Ode to George Clinton

Pamela Lee

University of Northern Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/deadletter

Part of the Art and Design Commons, Fiction Commons, Literature in English, North America Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1987 by the University of Northern Iowa

Recommended Citation
Lee, Pamela (1987) "Ode to George Clinton," dead letter: uni magazine of the arts: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 13. Available at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/deadletter/vol1/iss1/13

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in dead letter: uni magazine of the arts by an authorized editor of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Offensive Materials Statement: Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.
Mostel put his face in his hands. The rest of the orchestra was standing, most were leaving to smoke or visit friends backstage. It was his wife's social time. She liked to have people view her at the concert hall. And in the dark hallway, by the men's bathroom, his sweet Babette would be waiting in her customary place for him.

Mostel hurried to the hall. Babette was not there. The xylophone player had not seen her. He went to the restroom and remembered, pulling down his zipper, that the pistol was there. He pulled his zipper hurriedly up and went back to the hall. Several of the symphony patrons shook his hand. He still did not see Babette anywhere.

A thought dropped from his head to his stomach. Babette had had premature labor pains and left for the hospital. Mostel's heart pounded. He tried to remember what Babette was wearing as he swerved through the crowd.

First call was sounded. People were returning to their seats. His child was about to come into the world and he would not be there.

Mostel returned to the stage and looked out at the audience. Babette could, by a miracle, just be in her seat. He peered through the middle curtain. A lady in the audience waved at him. She jabbed her neighbor, who also waved. He saw Petra returning to her seat. It was impossible to miss his wife with her flaming hair.

Babette was behind her. Oh, relief. Oh, a thousand reliefs. It looked to Mostel as if his wife turned and said something to Babette. But they did not know each other. It must have been small talk, if anything.

Mostel went back to his chair. The violins were tuning again. Maddening. The years of violin torture he had suffered with this orchestra. Mostel tried to ignore them. He stuck his hand in the cummerbund to feel the pistol was there. The orchestra seemed to stop. He shut his eyes and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened. The orchestra kept playing. Mostel looked at the gun, astonished. He opened its chamber. The bullets were gone. The Maestro kept conducting. He would not look at Mostel. Mostel could not see his wife. He looked at Babette. She looked away.

The second chair cellist sat staring at Mostel. The Maestro motioned for the cellos to join in the last stanzas, and Mostel bent forward, laying the pistol beneath his chair. Mostel embraced his cello and drew the bow across its string. A deep moan eminated from the instrument, mingling with the other sounds of the orchestra and, as the piece ended, echoing in the concert hall, dying in silence.

---

**ODE to GEORGE CLINTON**

Jive on, George, exhaustion is one pleasure I haven't grooved on in months. Wail on. Jab another hole in my heart. Storm me to sleep with the jism of your royal rap. Render me mindful of my own missing bodyguard and some sweet birthday I'll have later, lacking my favorite lover. He's got other engines to rev up. So do it, George. Put my mind on that certain hopeless man and his chilled down, cooled out hands, and rap on.

— Pamela Lee

---

I sat at your desk today in your chair, looking through your books. In Brautigan you marked Worms as "Good!" I read Worms, more than once, wondering what thoughts you thought as you sat at this desk in this chair.

— Sandy Reno