

HisJazzRaptoMe: Hip Hop Vignettes & Quarter Waters

Samuel Aguiar Iniguez

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing & Poetics

University of Washington

2015

Committee:

Ted Hiebert

Sarah Dowling

Jeanne Heuving

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences - Bothell

©Copyright 2015  
Samuel Aguiar Iniguez

University of Washington

**Abstract**

HisJazzRaptoMe: Hip Hop Vignettes & Quarter Waters

Samuel Aguiar Iniguez

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jeanne D. Heuving

MFA Creative Writing & Poetics

*HisJazzRaptoMe* is ebb and flow; it is the remix of the water flowing back towards the ocean once it hits the shore. It is a remix of genres and Hip Hop elements. *HisJazzRaptoMe* is a mixture of cyphers, vignettes, prose, poems, and rap songs. It distinguishes that different genres of literature can come together to create one body of literature. In doing so, it is a true reflection of what Hip Hop is and what Hip Hop literature should be. *HisJazzRaptoMe* has a purpose. It is here to remind people that mixed genre literature can coexist with the traditional. It is here to propose that Hip Hop literature should be a mixed genre.

Table of Contents:

PO'e[so]t[er]ic Statement	6
1/Enter the Cypher	21
2.Amtrak Train	22
3/"...Diplomatic"	23
4.Father	24
5.Historian	26
6.Sandals & Rice	27
7.Thug Sonnet 2	28
8.Da Ghetto Museum	29
9.Vintage Gherri Curls	30
10/ "Innocent"	31
11.Urban Chicana	32
12.A Gene for Hip Hop	33
13.Picture This, Picture That	34
14.Soldiers of Misfortune	35
15.A Mother Prays	37
16\$Listen to Momma	38
17.Da Hood Messiah	40
18/ "Polemics"	42
19.Anatomy of a Tec-9	43
20.Da Garnish Man	44
21\$Every Color of Shoes	45
22.Her Polygamy	47
23.Kool Aid & Pot Stickers	50
24.Thug Sonnet 12	52
25.A Street Lector	53
26/ "Cypher"	54
27.The Underground Rapper	55
28.Dimes & Nickel Bags	56
29\$Belly Blues	57
30.Keg	59
31.Hue Man	60
32.Kicking it like Bruce Lee	63
33.The Deejay	64

34.No Jim Crow	65
35/ "Wealth"	66
36.Lotto Scratchers	67
37.Zig Zags & Quarter Waters	68
38\$Chicken & Waffles	69
39.Taco Truck	70
40/"Track"	71
41.The Hood/Ngh Templar	72
42.Senegal	74
43.An Evening with Miles	75
44.On the Lowdown	76
45/ "Heaven"	77
46.Miss Emory Forecast	78
47.Da Hi Coon	79
48.Thug Sonnet 41	80
49/ "Crunch Time"	81
50.Unseen Traffic	82
51.HisJazzRaptome	84
52/.	85

## **1.meta-discourse**

As a writer, the best tool I have is the ability to talk, argue, and joke with myself. At times, it happens right before I stain a blank page with ink or tap dance fingers on a keyboard into a grammatical sentence on my computer screen. This dabbling with uncertainty happens because ink is a mode of permanence. My mental buddy, that part of the brain which talks to me or proposes last-minute ideas or changes to every decision I try to make, has a lot of influence over my actions. As I listen before staining the precious blank page with ink, I accept an invitation to have a meta-discourse with myself. I subconsciously invite myself, that part of me who makes half of my decisions, to really consider all my possible actions or phrases before I let them be known to the world.

As a writer, this element of having a meta-discourse with my self is one of the most refutable processes of writing. Most writers do not consider that meta-discourse exists or that it is a suitable or recognizable writing process. Of course it does. How else will my buddy just ramble off all the time; my buddy is very opinionated. As writing is an active activity that involves synopsis into one's brain, the promiscuity of ideas to bad words to fantasies must be given order in just mere milliseconds. This innate ability to dialogue with oneself is perhaps our greatest gift as a human being and even better for a writer. Alas, why writers are perceived as lonesome human beings. Yet, I postulate that they are never alone. They just enjoy talking to themselves, and to the plants, and to other inanimate objects.

As writers, we need to be considerate that everything has a story. My writing process does not only include that living matter is all that exists. It includes the breath of God, the

mental jigsaw puzzle that connects words with other words, and that ounce of luck when those little green men hand you a word you never used in your life and after looking up the definition seven times, you realize it was the correct word for your grammatical phrase. Luck happens, and so does writing. And so does meta-discourse.

The ability to stretch oral conversation into mental thoughts and have a thorough editorial resolve is the best scenario of meta-discourse. This can also be well illustrated through the process of what Hip Hop emcees do when they freestyle a rhyme off the top of their head. They are actually having a meta-discourse with themselves and they are connecting that mental jigsaw puzzle with words that rhyme and whose definition fits into their oral phrase. And when emcees do this, as I do myself, those little green men hand them words to use through this metaphysical experience of oral word dabbling. When emcees freestyle, they emanate poetics.

## **2.Poetics: to emanate**

To emanate, to flow, to improvise, to freestyle, or to create on the spot is contemporary jargon for the emcee. The act of creation is in process. The orator, the griot and emcee have begun stitching their prose into the air for the public. Their rhyme scheme is flowing fluidly, and has mothafuckin' begun.

In my yesterdays that have exchanged their identity for today, I continue to chisel meta-discourse with emanation. It is a process of my poetics to infiltrate my mental space with enough words and ideas to define the leakage as prose or 'poetic prose.' My buddy and I decide

what to filter out- what water to let the masses drink and indulge in their process of purification. Yes, purification, because these words springing forth are literal bricks to building meaning and infrastructure between myself and other emcees in a cypher, or solely my connection with the public. What emanates must be perceived as intelligible by those within listening distance.

My emanation is a process dubious to most writers. It is not really considered a process but looked more as an act of inspiration. Really? My buddy disagrees. I am also in agreement that other writers shouldn't call my process 'inspiration.'" My buddy says the F with them, but I must further explain so as us emcees would say, "so all of us mothafuckas are on the same page," that there will be no misunderstanding about my vital process of complex verbal scripture.

In Cell Block 2, let's look at how a non-artisan and a bipartisan public might be able to understand this. 'I gotta explain how to make the Kool Aid' my buddy starts bickering. 'Quit bitchin' dude!' I tell him, 'we gotta stick together, bro!' So, here it goes:

1 open-minded brain

50% Buddy

50% emcee/griot/writer

1 mental word map

1 mental dictionary

1 mental rhyming dictionary

2-3 finely chopped ideas

1 teaspoon organic butter

1 clove swagger

Directions:

Preheat oven to 365°F. Open open-minded brain, and mix Buddy and emcee/griot/writer into brain. Pour mental word map, mental dictionary, and mental rhyming dictionary into brain. Stir 8-10 seconds. Chop 2-3 ideas finely, and pour into open-minded brain. Add 1 teaspoon organic butter and 1 clove swagger. Let bake 6-8 seconds. Open mouth of emcee/griot/writer. Let the emanation begin. Add a microphone and crowd (optional).

