and absurdities,

the moral vacuity of an adventurer

hastily scribbling an etcetera

abruptly abandoning the toil of thought,

not to engage with meanings as they ought.

Our duty to our children is to teach

them how to think. But those who have been reached

instead by messages their class is cheated

harbor unreasoning hate for those who reason.

Only an obsessional love of truth

can protect the good from slander’s tooth

or helpless far-off countries from our lie

that to preserve our freedoms they must die.

The self is not a body part that fails,

but made by us within our social pale.

This is how and why we are diminished

in a world gone wrong or institution.

A girl is to be given like a pet
when old enough, each female hanky wet
and every manly smile self-satisfied.
When all the sentimental tears have dried,
to fail is to succeed; it's hard to face
a secondary sort of life with grace.
At last a nag and scold, she undertakes
a diet that mortifies the flesh and fakes
her illnesses and moves beyond our caring.
Should your life seem small and failures wearing,
do not try to live another's life;
your sense of self is how to be a wife.

Simple violence makes simple sorrow;
evil is not natural but artful:
exclude, disqualify, distinguish, lie,
pretend, mislead, delay, twist and tie.
To believe one thing as scientist
but another as a man seems best.
If the rules don't suit: just say No.
The way to collapse the state: enact nothing new,
fail to enforce what is, turn away
from need, pretend to do your job and say
what is expedient. News blackout meant,
always, more than the clubbing of dissent.
A fantasy that will not let us go:
we will be cured if only they know how.
In truth, if something serious befall,
you will serve as research animal,

one mouse or rat of millions til they finish
and dispose of you as they may wish.

Happiness can be a choice, unlike
good fortune, at least beyond first youth,
when unhappiness, unbidden, like
the weather can enclose one, like sudden love,
like bad luck. Take heart, we have
not just the one beginning. Should we go far,
the rosy dawn keeps moving on before
the East-bound plane between the sky and the wave.

Now old mothers grow annoyed with roses;
how all figures do inform against us!
What we choose to say is true or not
regardless of our skill or terms of art:
with great pity for pain and waste, the drive
to life and truth and justice our revival.