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Dinner for One

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Cheryl E. Ball

M.F.A. in Creative Writing, Virginia Commonwealth University, August, 2000
B.A. in English, Old Dominion University, December, 1996

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August, 2000

Acknowledgement

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Dedication

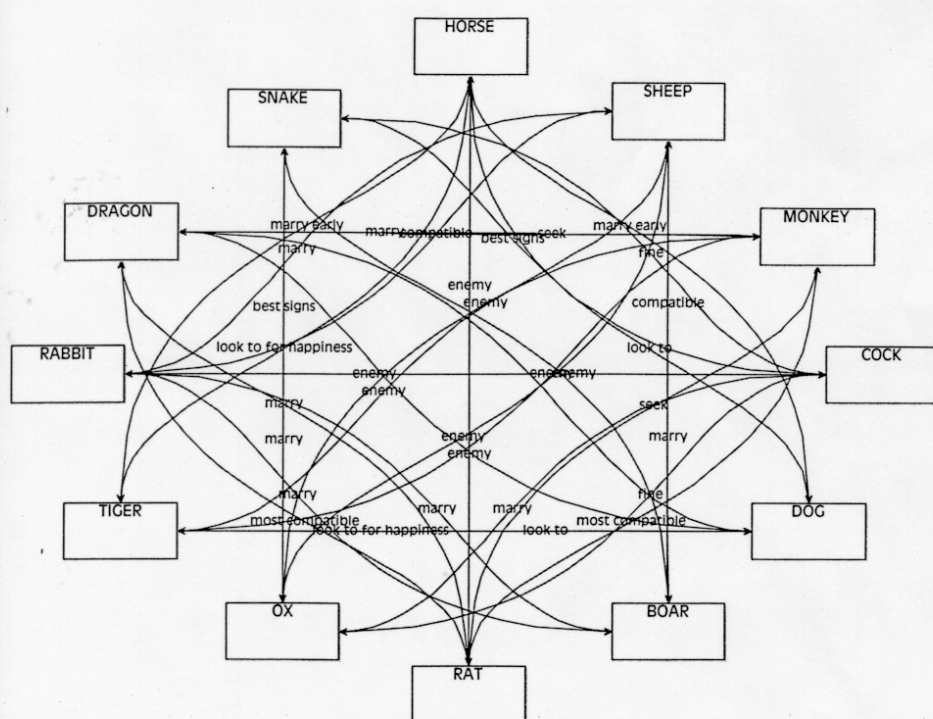
For her inspiration and love of writing, this thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Ruby Pansy Lee Lemmond Moore Hayden [just so I could use all your names in print! ;)].

And for continuing that inspiration, I also dedicate this work to Allison Joy Allgood, who will probably look at this thesis in 20 years and say, "Jeez, Aunt Cherocka, that CD really sucked!" It's OK. In 20 years, I expect you to do better.

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The twelve Chinese Zodiac animals used as navigational elements in *Dinner for One* are represented in the structure map below. The arrows between each animal represent links connecting the cycles of poems.



Cycle titles, which correspond to the twelve figures of the Chinese Zodiac, are listed below. Under each cycle are titles of poems contained in that cycle. Corresponding menu links (fortune cookie fortunes) appear in italics. This table of contents is for archival purposes and does not suggest a preferred reading order.

Rat

The Great Behinds

Every man is a volume if you know how to read him.

Cross Country Diet

Simplicity of character is the natural result of profound thought.

The Lynching

Participate in a neighborhood event.

Ox

Leagues of Justice

You have great physical powers and an iron constitution.

Ritual

Good news will come to you from far away.

Three Seconds

Renegotiate the conditions if you are dissatisfied.

The Secret

Answer just what your heart prompts.

Tiger

Between Conrad and Ravel

Find release from your cares, have a good time.

Losing Ground

You are a bundle of energy, always on the go.

Objects in Mirror

You are never bitter, deceptive or petty.

Rabbit

Vegas, 1999

A new wealth opportunity is about to come into your life. You will never be the same.

The Curator

You are original and creative.

The Sound of Thieves in the Temple

Get your mind set...Confidence will lead you on.

Early Sunday Morning
Discussions with a superior will be productive.

Dragon

James Bond (Girl)
You are sociable and entertaining.
Lord Give Us
You are always welcome in any gathering.
Reading Headlights
Make an extra effort to prioritize your tasks.

Snake

Trying to Believe
Stop searching forever, happiness is just next to you.
Drive-In
Good things are coming to you in due course of time.
Dictionary Boy
You will be advanced socially without any special effort.

Horse

Notes to Myself
Accept the next proposition you hear.
Three Days
You have a reputation for being straightforward and honest.
Marco! Polo!
You have yearning for perfection.

Sheep

Sunset on Hoover Dam
An aura of glamour and mystery surrounds your events of the week.
The Fourth Sign
Understanding someone else's perspective will make your life easier.
One Two-Step Closer
From now on your kindness will lead you to success.
History of the Earth from KCMO
Time is money.

Monkey

Conditional

You have a strong desire for home and your family comes first.

Local

Your dearest wish will come true.

New York Pavements

Someone is admiring you {sic} from afar.

Cock

On the Road

Put travel plans on top of your priority list.

Moving List

The best profit of future is the past.

Kama Sutra: Feminist Edition

You will have a fine capacity for the enjoyment of life.

Dog

Family Car

You are heading for a land of sunshine.

Loom

Speak only well of people and you need never whisper.

Your Own

Your home is a pleasant place from which you draw happiness.

Boar

The Sound

A pleasant surprise is in store for you.

Riding the Ferry

Friends long absent are coming back to you.

ABSTRACT

DINNER FOR ONE

By Cheryl E. Ball, M.F.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2000.

Major Director: T.R. Hummer, Professor, Department of English

Dinner for One, a hypermedia poetry thesis, explores the themes of aloneness, sexuality, independence, and journeys of discovery and distance. The Chinese zodiac stamps used as navigational elements in *Dinner for One* and the prose poems written as postcards to oneself and others reinforce the notion of travel. The fortunes from Chinese cookies give prophecies and horoscopes, reminding us of our fate, which is beyond our control. *Dinner for One* means to question, through poetry and interactive, hypertextual reading techniques, how much faith and trust we should hold in influences outside of our lives. The poems in this thesis are meant to be an examination of what we tell ourselves and, sometimes, make ourselves believe.

Vita

Cheryl E. Ball was born September 12, 1973, in Norfolk, Virginia. She enjoyed the local and state public schools, graduating from Kempsville High School in Virginia Beach and receiving her Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing in 1996 from Old Dominion University in Norfolk. While an undergraduate, she worked as an obituary writer, classified ad representative, and personals editor for *The Virginian-Pilot* and *The Ledger-Star*.