

GAZOOPLY

By
Olivia Cronk

Beard of Bees
Chicago
Number 31
April, 2006

Contents

Preface	iii
<i>To be read at the dinner table, one voice</i>	1
<i>To be read outside, two voices</i>	2
<i>To be read in phone tree form, thirteen listening callers, one listener</i>	4
<i>To be read in the basement, with noisemakers, one voice</i>	6
<i>To be read with calliope, birdsong, paper crinkling & on a bus, three voices</i>	7

“To be read at the train station” and “To be read with calliope . . .”
previously appeared in *Can we have our ball back?*

Preface

These poems exist as things spoken. The text includes loose instructions for creating a poem (from the words on the page) by “staging it” in certain locations (in the home, while dining, on a bus) and with (sometimes) multiple voices and apparatuses (noisemakers, telephones, and the like). The concept of creating poems in this way requires that they become the “property” of all-accessible, be easily manipulated, and are “possible” in every place the world over.

The words in the poems I take, in part, from an odd 1878 book: *The Table Book, of Daily Recreation and Information: Concerning Remarkable Men, Manners, Times, Seasons, Solemnities, Merry-Makings, Antiquities and Novelities, Forming a Complete History of the Year*. The collection, by William Hone, is the sort of thing kept in a parlor for entertainment after dinner or quiet thinking over tea. It mimics, for me, domestic acts of art as a record of time.

The word arrangements I take, in part, from Oulipian constraints like $n + 7$. I have also taken great liberty in arranging details to my fancy and adding my own flourishes, like any future creator of the poems should do.

Much thanks to the savvy and endless exploration of shelf-hunter Edward Fleming.

To be read at the dinner table, one voice

Swell Bone Mania

Heavy hearty snow means a grand constellation perhaps. Snip-snap wit, rabbits about. He pleaded at the bar. A bracelet round the wrist, gemmed with arsenic. Not an ass, but something with more fever: a colt, the foal of an ass! Imagine: a man of probity & spirit, induced-such a man sits among the vapors of this crowd, & it is bound to happen — oh, & me a gin-soaked box of trinkets spilt all over the linoleum floor. He with the throats-pear thorn swelling like mad along the collar. A streak of vigor. That man gave every day as a toast! The moon sloped a bit & we all talked raw & uncouth. Not delicate, not quite decent. The man was hanged accordingly. Gentler hands should tend to the immortal form. It is a real chase, gnawed & wildly lit.

One dip of swoon (read with food in the mouth)

Tender fingers slipped into the stew I made you. I would have pulled them out, but the stuff is tricky. I hooked belled strings into the bottom of the bowl as a surprise, so that when you'd finished, you'd find yourself full with melody. Gurgling cinnamon water, syrup of white poppies. I saw you one day sitting in saddle shoes at the corner & thought you looked up for it. A twister in the lip of your spoon. A whole pot of the infinite. Like varnished trees caught in storm. So severe against the cloudy afternoon, you think you might just collapse. Right there, in front of the bus stop. A dolled-up stew is a deceptive one. Too much pepper is a mask for thin water. But this stew. It is something else. Put your ear to the surface & you can hear its body. Like listening to the ground in a field of squash, each vine dragging along into form. This stew is a little marsh, great gawking creatures within. They'll pull at your hem if you should spill some on your skirt. This stew will cure: toothache, hysteria, & chills. But blisters I cannot account for. If I made a giant barrel of it, I believe it would withstand any weather. The hoops & staves could be blown right off, but the stew would remain.

Epitaph (shared desserts)

It is the wicked job of the crow-man, Find,
to bring home to his children,
all the legs of all the casket makers
ever the world over.
He wishes the night & vulgar is his cunning.

To be read outside, two voices

first voice:

Snap of tongue against teeth as speech & she is rotten heart heavy as ever. Once seaming, library spider, alphabet queen. Boxing match book. She lit hers, I hear tell, by wooden sulfur run down her coat zipper. A reefer girl like me, I think. One cannot say this of most book borrowers: wing of flotsam, fire set as flare in the untamable wood, from my thickest hem shall fall—

second voice:

I have read of a bird with some times the face like a lady, preying upon others of the like cut-coming to the lake to take a drink, joyjuice fool, catches her self in the pool's twisted glow & does pineth away for the kill, licking loose sugar as lightning. Makes for a wild hamlet up in here. No longer polite. I say: My mind has a tongue of its own, mama. I say this to her over stitches, from up top the stairs, for broth & grilled cheese. A pretty while it's been. Wilds every where ever.

first voice:

Nice slices of all in a row. Cakes & ale.
Rum balls, posies, bad rivers running the wainscoting.

second voice:

Oaken leaves will heal & mightily revive the body when good cannot, yet leaves were not saled in this world to waken the wickedly gone eyes of a mad, mad lamb.

first voice:

What chance
has a far thing
to burn a hole through?

second voice:

A louse catches the sleeve
& catches with red
& soon there's none to speak.

first & second voices:

Odd signs, some small music.