**3.Da Cypher**

Once the mouth of the emcee/griot/writer is opened, it is time for ‘da cypher’ to begin. In urban literary circles, as well as ‘Hip Hop’ terms, ‘da cypher’ is a profound display of oratory skill. It is quite spectacular because, as I have already stated it goes through an extreme editorial process between my buddy and I. The mental word map enlarges and words, images, and definitions are pre-screened for accessibility and relation to the chopped idea at hand. These fragments become the vessels that supply the emanation. When I and my buddy finally agree on the fragments to utilize for the verbal outpour, the process of meta-discourse leads to emanation- ‘da cypher’:

Off the top of the dome/ from my XY chromosomes/ I speak on the propensity of  
autoethnography/ with all these wiggas trying to challenge me/ the ebb and flow of inner  
city poetics/ I drop mad science/ like an epidemic/ for your addictive reliance/ on your  
Tuskegee syphilis study/ barring civil rights/ to my darker toned brothers/ my Macon  
County sharecroppers/ who had no voice/ of receiving health care/ Obama stepping into  
the scene/ to repudiate past ethical standards/ of a US medical Klan/ into a universal  
health reform dream/putting a ban/on no whistleblowing schemes/ coming into prolific/  
the mass distribution of equality/ Freedom of Verse, Freedom of Press/ as dignified as a  
can of coffee/ supplied and demanded for its coarser skin color/ the impetus of labor/  
across the southwest region/ is a cotton candy flavor/ of railroad tracks along the legion/  
of an Uncle Sam conspiracy...

In hip hop, 'da cypher' is a delicatessen. Not everyone has the ability to meta-discourse and select the correct rhyming words to enhance the fragmented idea blossom through vocal projection. It is a select few who can do it well. In my experience, one improves with time because it takes time to develop chemistry between yourself and your mental buddy. Natural ability can only go so far. One must also be open to failure to be able to improve and do it well. My buddy still laughs at me for the word choices I selected during my past cyphers. He gets upset because I don't listen to him during these crucial milliseconds of a team huddle. He has been so upset at me that at times he won't speak to me for weeks. The more meta-discourse I have with my buddy and the more exposure I have to cyphering the better our improvised prose sounds. Not only because we become familiar with our mental word map, or mental rhyming dictionary, but because as we dialogue at the speed of light, we also become oriented with words

and techniques across different genres of prose. Definitions, rhyme schemes, syllables, appositives, and other notions such as transitions or subtext become propelled into our emanation, and thus our playing field expands. My cypher is just no longer easy rhyme patterns, but a stitching of fragmented ideas across mixed genres.

## **I am Mixed-genre**

My life is a mixed genre. From poetry to freestyle to fiction to playwriting to just about anything from a 5-7-5 syllabic pattern to a sestina, I conjugate genres like mix matched wooden boards to build houses anywhere. I build pragmatically or abstract. Without logic and a gutful of feeling, my intuition is an aroma of juxtaposition between genres. My writing process isn't only one genre. I breed genres and create new ones. I create new words as is typical in Hip Hop literature, or through the emanation process of emceeing. Creating words not on Webster's Dictionary is one of my fortes, one of my everyday writing objectives. Which leads to why I am also writing this so called "PO'e[so]t[er]ic Statement." Hybrid words are a good example of how to create the process for a mixed genre.

"The Poetic Statement" or "Esoteric Statement" is basically almost the same thing, as the meanings are very similar. People who delve into the consciousness of creating a "poetics" statement are a very select few. They are a small population of writers who perhaps believe in a writing degree to further be exploited by academia or publishers. Or, there are those who live life with the belief that they are the select few in life. They are the small group of billionaires that can do what they want when they please, or the terminal degreed professors with a doctorate of

philosophy whose egos as well are not limited with what they believe they can do or achieve. Thus, the title “PO’e[so]t[er]ic Statement” is a hybridity of two extremes who have similar characteristics. Maybe, the MFA degreed writer, the billionaire, or the Ph.D. department chair all constitute extremities. But, both ‘poetic’ and “esoteric” seem to be filled with a special skill or knowledge.

Continuing with the idea that both the ‘poetic’ and ‘esoteric’ share like qualities, I will venture to say that emcees/griots/writers also share special knowledge of a select few. The process of emanation cannot go unnoticed. But, there are those who care not to notice it or give it its due credence. When people say that freestyling off the top of your head is like the Jack Kerouac school of thought that the first draft is the best draft, my buddy and I disagree. Freestyling is not a first draft or second draft, but more so a finalized draft because you can’t take it back. It goes through an immense editorial process, as I have previously stated, but also bridges together different genres. Sometimes, as an emcee/griot/writer, I can connect poetry with hip hop or hip hop and R&B. I can be rapping and then sing a couple of lines I consider the chorus and then go back to rapping without ever thinking again of singing another line. When I am mixing genres as a performer, I am orchestrating at full capacity because I do not limit myself as to what genre I need to rely on or stick too. I orchestrate silence, beats, rhythm, pace, vocals, words, and body movements. If emanation was not edited thoroughly, it would be a cacophony. That is why emanation is a strong edited draft. Nothing is final in life, thus in my PO’e[so]t[er]ic process there are no final drafts. There are only freestyles with diligent editing to provide quality prose. By allowing myself to become a mixed genre during writing or performance, I am skillfully weaving in some polit[r]ic[k]s.

## **Polit[r]ic[k]s**

The weaving in of manipulation during the emanation process is a highly noted skill and process. The manipulation is both influential and skillfully persuasive due to its creative nature. The “politricks” denotes a word play by the emcee/griot/writer in a way that the word does not really exist but only created for the purpose of providing a hybrid meaning between words to influence an audience to accept such a non-existent word that will help bridge meaning to the emanated prose. “Politricks” is a form of my improvisation. It is both meanings of two words into one- a combo definition provided by a temporal word.

Like previously stated, PO’e[so]t[er]ics is a “politricks.” It combines two words into one. Both word definitions are similar as is “politricks.” The words “politics” and “tricks” is somewhat synonymous. “Trick” means to deceive or manipulate, and so do politicians who do ‘politics.’ Word play is a fun form of creativity for the emcee/griot/writer. During my meta-discourse, my buddy and I always debate what is the best form of ‘politricks’ our audience. What words from my mental map and mental rhyming dictionary will fit into the finely chopped idea being discoursed at the time. Some words my buddy and I have used in recent cyphers are:

‘Cuntry’ meaning her private real estate stemming from words- Cunt and Country

‘Concockshun’ meaning his cock juice for words- Cock and Concoction

‘humicide’ meaning killing someone softly with hums for words- hum and homicide

‘eaglealiens’ meaning sharp visionary immigrants for words- illegal aliens

‘Crucifixmas’ meaning a crucified Christmas for words-Crucifixion and Christmas

‘Realigion’ meaning a questioning of religions for words- real and religion

The list can go on and on. My buddy and I are always processing new words during cyphers or freestyle writing sessions. The process of ‘politricking’ is to trick an audience into accepting and understanding the hybrid word as a new definition for the combined words. It is not oftentimes questioned or misunderstood because a cyphering crowd usually understands the emanation process and will continue to use these temporal hybrid words within their own social circles. The method of ‘politricks’ is an easy adaption for the conscious literary crowd. And thus, is why emcees/griots/writers are a staple in the “poetic” and “esoteric” few of society. They create a special knowledge that only a few select have access too. They are the contemporary literary architects that provide the landscape for the masses to ascertain the new slang, trends, and words to be possibly introduced into Webster’s dictionary because of their popularity of use.

