

# Grace Hart Crane Attempts a Communication with Her Son

## I. 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 ureal 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 *Rambaundctious*  
(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.

*The Flea Remembers*

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.*