Fish are nothing but element congealed.

A handdog lake creature made a noise at my window once,
a noise curling round, thirsty & hot.

Feet change to fins over a cigarette in bed in July,
all animals all trouble all over.

This will have to do
as my Buzz & my Sting.

To be read in phone tree form, thirteen listening callers, one listener

(The long time listener, first time caller, leads the next into verse)

caller one: Palmist, palmist, listen: a dog with hare hair in the comb of this teeth just passed my window.

(hang up)

caller two: No doubt a delectable little creature, but a flimsy metaphysician. Palmist, palmist, listen: hare hair in the comb. In some parts, people think they've bilked the devil & booked sure places in heaven. But I fell in with a summer demon years ago — big cowboy belt across my hips, oh, mexican jumping beans lining my ,

(hang up)

caller three: Is there fortune in hand?

(hang up)

caller four: A dog with hair of hare, blackberry pudding; it is not uncommon to see the apostles drunk in the pot-house.

(hang up)

caller five: Esther, Shadrack, Moses, Puddyfat. Botley, Hemel Hempstead, Thomas Tomkins — Call the bountymen! The dog's teeth confess every every hunter's name so very ludicrous!

(hang up)

caller six: I cannot think.

caller seven: You do not recollect.

caller six: What makes my ankles grow so thick?

caller seven: How great a calf they carry!

(hang up)

caller six: Butter at the bottom of the hour,

(hang up)

caller eight: honey at the top.

(hang up)

caller nine: If you put fire & toe together: you burn the room.

(hang up)

caller ten: Burns come as a belly dancer, her violet hair choking the hare — one must be before one can see.

(hang up)

caller eleven: Lore, lore

(hang up)

caller twelve: Palmist: I am a window watcher, eyes mismatched so a dog mouth might as well be a wheeled vampire out for the damp, out for the prank.

(hang up)

caller thirteen: Listen to the ditty: you will burn the room.

(fourteenth listener stays on the line, a good faith effort)

To be read in the basement, with noisemakers, one voice

Catch the muses napping—
and of this sudden: draft of eagles as curtains tugging open the day,
sky blue as shingles, and how to usher such signals:
the girl's mad as fox (creeping in & out of the cellar,
all day a powdered clown in her dress, Swank & Ceremony, even in the tub).
Early makes all, crow as lawman (dagged up & watching),
a choir underfoot of claws clutched & digging.
Tiny red lunacies at the ears, crowberries,
a thumb of seams, a soul comesickly
limping the body along.

To be read with calliope, birdsong, paper crinkling & on a bus, three voices

first voice:

Never seen such swarms,
a mess of bad bees with cartoon pink lips,
a train shaking dishes in the house.
The whole place had been going
to seed all along, birds heading in
for the ever, ever, the father
dead in the body, the brother
dead in the mind, & she & the mother
just laughing,
crows & panic lumped on their backsides,
where hands go hip-hold,
a hive of axes humming,
& weevils at dinnertime.

second voice:

Dear Sir—

The news is a re-run, so I write you from a bark canoe in my bed, shaking a bottle of aspirin as melody. What would a coyote do here? Amuse himself with collecting old ballads, printed on half-penny sheets? Find the old song publisher? He, surely, is locked up in the basement with some wicked sherry & the so-luscious musk of rain books. I miss rummy & trumperies of any sort. Play assassinations in the kitchen. Tell me: If a ghost gave you a raw sweetpiece of bear meat, would you keep it in your pocket? A vulgarity, rotting & loving its dark space? The papers in my purse pockets seem to neverend. Polly is what I would name her. The purse. I endeavor to collect these fly-leaf heroes: Water King, Crazy Dazy, Rock n' Roll Raven, Overcourteous Knight,

I am, dear sir, & you are too,

third voice:

askew,

I leave all my fingers to my shoes,
& all bugs, hoops, teeth, pill boxes, & such
to my radio & my television — wooing unto the north.

As for my legs, give them to my coats,
arms go to my couch, torso to bed,
whereon a redbird shines & shines.

Toes & one eye to the worn nook of my floor,
the other eye to the groceries rotting,
(maiden's lair, raven's hair).

My chairs I leave to my cabinets & windows
& the shaggy bloodhound sleeping sound,
& my ears I leave to my overstuffed panty drawer.

Go, bring me some gold for my tub,
& some dapple grey for the sea-side.
This world is too rich for salt & weed.

OLIVIA CRONK lives and writes in Chicago, Illinois. Her work has appeared in *can we have our ball back?*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *Shampoo*. She also writes reviews for bookslut.com.

Beard of Bees books are produced on GNU/Linux systems, using only Free Software.

Copyright © 2006 Beard of Bees Press
Chicago, IL

www.beardofbees.com