### **HisJazzRaptoMe**

As my buddy and I concur that hybridity is the result of meshing words together to create a new meaning, we also believe that this hybrid approach also intermingles genres. My thesis, *HisJazzRaptoMe*, written both by my buddy and I is a mixing of genres to create a new form of literature reflective of the true form of Hip Hop. In Hip Hop, there are many elements that comprise such culture: emceeing, graffiti writing, break dancing, videography, deejaying, community involvement and education. In *HisJazzRaptoMe*, I tried to reflect the true nature of

Hip Hop by having various characters represent the elements of Hip Hop. I also use a circle of emcees as narrators as they take turns cyphering. They feed each other words to feed their cyphers and in doing so, *HisJazzRaptoMe* takes form. The words being cyphered are reflective of the vignettes that follow the theme the rapper is busting a flow on. *HisJazzRaptoMe* is ebb and flow; it is the remix of the water flowing back towards the ocean once it hits the shore. It is a remix of genres and Hip Hop elements. *HisJazzRaptoMe* is a mixture of cyphers, vignettes, prose, poems, and rap songs. It distinguishes that different genres of literature can come together to create one body of literature. In doing so, it is a true reflection of what Hip Hop is and what Hip Hop literature should be. A mixed genre of literature is Hip Hop because Hip Hop is a remix. Hip Hop uses old vinyl records to create new music; it also uses different genres of music from jazz, gospel, reggae, soul, and rock to re-create itself. In re-creating, my buddy and I want to remix back this discussion to the term *HisJazzRaptoMe*.

Why “*HisJazzRaptoMe*?” The first syllable ‘*His*’ is representative of the word ‘history.’ History is filled with events and inventions and most of all it is symbolic and proof that living has occurred. My buddy and I felt that the first syllable should be *His* in our preamble to the importance of our own histories. But also, we realized the double meaning here. *His* is also symbolic of He, the Man, God, or Patriarchy. As is Hip Hop, a male dominated music genre, we felt also compelled to keep *His* as our first syllable in our hybrid word because *His* is also a “politrick”- a tool we use to remix and create within our “poetic” and “esoteric” nature. *His* is a syllable that aligns with history and also with male chauvinism. And though my buddy and I do not endorse male chauvinism, we as emcees/griots/writers have a duty to interpret and re-interpret the mores of our society by having readers and audiences take away their own meaning from interpretive literature, such as Hip Hop. As emcees/griots/writers, it is not our duty to make

people accept our beliefs or ideas, but rather give them the opportunity to develop their own. And thus, *His* became our first syllable in our remix of our “HisJazzRaptoMe.”

*Jazz* easily became the second adopted syllable. In *Jazz*, my buddy and I felt that a homage was needed to those who created the music form that was remixed by both white jazz musicians and hip hoppers from the black jazz musicians who had their art form stolen or borrowed. By using old forms of music like vinyl records to re-create samples in hip hop or new music, the new sound or samples now have been given new life. The use of sampling pays homage to older music for a new generation who most likely never would have listened to the older music if it was not sampled by hip hop artists.

*Rap* as the third syllable was probably the most debatable syllable in our rendition of “HisJazzRaptoMe.” My buddy and I argued over millions of milliseconds in trying to reason why the syllable *Rap* was deemed suitable. We discussed at length how *rap* means to strike quickly and smartly. This caught our attention at how an emcee showcases this through their “poetic” flare or swagger as he/she is emanating. *Rap* also wooed us with its meaning of discussing freely without restraint and also means a form of sharp criticism. All these definitions of *Rap* and its petite size caught our attention. A syllable with only three letters with so much punch impressed us and thus *Rap* became our third syllable during our heavy weight meta-discourse battle. *HisJazzRap* was beginning to function as the potent warrior to battle time and space as past Jazz musicians did when they improvised during a long solo or how an emcee does today during a freestyle. My buddy and I now needed action and movement and thus we felt a preposition would accomplish this as the next syllable.

*To* is a preposition that expresses direction toward a point, person, place or thing approached or reached. *To* was unanimously the fourth syllable of our congruent metaphor for giving back life to remixed music, to people, to humanity. But as my buddy and I checked the syllabic scheme, *HisJazzRapTo* we felt that something was amiss. We played with the order of the word but felt that the preposition would have to be lowercase in order to give more importance to the importance of the three one syllable words preceding our preposition. The new syllabic scheme of: *HisJazzRapto*, was now looking imperial. My buddy and I now knew that this new “politrick” would do some tricks. *HisJazzRapto* was almost ready to give headlines to the resurrection of remix by allowing the sample to be revived as a musical hook of importance in contemporary society. But, but...what would bring it a due diligence? Another million milliseconds of meta-discourse led us to conclude that an internal battle was needed before the resurrection of old music as a sample could take place externally and be listened by a new generation of hip hoppers. And thus, a word for ourselves was the next choice.

*Me* is the simple objective case of I and means an obsessive interest in one’s own satisfaction, and thus, my buddy and I believed this would give importance to our movement of sampling old music as a new voice in today’s musical hip hop loops that lead to our *HisJazzRaptoMe*. The music in the sounding out of *HisJazzRaptoMe* was mind blowing. It was jazzy and rhythmic. With *HisJazzRaptoMe*, my buddy and I believe that every syllable step of our emanation of the word “HisJazzRaptoMe” has an importance and story that must be told.

As emcees/griots/writers, our purpose is to not tell people how to do this or do that but to help people to reflect forward from the past and the unseen. *HisJazzRaptoMe* has a purpose. It is here to remind people that mixed genre literature can coexist with the traditional. It is here to propose that Hip Hop literature should be a mixed genre. It is here to showcase that emanation is

a writing tool that stems from meta-discourse which leads to cyphering and “politricking.” It is best displayed through a fusion of genres and hybrid vocabulary. It is what it is until the next meta-discourse between buddy and I. But before we have that next meta-discourse in the near future, my buddy and I need to give some shouts out like they do in Hip Hop.

## **Shout Outs**

Before my buddy and I thank anybody, we must first recognize what needs to be recognized- the “mothafuckas” who bled, struggled and drank enough moonshine to make the moon shine. That being said, my buddy and I would like to give some props to these “mothfuckas” for their thoughts, ideas and regurgitation of philosophies that my buddy and I brought up during our meta-discourses. Due to a notion of brevity, my buddy and I will not list these fools in any particular order. We’ll just list them as a freestyle- as how we remember them on the spot for their contributions to our meta-discourse.

