Ennoia and Ophis

A snake
  circles twin voids –
Christum  autem non
in substantia  carnis fuisse.
Imitor, the holy serpent,
twitching tongued,
languid (Eve was
languid) Eua quasi
  filio deo crediredat
  I don’t
have Latin (did she?)
what useless unstitched
cavities. They say
the son of chaos, and so
incorruptible, birthed from
these waters. Motherless,
he viewed these waters
from above and of them
he despaired until his mother
cried to him: O why do you
not come to me
  alone?
II. Hart Crane’s Flea Circus

*The Flea*

Wahey & over the silver bridle I run & jump &! fee fi fo the blood of a poet straight from his thumb! Friends! Am I elevated? Am I difficult? “O” friends Let’s drink from his pulque-clogged veins! Mixing metaphors but! Mind is dammed by spirits sometimes. Friends! At the neck I can taste Lysol for the syph, O the taste of its yellow unreal cast on idiot skin!

Friends,

take this down:

Mr Guggenheim! Dear, sirs:
Your poet is flat out in the dirt that sailor shirt is losing its stripes where we dance *Rambaudctious* (preserve my emphasis) across lips mumbling courtship-Spanish. Oh Ho! Snatches on paper in his pockets!

Boys it’s teleology: your activities past, forward, reduced to that final leap from the dog to the rat to the water around the drain. Each of your ramblings pulped, or bought by pedants confusing sadness with curiosity.
We had a cousin
    in Professor Bosco’s
    with Charlie’s lads,
who pranced, sprang
from bowler hats
perched on mustaches
& the wire batons
glued to their bodies
seemed to spin.

Once I perched behind
his ear at the market
& the poet said he could
identify a man
by philtrum alone.

The poet said passing
the grocer: she’s a whore
& that man, he’s a cutthroat,
& he’s lost – see his collar –
he’s Viennese, but not born there.
He’s written a dozen dreadful
suites since he first saw
her draw the curtains.

That woman of oranges,
has a dyspeptic parakeet
through which she thinks
she speaks to the ghost
of her father –
even in death a bore
(a bore with feathers).

She, with the grey skirt, is an ingrate,
stayed in my boardinghouse & left
her skiddies on the floor
thanklessly eying the maid.
We are all, he said, two steps
away from eating out of the can
behind shut drapes.

He said that
the doctor threw
a cage of rats
into the sea:
dozens of whirling
grey & typhus
-riddled rats
swam towards Havana
gagging on saltwater.

‘I saw their teeth from the prow,’
he murmured in his sleep, where he made
gentler sounds,
‘hundreds of tiny teeth
glinting yellow in the waves.’
The Flea & the Chorus

Should we cry?
You could.
Did you see the others cry?
We did not.
What did you see them do?
They conducted séances:
a bird flew around the room
with sweets in its mouth.
They prayed for the burning.

Should we turn down the lamps?
They are already low.
III. Grace Contacts Hart Through the Victrola

Carnal, caramel, 
what drifts from 
tongue to carnet, 
sand in the spine 
where he poured 
yellow grains 
on the Victrola, 
dazed, and the bolero 
slowed, unravelled.

I sat in an orchard upstate, 
the arbor shook with the late summer 
wind -- the light, yellow, 
diving, he would say, 
through the wet leaves, 
the wet grass. The apples 
would be the sun’s mimics 
desire incarnate: abstracted ardor -- real 
in its sincerity.

The sand in my palm 
yellow and gray 
with black darts scattered 
through it.

I shook the grains 
on the Victrola, 
dazed, and the bolero 
slowed --

Note
These poems are inspired by and take liberties with a transcription of Grace Hart Crane’s attempts to contact her son through a medium, Frances, in New York City in 1941.