

If you're new to *Muse*, you may be puzzled by the rabbit problem on the "*Muse Mail*" page. Occasionally, part of someone's letter gets eaten by hot-pink bunnies, which pop up in a smug row, having completely obliterated what the unfortunate person wrote. The Queen of Muses decided that a full explanation was called for. "Get Paul Baker to write it," said Kokopelli. "Don't be silly. He'll write it in Elizabethan," said Aeiou's sleeves. "Exactly!" said Kokopelli. "Crowned 1558, died 1603," ruminated Bo, which was accurate but not very helpful. The Queen of Muses had lost the plot by now, so I got the job. If you don't understand the Elizabethan, write and complain. But you'll have to complain in Elizabethan, or you might get bunnied.



A Surfeit of Coneys

by Paul Baker, art by Henrik Drescher

Being a true and faythfull Historie of the
Greate Bunney Warres that have raged and
burned within this Journal these twoo yeares
past; the whyche are like to continue yf no
Balm can be founde to ease theyre festering.

The cut and parry of these Warres having lately furnished that monstrous ferment wherein Dissent and Enmity do flourish, to the grete detriment of Peace and Order, al the noblest Authors as labour long o'er their pens to fashion eminent prose, and al the Muses as are writ of herein, and al the Officers of the Press charged with the good governance and worthy Reputation of this moste well regarded Quarto, all are agreed that an end shal bee putt to the said Warres. And to beginn upon the



Reconciliation of the seaverall Armies, it hath fallen to me (at the behest of the Quene of Muses), to write a true accompt of what was the cause of the matter, and wherefore suche grete Contention arose among those gentle and discernyng persons as comenly reade these pages.

Know, then, that it came to pass that a grete clamour sometime arose among certaine Cat-fanciers; that theyre chiefeste toyes, wherein they take grete delghte, were spoke not of here at anie length,





but onlie in passing. And suche fyne Petts as they had were deservyng of more Consideration, and theyre habits, condition, bewty, benevolence, and maner of mewyng, should be beter written of by learned men and women. Wherefore sundry of these Cat-fanciers were provoked to write unto the Muses, demanding that such Injustice shoulde be straitlye requited.

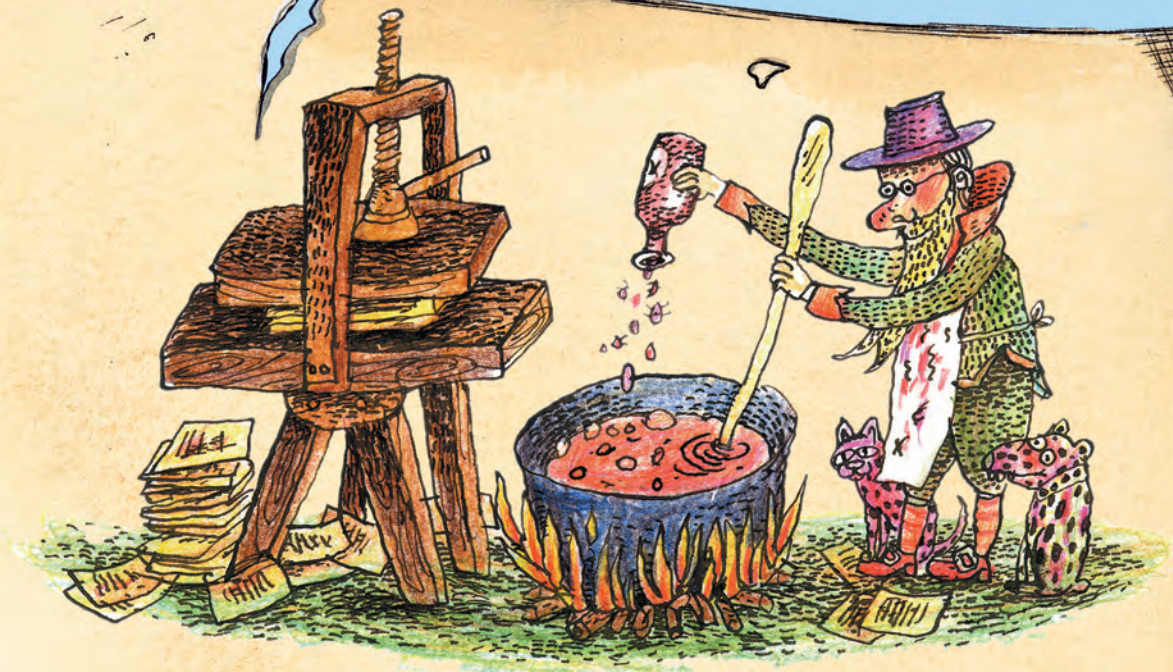
Let it not be said that the Muses take alwaies theyre owne path, and heed not the plaints of theyre disciples. For in the verie next Edition, there was put in a Cat-counter (as it was called), whych shewed the number of persons who had desyred som essay uppon the feline realm. And though manie thought it false (it being sene at the firste to number above six thousand million), yet it semed indede that manie readers woulde esteem Catts worthy of discourse. Wherefore ere long an entire Edition was printed, having lytel within it but homilies, and tractes, and theses, and pourtraytes, all concernyng Catts and theyre doings.