A shout out to DJ Shadow. His album “Private Press” blew our minds. This mothafucka created a whole album out of old records. The beats, the horns, music, and voiceovers were so tied down to the nuclear family syndrome that hip hoppers today now have a different perspective on what the nuclear family listened to. And the best part, it’s now hip hop!

Another shout out goes to my scribbler, Franz Kafka. Besides dying hella early, this fool orchestrated stories through the use of semi-colons as samples. His use of semi-colons were like different tiles in different shapes and sizes to patch up a roof. His stories were a bunch of stitched

work that gave vital importance to each sentence and idea. Kafka was a multi-dimensional meta-discourse artist. His narratives are great gifts for any emcee.

My buddy also says that Paul Beatty can't be over looked. This black American writer who fathered some memorable novels such as "The White Boy Shuffle" and "Tuff" were so enriched in the fabric of hip hop vernacular and landscape that the characters in these novels could also be some of the characters in "HisJazzRaptoMe." I also concur with my buddy on this but I would also add Henry Dumas as a man to also be remembered.

Henry Dumas's story, "Ark of Bones" was perhaps the most thrilling story I ever read. It had southern dialect, mysticism, voodoo and slang that is still very prevalent today. Unfortunately my buddy is telling me right now that this writer also died really early. The po-po's shot him down at the age of 33. Hmmm. My buddy thinks he was the black Jesus. But that's another story for another book.

Another shout out goes to Sherman Alexie. This Native American has so much wit and humor in his stories that my buddy can't stop reading his *Indian Killer* novel. I think together, my buddy and I have read it thirteen times. The symbolism, politics and dialogue are so well crafted that it's the best movie you will ever see as you read. Also, his straightforward style and toughness is the persona of an emcee with a lot of swagger.

Also a person we both unanimously agree on is Damian Marley. His ability to remix his father's songs into hip hop is quite astounding. My buddy and I will slap any Jamaican who disagrees with us that we'd rather listen to Damian's version of *Pimpa's Paradise* than that of his father's. I guess it's the hip hop in us and the rapping of Black Thought from the hip hop band *The Roots* that make the song so dynamic. But Damian Marley is the shit! So, he's on our list.

Another writer that makes our list before we go and take a big phat shit is Gloria E. Anzaldua. This Chicana Feminist writer was off the heazy. She wrote in mixed genres herself in her famed book *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Anzaldua wrote prose intermixed with poetry. She also wore her lesbian identity as a proud flag and my buddy and I give her lots of props. Like in “HisJazzRaptoMe,” Anzaldua is also a mixed genre of cultures and identity.

All in all, and with a gunshot salute to those who need to be shot, my buddy and I need to put our tec 9 away and go hit the toilet. It’s been a while through this constipation proclamation and now since the urge has arrived, we will take full advantage. My buddy hopes there is *Charmin* in the restroom. I concur. So we probably didn’t remember all the shout outs we wanted to give, but at least, you know some of these “mothafuckas” who have given rise and guidance during our meta-discourse in our writing of “HisJazzRaptoMe.”

## **Enter the Cypher**

“Ok, so what’s the word Crunch?”

“The word is ‘Diplomatic’”

“Deep...low...matic?”

“Yeah!”

Zoo looks around the crowd. Five or six heads are bopping their heads to an internal beat, waiting for him to begin. Zoo closes his eyes and listens for the music.

## **Amtrak Train**

Mile after mile upon the track, and endless acres of fertile land, trees, riverbeds, and grey clouds, there is so much space to plant fruit, stretch legs, and to consume ideas, the photographer thinks.

[f/2.8] A grove of cherry blossom trees appear as a stretched pink cloth.

Looking onto the rivers along the track is like catching a glimpse of memories in the present. The silver train trudges along the waves like a powerful sockeye salmon.

[f/8] The reflections of trees in the water are shadows trapped in mirrors.

Waiting with camera in hand, and bag of lenses at his side, the photographer speaks through his Nikon D810. The shutter speed of 1/1000s should hold steady until the sun descends.

## **“Deep...low...matic”**

traveling into the deep/ into the cavernous low/ my ill-matic schematics/ set Zoo amongst peeps/  
with a dangerous flow/ so you know/ how I creep into yo' Jeep/ & take all yo' dough/ 'cuz Zoo  
so animalistic/ he can't be detained/ dropping rhymes critics call prolific/ cuz my literary sperm  
comes from the brain/ & enhances passionate flames/ too deep for the low matics/ who try to  
crucify me/ 'cuz my rhymes are perpetualistic/ like my anatomy/ that will be here for years/ after  
I'm gone/ 'cuz Zoo knows no fear/ only drip my pee inside a John/ & sing my song/ for those in  
need to be liberated from the cage/ Zoo sets forth deep instincts/ from page to page/ & with a  
mental assault/ to the police precinct/ 'cuz Zoo is on death row/ for being innocent...innocent...

## Father

“Yo’ daddy here yet,” momma asks Jerome as he sits on the couch closest to the front door. It is 10am and Jerome is waiting for his daddy to arrive. He remembers that daddy said he will be there at 10am on their phone conversation last week. So, Jerome is happy and knows his daddy will be here soon. He is quickly fudging with his fingers counting all the rides he will go on.

“Now, don’t get all cheery now. You know he didn’t show up two weeks ago,” his mother reminds him as she passes through the living room into the kitchen.

Jerome shrugs at his mother’s noise. He is wearing his LeBron James, the pair of shoes his daddy got him last year for Christmas. He also remembers that daddy was too busy last time and couldn’t make it. He also forgot to charge his cellphone and that was the reason he couldn’t call to let him know he couldn’t make it. But quickly he smiles as he remembers that tomorrow is his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday and daddy will be here soon.

“You get somethin’ to eat already,” his mother yells from the kitchen.

“Yep,” his voice barley a whisper.

“You better come eat! You know he aint got no money to be spending on you. He got two other kids from that bimbo! Come here and eat,” momma’s voice escalates.

Jerome remains on the couch. He doesn’t want to eat oatmeal again. He thinks of hotdogs, popcorn, cotton candy, and pizza. Daddy had told him to be hungry so he can eat everything he wanted when he picked him up. Jerome was preparing himself for his big meals today by ignoring the rumbling in his belly.

“J! Get yo’ ass in here and eat! Yo’ cup’ of noodles is ready!”

Jerome looks at the digital clock atop the tv. 10:19am. He looks over at the phone lounging on the coffee table. Is it on? Is it charged?

“J! I know you hears me! Get yo’ ass in here before I put some hurtin’ on you.”

Momma’s footsteps coming from the kitchen are enough to make Jerome jump up from the couch.

“But, momma, daddy told me not to eat.”

“Say what boy? Yo’ daddy aint got no money! Get in here and eat!”

Jerome peaks through the thin curtain window by the front door. No car on the driveway yet. He looks at the clock again and daddy is late. Ok, he tells himself, I will only eat a little bit cuz daddy might be stuck in traffic.

“Come eat boy! For heaven’s sake, hope yo’ daddy don’t ‘no show’ again.”

