

AUNT CHLOE

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Manifesto, or Ars Poetica #2

Give me the night, you beasts hissing over the face of this dead woman, I climb into your eyes, looking. To those who would sleep through the wounds they inflict on others, I offer pain to help them awaken, Ju-Ju, Tom-Toms, & the magic of a talking burning bush. I am the queen of sleight of hand wandering the forest of motives, armed with horoscopes, cosmic encounters & an x-acto knife. My right eye is a projector flickering Hottentot & Huey Newton, my left eye is prism of *Wild Style*, gold grills, lowriders, black dahlias, blunts & back alleys. At twenty-one, I stood at the crossroad of Hell & Here, evil peering at me behind a blue-red eye. I armed myself with the memories of Pentecostal tent revivals, apple orchards, the strawberry fields I roamed with my mother & aunt in the summer, & the sightings of UFO lights blinking in the black of an Ohio night sky. I am a weapon. I believe in hoodoo, voodoo, root workers, *Dead Presidents*, *Black Tail*, *Black Inches* & *Banjees*. I believe in the ghosts of 60 million or more, & black bones disintegrating at the bottom of the Atlantic, below sea level, *Not Just Knee Deep*. *I believe that children are the future*: love them now or meet them at dusk at your doorstep, a 9mm in their right hand & a head noisy as a hornet's nest later. Your choice.

Black, still, in the hour of chaos, I believe in *Royal Crown*, *Afro-Sheen*, *Vaseline*, *Jergens* & baby powder on breasts, the collective conscious, cellular memory, Public Enemies, outlaws, Outkast, elevations, *Elevators* & *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Under my knife, El Hajj Malik El Shabazz laughs with Muhammad Ali, a Lady named Day cuddles with a Boxer named Mister after traumatically stumbling on strange fruit dangling from one of the most beautiful Sycamores evah. Under my knife, Marilyn Monroe enjoys an evening out with Ella Fitzgerald, meanwhile, *Life* shows me a gigantic photo. I am a weapon. I chart voyages of unlove, high on a man called crazy who turns *nigger* into prince. I believe in Jong, Clifton, *Dirty Diana* & Dilla, paper, scrilla, green, gumbo, coins, Batty Bois & Video Vixens. I believe that beads at the ends

of braids are percussive instruments in double-dutch. In the reflection of my knife, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington & Thelonius Monk argue in a Basquiat heroin nod. I am a weapon. I believe in goo-gobs of deep brown apple-butter, alphabets, Alaga syrup, Affrilachians, A-salaam Alaikum, Wa-Alaikum A-Salaam, & African Hebrew Israelites. I believe in Octoroons, Quadroons, Culluds, *Coolie High*, Commodores, Krumpin, Krunk & *Burn, Hollywood, Burn*.

I am Sethe crawling a field toward freedom with a whitegirl talking about velvet. I believe in tumbleweaves, hot combs & hair lyes, Shaka Zulu, Mau-Mau, Slum Village & *Bubloone Mindstate*: “Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless – like water...” I believe in water. My body is pulp. I bleed ink. I believe in the *Fantastic (Vol. 2)*, *Low End Theory*, *Space Is The Place* & *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*. Tucked in the corner of my right ventricle sprouts a Tree of Knowledge, lives a Shining Serpent, & a middle finger. I’m on a quest for the Marvelous. My face is a mask of malehood, malevolence, one big masquerade. Metaphysically niggerish, I am a weapon wandering the forest of motives, a machete in one hand, a mirror in the other, searching for the nearest body of water.

(“Manifesto, or Ars Poetica #2” is part collage poem that contains lines from poems by Wanda Coleman, Aime Césaire, Amiri Baraka, Tim Seibles, Erica Jong, Lucille Clifton, & Krista Franklin, album titles, movie titles, song titles, book titles & a quote from Bruce Lee)

Infinity: A Love Poem *(for my mother, C.F.)*

This is her answer to everything:
Get on your knees
Draw a beam of light
From God's eye

Get on your knees
Pull the answers
From God's eye
Gaze cast wide as fishing net

Pull the answers
Buried in the code of your body
Gaze cast wide as fishing net
There is no separateness

Buried in the code of your body
The secret to eternity
There is no separateness
Progenitor is progeny

The secret to eternity
Tucked on a shelf in her mind
Progenitor is progeny
Her womb full of others' children

Tucked on a shelf in her mind
My body passing through hers
Her womb full of others' children
She heals herself

My body passing through hers
Hazy as a 95 degree morning
She heals herself
The divine erupts inside her

Invocation Wunderbar

Come Chicago, brick & bitter, lake wind blowing north on Wabash,
girls in bubble coats walking backward, boys smoking cigarettes pinched
between red fingertips, come cars, blowing blue exhaust, buses billowing
black smoke, billboards smiling down with their false advertisements,
come heater, knocking at night, come television, come double locks,
come snow boots, come gloveless hands and loveless gray afternoons.

Come muse, come nouns, come verbs, come Epson, come books and ex-
slaves with one eye seared shut for trying to read, come reading, come
hours, come paper and pages, come hours, come paper and pages, come
vision, come paintbrush, scissors, glue, old book. Come Kahlo, come
Jean-Michel, come Andy, come Walker, come studio, piles of National
Geographics, clipped things, feathers, ripped sign, old art, come smoke

& Jameson, Ohio Players, Kill Bill, aching knees, come, white candle,
come, rice, come letterpress, come Vandercook, come, binder's needles,
linen threads, inkjet, bone folder, come, quilter's skills, come thousands,
come, J*Davey and Kanye, come, come, femme fatale, paper bullets, pink
gouache, come, gold leaf, jars of water, come, time and breaks & bodies
& bodies

Of work, come, brilliance & fame and wealth, come, Clifton, Brooks,
Knight, Grandma & Grandpa Franklin, come, Charlie & Mary Ann
& Susan and Papa Sam, come, Margaret, Ginsberg & Howl and Kerouac
& Burroughs, come poems & poets & masterpieces & legacy, come,
Come, come, come, come, come, come...