And thus began the Warres. For there were among oure readers also manie Dogg-fanciers, who had scant regard for catts, and gretlye misliked a whole Edition devoted to theyre cause. It availed lytel that the Muses, in that verie edition, put up a Dogg-counter. For it began at three, ran on to one and thirty, and then fell all in pieces. Rumour saw therein cozenyng and dissembling by the Catts and theyre masters.

Lo, within two moneths the Dogg edition appeared, whiche gladdened the Dogg-fanciers, but drew forth scorn and wrath from the Catt-fanciers. And thereupon the trump sounded, and the cries rose up uppon both sides, and naught was to be heard save the dread discord of battle.

The Quene of Muses was constrayned to assemble her Court in extraordinary session. And this she ruled, that anie further fulmination uppon the merits or failings of Catts or Doggs should be cast into the Pit; or else, if yt were onlie parte of a letter, the offending passages should be struck out with a row of coneyes, set in the fairest shade of pinke that the Printer could contrive. This tincture he called Hot Pink, methinkes because yt is made by longe boyling of al maner of straunge substances, the nature of whyche onlie a foole wolde enquire into. And the coneyes he called Bunnies, whych is theyre pet name. (For children are perverse, and oft will make a pett of that which woulde make a better potage.) Howe'er be it, Hot Pink Bunnies were made forthwith the Mark of Excision.





Thus for a tyme were the doggs of warre
putt back uppon theyre leashes, and the cattis
too. For al writers wel knewe that to hold
discourse uppon the forbidden beastes was to
be straitlye Bunney'd. Yet was strife ever ready
to break forth anewe. For when the Printer
anon took up his inkes uppon a later Edition,
he carelessly bent to some other paltry
purpose his famed Hot Pink, and thus was
constrayned to use some other pink for his
Bunnies; whyche alteration he deemed of lytel
accompt, thinking twould pass unnoticed.

Marry, it near rekindled the Warres. For
the want of a goodly Field wheron they could

fight o'er theyre petts, both Armies rose
upp and fought the Printer for miscolouring
theyre Bunnies. The poore fellowe hid in
a priest hole for a week, and nowe hath
himself the look of a coney aboute him.
One that hath sene a foxe.

Lo then, child, if thou art new come to
this fyn Publication, bee not dismayed at
rows of bunnies, nor flowers, nor heartes,
nor al maner of other smal devices, set in a
letter. For they signifie onlie that some
mater hath bene rehearsed beyond reason,
and there is lytel virtue in wasting ink
with further orations uppon it.

A Warning to Fanciers All

O, hast thou, child, a hounde, belov'd and brave, / The whiche in equal measure loveth thee?
And was thy Treasure mock'd by some foul knave, / Whose cattish wordes thou'lt spurn unquietly?

Beware! Lest in thy wounded Fancy's rage, / Unreasoning Opinion thy pen
Shall lead in warlike fashion o'er the page, / Denouncing all the joyes of other men.
For then, a host of coneyes pink shall rise, / And hide thine angry wordes from all men's eyes.

*Paul Baker lives in the middle bit of England. He is one
of the few surviving lunatics who still plays Elizabethan
music. He hasn't altered his fashion sense in 400 years,
and doesn't really see why he should alter his speech, either.
It was good enough for Shakespeare.*