## **Historian**

Watching her sleep every night is like watching a star fall over and over, quite resilient and satisfying, knowing that if she awakens, both of her stars dimly lit will be searching for me in the dark. Even without her contact lenses, she senses my smile and knows that my nearby shadow is a mountainous flesh of warmth and comfort. I have a bad habit of watching her sleep. Who is to say if this is bad or even bad at all? I am calmed by her solitude under blankets. Listening to her breathe reminds me of an ocean cascading waves onto a shore 30 meters away. It has a slight hum, a bounce, a rhythm of being alive. At times her narrow body wrapped underneath layers of bed sheets, especially when her legs are outstretched, I can't help thinking she is a lone enchilada on a platter. Hmm... where's the beans and rice? And where is my knife and fork? She awakens and blinks in my direction. I am a camera videotaping her eyes, the curve of her lips bending, an acknowledgement that her brief moment of rediscovery involves an instant of me being found. I continue to videotape her sleep into memories.

## Sandals & Rice

A two-bedroom flat with two beds and two couches is barely enough territory to house three couples and two infants. The two husbands and the eldest wife share a Ford Escort to work every morning. The baby father who is unemployed leaves and comes as he pleases. He doesn't seem too enthused about living away from the casinos and his lady friends. He bitches when his barely-turned eighteen baby mama asks him to hold his son, while she cooks or cleans or showers.

The kitchen is always hot, as the rice cooker is always whistling and steaming. Eight pair of sandals are always outside the front door and another ten inside near the door entrance. The dining table has five mismatched chairs and white plastic dishes ready to serve any guest.

In the shower, teenage Meuy hears her son crying. She wants to step out and dry herself. She hears him saying, "Why you crying? You wanna be a little bitch!" She stays in the restroom soaking her head with the shower gun. She listens for silence. She closes her eyes and imagines if she had gone to the clinic. She would be studying right now. Her parents would still love her. She would be with her girlfriends. She slightly massages the bruise on her left rib.

Through the thin paper walls, Meuy can hear the ice cream truck song passing by. She opens the window to hear the sounds of her youth. She running with her older sisters. Her father not too far behind with wallet in hand. The memory of a refreshing 50-50 with the vanilla inside the orange popsicle brings her silence. She smiles momentarily.

"Meuy, I gotta go!" Her confidant has opened the bathroom door. "Hurry! Take him. I gotta go!" Meuy slides the shower curtain aside to take her son who is still crying. She is naked and wet. He looks at her and stares at her bruise. "Do they know," he asks. She doesn't answer. As he exits, the other wife is waiting by the door to come get the child.

"No, Trang, you go back to sleep. You work tonight," says Meuy who has stepped out of the shower. She raises her son chest high and gives him her pink nipple. Grimacing at his biting, she closes the door. Silence again.

## **Thug Sonnet #2: When fortie Winters shall besiege thy brow**

with a forty, in mid-winter, under my brow,  
my boys dig deep trenches on beau'ful field,  
youth black and proud ready for battle now,  
willing totters smoke weed and never yield,  
never snitch where their cronies drink and lie,  
with mad scrilla' they inject inside thighs,  
to say time flies by under tired eyes,  
boys n da hood put on hold silly cries,  
how much caviar in my peesa pie,  
can thou wager how one is mortified,  
shall sum my blessings and make no excuse,  
prowling perfumeous prey over red wine,  
rollin blunts from god's pages is a deuce,  
all left under Ice Cubes 'Day,' is all mine.

## Da Ghetto Museum

da hood be like, keep an eye on this nigga...he might bust-a-cap on yo' ass. keep yo' affiliations tight and the Crisco off the gherri curl. ya see', my peeps and me be frequenting the hood flocks and some of me boys be burning up until doc orders them some pills. but not me, i be like Massa' Bama' and hitting it right wit' the white snatch. hit it and quit it is a must by all means necessary or yo' hood will know who be eating that pumpkin pie with the cream. but gossip is fairytales with a hoe named sock-eye salmon. the army recruits be socking her pink flesh and all we's can do is sit back and pray she got a pimp who can retaliate. yes, life is a spiral viral. it comes wit the territory. Mister Botany was handcuffed the other day. search warrants and ghetto birds filled the spectacle. no one was home. everyone was busy climbing each other's back yard. dogs barking, children crying, breasts lactating, mexicans still mowing lawns, and Mary descending from Magdalene still curved her legs around customers inside the chicken coop. me and me boys knew there would be visitations and stabbings. we knew time would tell on the face of a snitch posing inside a gallery with confined bars. we wuz looking, always looking, having to tell the man who what and where or else our dope would be held up.

## **Vintage Gherri Curls**

Miss Aunt Jamima  
sits on Safeway auction block  
with her gherri curls

## **“...Innocent”**

innocent...like Mumia/ my life a prison term unexplained/ from Tuskegee to gonorrhea/ a black man is always detained/ by the Politricks of practice/ keeping us chained/ but Prodigy One will crack this/ to set forth the freedom train/ give reparations to ex-slaves and inmates/ wrongfully incarcerated/ ‘cuz so called innocent business/ smears blood of those unseen/ by today’s media/ the guillotine/ chopping ethnic flesh into uremia/ pissing through a dialysis machine/ & the FDA still innocent/ when shipping banned meds/ into third world countries/ our people have bled/ like dissected monkeys/ for an Ebola epidemic/ & innocence is lost/ because of differential polemics...polemics...

## **Urban Chicana**

with tank top hung low  
Bob Marley and Zapata  
tattooed on left tit

## A Gene for Hip-hop

Her mother wants to know why he is still here. Why in the freak' in bloody mary of his family's alcoholic lineage is he still using her daughter's EBT card for his *Billy Dee Williams* grove on. *Colt 45*. The black man's liquor and her mother about to slap her daughter silly. He just using you. He aint got no job. He uses your card and for what? Foe some nightly ass whuppins. Black eyes, puffy lips and your baby girl crying cuz she has rashes. "That you don't have any *pampers*?" He sits in their living room blaring *Easy E* from the stereo and smokes joints all day. Saying he has to lay down low. He trying to get his act together. He writing down some lyrics to get some paper.

She tells her mother that she believes in him. That he has hip-hop in his genes. And yes, he hits me but not as much as before and that he has real talent. "Just wait mama, he gonna rise us up." The living room has become his daytime office. Stack of empty shot glasses and half bottle of *Hennessey* on the coffee table. Open bags of *Doritos* and *Cheetos* sit on the brown stained carpet. He sleeps on the couch with his Jordans on. He snores sound like planes flying overhead. His red tongue from the *Quarter Waters* inside the red plastic cups is evidence of some homemade brew. In between snores, ghetto birds flap their wings over yonder.

Her mother waits inside her bedroom. She can't even cook in her home with him here. But he gave her a roach the other day and she smoked it inside her room. Her daughter better not be pregnant again she tells herself. She should have known better than to have a kid during her 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Mother blames herself for her daughter's choice in men. She used to wear them mini-mini-skirts to her daughter's PTA meetings. Always looking for her way out of these projects. Maybe she could rouse up some interest. She was almost forty when becoming a grandmother. But she still kept bringing men home night after night. Her daughter had no choice but to move in with him who is currently dirtying up her living room.

