

# WAIT, WAIT, DON'T TELL ME:

## Beebo Brinker Meets the Tenth Amendment

Ann Bannon (not her real name) born 1932, invented Venus Bogardus (real name). I'm not making this up. She is.

Ms. Bannon gives workshops. April in Seattle. July in California. She has a nice website. [annbannon.com/](http://annbannon.com/)

“ ‘Darling,’ Paula said, and Beebo thought how much warmer and truer the word was when Paula spoke than when it bloomed on Venus’s perfect lips like a gaudy rose.” (Triangle Classics ed. p. 682)

Ann Bannon is the George Washington of both gay and lesbian fiction. George, a snappy dresser and dab hand at dancin’, would enjoy the compliment.

Bannon proves that both S. Richardson and H. Fielding knew what they were talking about. It’s all in the dialogue.

We’re not talking the twinkling lights of Staten Island or Jersey City.

It’s just straight, unvarnished dialogue with tranches of, “now take this” or “now take that.” You the reader are on the receiving end. “Feel this.” “Feel that.” As in watching *warm* and *true* words.

But if you put characters into a situation in which the plot drives their conduct; if you put them in a situation in which there are no twinkling lights of Staten Island, no earthquakes, no road trips –

What are they going to do? They’re going to talk to one another.

That’s all they’ve got *to* do. Talk to one another and make judgments about each other’s behavior, and then discover how inadequate those judgments are, appeal and so forth.

(Kant said the same thing. Kritik of Fahrvergnuegung B93, but I digress.)

WAIT, WAIT. DON'T TELL ME.  
Beebo Brinker Meets the Tenth Amendment

---

Everyone knows what a platform is. It's the soapbox you stand on. The reader's experience is likely to be this: You're sitting at your computer. An email arrives in your inbox. You know you don't want to read it. You delete it.

You do this day after day after day.

What we're talking about is a 'platform.'

Somebody got up on your (yes, your soapbox) and commenced to rant.

You were (with modest effort) able to dismiss 'em. Into vapour.

Platform is a broken, raggedy-edged, unfilled shell in which one side or the other, sometimes even both sides, peep out.

They rant or strut. At somebody. You, if you let 'em.

It's not dialogue.

Beebo knows what dialogue is and she knows it when she sees it. "I found other girls [this is Laura to Beebo] while I was waiting so trustingly for this perfect love." That's dialogue. Discourse of the ethical variety.

(Beebo's reply runs: " 'I won't believe anything bad about you.' She guided her back to the bedroom." p. 683)

Beebo's not the only one who trusts the Laura's of the world when they say they've found 'perfect love.'

Lawyers and judges. To name two.

Which brings me to the point.

What's the gold standard for dialogue?

Do *we* know it when we see it? Of course, I refer to the 'few, the happy few'. In short, the licensed.

WAIT, WAIT. DON'T TELL ME.  
Beebo Brinker Meets the Tenth Amendment

---

That's you and me.

Lawyers and judges invented it.

The gold standard.

It's trial by jury, and taking several slices: opening arguments, direct and cross-examination of principal witnesses, closing arguments, the judge charging the jury, the jury deliberating, publication of the verdict, and appeal. Near-endless appeals, true. And the reformer Jeremy Bentham wanted to shoe-horn into this process yet *another jury* (quasi- by name). Madison rejected his offer. 1816 was a bad year to be offerin' advice to folks after arsoning their White House. Another story.

So is this constitutionally-required speech?

Sure is.

And it's not mandated by one of those low-numbered amendments either. This is the Tenth-worth of gold standard.

Think of it this way.

Beebo comes over to Laura's house and Laura emotes. Or Venus unloads on Beebo the pizza-delivery girl. (This is the Village; use your imagination!)

Free speech? Sure.

But what's required of the author?

Dialogue. In short, advocacy, attack and defense of should statements.

Sure, some of this dialogue is pretty cheesy.

We're not talking Henri Beyle or the Immortal Jane, here.

It's compelled discourse.

WAIT, WAIT. DON'T TELL ME.  
Beebo Brinker Meets the Tenth Amendment

---

Logos you gotta have.

It's no different from what the Bill of Rights compels states to afford, by, in a rather Madisonian reversal of fortune, guaranteeing to states the right to compel citizens to engage each other with their wits.

Proof?

Imagine that everyone in the B.B. Chronicles emails each other.

Kinda hard to imagine Venus Bogardus munching down Beebo's pizza, stiffing her for the check and tryin' to seduce her all at the same time. By email. Or any other rickety old platform.

Like I said, the Tenth is one fine amendment. As is speech that you gotta have, when you gotta have it.

Hey, don't ask me. Ask the folks in the Village.

*Apparatus*

Author:	Peter J. Aschenbrenner
First Published:	The Alaska Bar Rag
Revisions:	Minor.
Copyright Notice:	©2008, 2011 Peter J. Aschenbrenner. The moral rights of the author are reserved.
Our Server Version:	18 - Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me