The smell of Chinese food steams from inside a plastic bag. Daughter is home, carrying baby on one arm while also lifting the Chinese food onto the kitchen table. He sits up on the couch and tells her to bring him a plate. His stomach is calling out. Mother opens her bedroom door and asks if she brought beef with broccoli. Daughter responds two orders and some sweet and sour pork, peking spare ribs and a chicken fried rice. Mother walks into the living room almost stepping on the *Cheetos* bag. Mother looks at him and briefly pauses then continues on towards the kitchen table. He waits on the couch; he waits to be served. He knows they had both worked hard all day. She taking orders at *Denny's* and he putting his signature on what *Tupac* would have called *Thuglife*.

## Picture This, Picture That

In his FUBU jeans, green POLO rugby shirt and overpriced pair of white Jordan's, Kodak in his 12 inch afro stabbed with a black pick the size of a harpoon is bobbing his head up and down, his back against a brick wall. He is listening for the rift between air and sound. He is attuned to the solstice between stars and suns, illuminated by a moon the size of a glowing onion. He burps...and sniffs the aftermath of his carne asada tacos with extra cebollas; he is savoring his past hour's dinner as he waits for the hoes on International Boulevard to start waving at customers who drive-by in their Cadillac Escapades, Acura Legends or Ford Explorers. He is looking for the famed "Cadillac Carmen" in her yellow leather pants and hot pink sports bra. The 50-year-old socialite who once was a prized possession from traveling celebrities and politicians was rumored to work this evening. And Kodak wanted to capture her with his passed me down Minolta X-700 35mm film camera.

"Picture this...what if I could capture that Nubian goddess in the act of creation. Picture that?" He told his hood cats who were quick themselves to eat pussy with a fork. All his neighborhood affiliates called him Kodak because his oratory vision was beyond his pictorial skills. Kodak had some passed down hardware that only cats who fathered children during the Harlem Renaissance knew how to use. Asking white people was out of the question as Kodak prided himself as the next generation Black Panther to do damage to "your mental." Kodak understood that his people were still not free and thus his continual efforts to re-educate his people about oppression was a passion he never tired of.

Kodak in his b-boy stance against the brick wall was eager for the night's business to commence. He hoped his newly bought used telephoto lens would work as smoothly as his suave negotiating skills..."Picture this: 'Cadillac Carmen' with her Tina Turner muscular legs and Beyonce's booty desiring me to take her back to the motel...Picture that: what a sight for the Kodak man...the love machine of original creation, the Kuma Sutra of East Bay to the fullest, the Black Ansel Adams of Portrait, and the pictorial DMX with the elongated flex..." but as he began to check over his equipment inside his backpack he realized that he only had four shots left on his camera. There was no payday for him until pops decided to send momma some of that alimony money he had promised them. Kodak would have to wait till the beginning of the month to process this film. He thought about getting a job; he dreamed of working for the San Francisco Chronicle.

"Picture this: An Afro Wearing Nigga Wins Photography Award. Lands Job with the San Francisco Chronicle."

"Picture That! Yes, my crack smoking niggas...picture that!"

## **Soldiers of Misfortune**

stacked in wooden boxes  
wrapped in red, white, and blue cloth  
young men are sent home  
cargo shipped overnight  
eaten by different sharks  
living in a white house  
who navigate stars and stripes  
six feet under  
blaming duragged men  
of pilfering innocent lives  
reacting to a scripted lie  
to secure untapped fortunes...

“My son is no longer here...He was a dedicated soldier, one who died with dignity serving his country...His death helped America liberate a country from a sinister wicked man”

mother alone  
knitting tears with memories  
photographs no longer kept  
in an album  
a family missing  
from the camera  
as mother speaks  
her audience is  
an empty room  
abandoned by politicians...

“My son is in a better place...this I know...this is...this is...what I should believe...”

a cracked frame  
confines the memory  
of a young man  
missing-in-action  
his blue eyes  
& wavy hair  
in battalion regalia  
has become hopes  
& prayers of desperation  
as mother cries  
for his return

she sinks below sea level  
drowns in her sorrow  
& swims on a couch

ready for the sound  
of the doorbell  
to awaken her

“My son hasn’t sent me a letter in months...I know how hard it is to write when lives are being lost...I just hope that he writes soon...”

soldiers are ready for battle  
to die for their country  
to defend a flag  
whose honor is built  
from soaked blood  
of indigenous tribes  
from greed of stolen lands  
that gave them province  
& a whisper from god  
granting permission

pawns are the first pieces  
removed from a chess board  
standing in harm’s way  
sent to the frontline  
at-risk & poverty ridden youth  
carry rifles & guns  
trained militia to kill  
other marginalized youth  
who question their government

a generation of youth into soldiers  
decomposes humanity  
with theories of evil  
weapons of mass destruction  
& filtered media

soldiers of misfortune  
kill one another  
for a nation’s bravado  
kill their own intuition  
when living in fear  
becomes their only asset

## **a Mother Prays**

With rosary in hand, kneeling inside a church, a mother prays for her son to change. She wishes for her son to find God and live a blessed life. She is afraid he has begun street dealing and police evading. She worries about him- only fourteen and his facial hair can tell the story of a man twice his age. She no longer is able to keep him at home or command him to do his homework. Who knows, she thinks, if he even goes to school now. He carries no backpack and has no textbooks. She wonders if she should take a day off from work so she could follow him around during the day. She is constantly missing money from her wallet and yet she knows he is the only other person inside her home. She refuses to admit it was taken without her approval. Mother prays to the Saints, the Virgin Mary and whomever deems themselves worthy to be called upon by her sacred book.

The scent of burning wax from the lighted candles upon the mantel below the Virgin de Guadalupe is enough of a reminder that her prayers will not go unanswered. She has believed in her when times were tough. She inherited her mother's silver rosary at her Holy Communion. She was twelve and knew all the prayers and chants, and mostly, she knew that it was her only form of healing. Mother as a pre-teen was seldom confronted with any influence outside the church or scripture. Thus, pre-teen mother was molded into regurgitating verse she barely understood.

Nearing her last decade of prayers, Mother begins her sorrowful mystery of the Crucifixion. She is seeing her son on the cross. His hands outstretched and a crown of thorns upon his head. She prays for him. A young man splattered in his own blood. His flesh welcoming his mother's prayers to live.

## Listen to Momma

like Sigmund Freud I be getting inside your mental/ discovering that your birth was accidental/  
since your parents never planned on having you/ father left when you was only 2 months due/ &  
momma's still singing the blues/ about which baby's daddy made her cuckoo/ in the middle of  
the night/ raising you was a struggle, was a fight/ that momma thought she won/ now you're  
hanging out with fake ass niggas/ trying to buy a gun/ a Smith & Wesson/ trying not to  
remember the lessons/ that momma taught ya'/ blaming her your problems/ 'cuz you didn't have  
a poppa/ at your side/ & now your contemplating homicide/ 'cuz your boys tell you/ "Are you  
gonna ride or die?"/ la-la-la-la-lalala/ in the '64 Impala/ backseat trigger pulling/ a drive by for  
the amusement/ over the music/ & E & J mixed with Old English/ to help your movement/ from  
Folsom Prison to Pelican Bay/ I should have listened to my momma/ I finally says/ 'cuz I'm a be  
locked up/ till the end of my days

please listen to momma  
to all her screaming sounds  
she knows better  
'cuz daddy was never around...(x3)

when I was sick/ momma always had that chicken soup for me to eat/ she never asked for much/  
but for me to be sweet/ & finish my education/ got a GED to study for/ & I'm felling the  
frustrations/ 19 years and w/out a job/ got a criminal record/ knowing nothing pays the bills/  
unless I rob/ but my S.O.B. probation officer/ has a job for me/ changing tires & motor oil/ how  
much will I stand/ before my blood starts to boil/ & I gotta hit the streets/ I can pimp my ex/ 'cuz  
shes' still fresh meat/ or run around for the act of running/ my aim is to start gunning/ no AFDC  
for me/ so I won't be bumming/ cigarettes of you gotta be a criminal/ I gotta do what I gotta do  
do

please listen to momma  
to all her screaming sounds  
she knows better  
'cuz daddy wasn't around...(x3)

sever to sever/ the memories once remembered/ & rehabilitation is the key/ beyond a self-made  
prophecy/ of an incarcerated G/ as I sit in despair/ having to pay the fee/ of a monthly check/ no  
credit or bank account/ to retrospect/ as they continue to inspect me as a suspect/ as I confess the  
stress/ of not coming correct/ from the beginning/ have a co-drug dependency/ & I'm still hitting  
women/ 'cuz it's my only intimacy/ saw what poppa done to momma/ a man must be the  
supremacy/ 'cuz I can make women holla/ & that's the lunacy pillaging inside me/ trying to  
make that dolla'/ so's I can be/ a Rick James Super Freak/ but at the peak of my game/ I pimp  
juice to seek/ the eternal flame to let burn the shame/ that continually hounds me/ so I learn to  
pack a Glock/ a.45 & .22/ just in case a cop/ meddles with my business/ & I have to send him to  
the morgue/ like fish sticks

please listen to momma

to all her screaming sounds  
she knows better  
'cuz daddy wasn't around...(x3)

like Papa Doc's regime/ killing mothafuckas in Haiti/ I'll whip that ass with a sugar cane/ if you continue to hate me/ rape me of my mental jurisdiction/ stereotyping me as a villain/ as one of Satan's children/ who knows nada but self-reliance/ never had a poppa only a momma w/out an appliance/ & not being a full-time employee/ she couldn't get a job/ so her anger annoyed me/ pointing at all her short comings/ & I couldn't cry victim so society calls me a dummy/ for not pursuing my education/ coulda got out the hood/ if I gave my life to Christ's revelation/ but can a passage or verse feed me/ or change our income/ 'cuz faith is for fools/ & reality the clip on my gun/ that shoots & drools/ at segregational propaganda/ be quick to kill a redneck/ in exchange for the handcuffs/ but each time I pull the trigger/ I only kill myself/ & everything bigger/ like my dreams of being the taller man/ & now momma disappointed in me/ 'cuz I live off garbage cans

please listen to momma  
to all her screaming sounds  
she knows better  
'cuz daddy wasn't around...(x3)

## Da Hood Messiah

He returns  
with 40 in hand  
arrest warrant  
ghetto bird patrolling  
searching for his resurrection  
with a reincarceration  
of metal crosses  
& barbwire keeping his  
prophecy on lockdown

with brim hat  
polyester slacks  
a rolex casio  
& shimmering gold teeth  
he arrives  
through double doors  
c-walking to the bar  
blessing his flight  
with a vodka gin & Seagram's 7  
breaking liquid bread  
with street heroes  
& an authentically tanned  
Mary Magdalena

glass after glass  
& Mayfield blaring from the jukebox  
young disciples pay respects  
offering a smoke or two  
from zig zags  
in the parking lot  
gathering wisdom from his time  
in Juvi & Pelican Bay  
receiving lectures  
on escaping rent  
& paying off Romans

with bullet wound healed  
on lower back  
and scar across chest  
He counsels the stars  
reflected in their eyes  
recruits followers  
to join him  
for one last supper  
before sipping on wine  
fermented  
from his own blood

He will disappear  
inside books  
a lifetime sentence  
a run-on without parole  
telling his story  
as a statistic  
never to be read

## “...Polemics”

po-le-mics/ p to the o to the l e mics/ polemics/ po'mics...is in my hand and I will make you understand/ my polemics/ my controversial systemics/ coming from my internal dome/ breaking chains & ethnic cleansing contraceptives/ for Kodak will tell you the scripture/ inside the picture/ with a click click telekinetic lense/ breaking down ghetto bricks/ to ease the pretense/ of our governing polemics/ Democrat & Republic Can/ only causing damage/ to the darker toned specious/ whether I'm a wetback or Ameri Can/ I'm just a fetus/ not included into their decision making process/ but Kodak will refuse their fuss/ & drum roll with his arquebus/ to shooting down pictorials/ with his point and shoot/ this man with a camera is in cahoots/ with this cypher...cypher...

## Anatomy of a Tec-9

A small crowd in black hooded jackets stands silently in the rain a short distance away from the on-going funeral. They shake their heads as Father Angelo gives the last blessing before the coffin is lowered into the earth. Tears and wailing come from the family and extended family standing underneath the canopy- a single mother and two daughters: a teenager and preteen, who know their eldest brother will no longer be around to protect them. The priest lectures on and sprinkles holy water on the coffin. The distant bystanders in the black hooded jackets pay respects. Some are teary-eyed. Some are angry. A few touch the grip of their semi-automatic handguns tucked away inside their jackets. As the coffin is ready to be lowered, gun shots ring out in a distance. The priest looks and there is more crying in the crowd around the lowering coffin. The mother yells “they took my son away, bastards!” At the sound of pain and distress in the mother’s crying voice, the young men holding their semi-automatic weapons inside their jackets dash out towards the gun shots. The eldest sister pulls out a glock and is about to go running with those in the dark jackets. But, her little sister grabs her hand, “no, Monique, who’s gonna watch over me?” The mother reaches over and snatches the glock out of her hands. Monique falls to her knees crying. The priest continues the descent of an Amen as the ropes continue to lower. A big woman in a black dress standing elsewhere under the canopy begins to sing: “*Like a comet, blazing across the evening sky, gone too soon...*”

## Da Garnish Man

“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”- Job 1:21, KJV

Da Garnish MAN furnishes her and he also takes it away. HE gives her pearls, necklaces, rings, Louis Vuitton, POLO and even a mothafuckin’ Range Rover with a Supercharged Plus Autobiography Package. HE makes sure she can please, appease and strip tease and as long as she doesn’t ‘cut the cheese,’ HE provides her enough high class clientele to window shop along the moon, collecting diamonds in the sky. HE oscillates in-between different rhythms of patriarchy- ‘Papi knows best’ to ‘bitch better have my money!’ Through villas, condos and now a mansion, HE oversees his telemarketing company out of his upper class area crib. A dozen female phone sex workers who could blow a man through a handset sit in the front living room, regurgitating moans and ecstasy that they never experienced in their short lived marriages. Their spasmic utterances sound like a scandalous frenzy of Wall Street stockbrokers selling bodily investments- “50 shares of ass, 20 escort dates, a roundtrip to Maui with the diva of your choice.” HE sits in his 2300 square foot bedroom, watching the forty and fifty year-old ex-socialites book him business on his twelve Plasma screens. HE is awaiting his 3am shipment of maquiladora workers to be brought in through the ‘River City’s’ discreet Highway 16. HE has just purchased another warehouse building in West Sacramento. HE could hold forty girls there for a couple of weeks. The good ones will move up. The less pretty will work in his chemical lab. The rebellious ones, well, those HE loves the challenge of breaking in. HE once tied up a sixteen year old from Guatemala who spit on his face. Besides breaking her nose with his backhand, he tied her up to the back of a plugged in refrigerator. While she screamed of her back burning, he cooked a dead rat in a skillet, medium rare, and force fed it down her throat. HE remembers her well. She no longer spit on his face. HE later groomed her into a body double role for Rosario Dawson in the film *Kids*. And then had a line of customers waiting from 95831 to Mexicali. Maybe only half of the line became a client. HE tries to remember. HE looks at his watch and also knows that once Soraya comes back down from the moon tonight, he will have to read her some scripture. Her earnings are slowing. HE can’t wait to find his new star.

## Every Color of Shoes

from Martini's to Hennessy to Tanqueray/ the fast life of a Jazzabelle/ from alleys to motel rooms per se/ is filled with eyes & lips that swell/ 'cuz her pimp had a bad day/ so he took to beating her/ & quenching his sexual needs/ 'cuz living under ecstasy/ kept her mind blurred/ with a little hit of weed/ to escape the nose bleeds/ if she didn't bring in enough cash/ only 20, & she's been giving up the ass/ since momma kicked her out at age thirteen/ & she chuckles with a Guinness Stout/ 'cuz getting high is what she feens/ "By Any Means" necessary/ & her dream of being a fairy/ was her lost innocence when daddy intruded her/ before she even ovulated/ & now each fist that occurs/ leads to her succumbing to being penetrated/ & what can be said of her nightly abuse/ she lives the life of a street diva/ with her high heeled shoes

she has every color of shoes  
garter belts & fish nets  
make-up, mascara  
to hide the bruises & threats  
that her patriarchy produces  
cuz she's only worth  
love without excuses...

she has every color of shoes  
every color of shoes...(x2)

he promised her a ring/ & endless gifts with every client/ but the hostility he brings/ has her heart in self-defiance/ not believing in any word he speaks/ so her other John is her only reliance/ of getting everything she needs/ her pussy working overtime/ with two pimps and her flappy crease/ not tight enough to make peace/ or to give them a piece/ so she walks the streets/ for someone to love her/ & true indeed/ her street value has decreased/ 'cuz new strays are hot commodities/ as clients looked to be appeased/ without a trick bitching about anxieties/ so sobriety becomes the quest now overlooked/ all her earnings going to drugs & alcohol/ 'cuz the fast life has her hooked/ & right before she floats to later fall/ the justice man will have her booked/ & there's no family member/ who will accept her call/ in her time of need/ so please pass the blunt, the bong & light the weed

she has every color of shoes  
garter belts & fish nets  
make-up, mascara  
to hide the bruises & threats  
that her patriarchy produces  
cuz she's only worth  
love without excuses...

she has every color of shoes  
every color of shoes...(x2)

slowly & slowly she wishes to die/ now in her late twenties/ & her own love she has defied/ for catering for so long/ to endless men without a heart/ & whether right or wrong & till death due us part/ she continues to sing the same song/ in missionary, or doggy style/ with or without a thong/ her orgasms only quite mild/ when nothing is done for love/ but her addiction of being praised/ rises her above doves/ flying beyond memories of how she was raised/ of two parents always absent/ unless daddy popped her cherry & momma couldn't repent/ about how scary/ her husband dealt her blows/ her life now a fragment/ no subject or verb to control into action/ only her pimp's satisfaction of harnessing his hoes with intimidation/ & "bitch better have my money"/ as his salutation

she has every color of shoes  
garter belts & fish nets  
make-up, mascara  
to hide the bruises & threats  
that her patriarchy produces  
cuz she's only worth  
love without excuses...

she has every color of shoes  
every color of shoes...(x3)

## Her Polygamy

she reeks of dried sweat  
scented by his naked body  
& cheap cologne  
she lets him dive  
& penetrate  
over & over  
separating her secretions  
with a rubber  
glistening in wetness  
cap filled with sperm  
& she hopes  
it's secure for him  
to keep thrusting  
beyond thighs  
into full-sized breasts  
into an early morning  
of her gone  
before he awakes...

she wants more & more  
to taste his root  
to feel the comfort  
of his breath  
along her back  
to see if his seed  
is well worth  
a nine month plan  
a wedding band  
& a secured home...

she meets he  
but remembers him  
who gave her dresses  
roses and literature books  
& imagines what he  
would be like in bed  
what hip techniques  
tongue tactics & decompression effects  
would shake inside her  
& reveal to her  
that he is the one  
the nectar of necks  
& the water hose

to quench her thirst...  
she is alone  
but intimately filled  
with physical jargon  
that leaves her empty  
kissing, suckling & thrusting  
her verbs of intimacy  
that help her pretend  
she is loved  
helps her forget  
how she lies to keep him...

she is disturbed  
by the touch of his hand  
along her belly  
bloating into creation  
a heartbeat beating  
& she refuses his hand  
wanting him and craving he;  
she is his  
playing role of nurturer  
for his seed  
praying for a future  
to lead back to him  
while staying a night with he  
who knows not  
the answers of her riddles  
nor the dreams she stitches  
underneath her pillows  
or the simple pleasures of her reading  
being lost within stories  
once given to her  
by him...

she is at the edge of her fear  
at the plateau of growth  
waiting for breath to breathe  
for the birds to sing  
& her suitcase a mobile unit  
granting her speed  
to find them a home  
where screams & bruises  
are not welcome  
& bartering for rent  
does not exist;  
she is certain

that He and His  
is not like Him  
who has softly given her room  
to exist in her desires  
but certain  
she will never be ready...

she remembers Him  
when He and His are no longer there  
wonders if asking forgiveness  
will keep Him around  
& if her polygamy  
will have to expire  
if she decided to love Him  
a first time

## Kool Aid & Pot Stickers

1.

mama brew  
the red liquid  
w/the chilled  
sparkle diamonds

she says  
1 glass only  
till the chicken ready

cherry fruit punch grape  
mixed threegether  
& we smell them greens greening

2.

china man  
in his dark dickies  
& pale karate shoes

empty tables  
filled wit' chopsticks  
& tea pots

year of the dragon special  
tomato beef chow mein  
& 2 pot stickers

3.

mama not workin  
waitin for phone calls  
cuz frigerator empty

we sit around  
play bingo & cards  
wait for Sunday  
for milk & cheese

at night  
we hear mama cry  
in the morning  
stranger lays

next to her

4.

china man  
new menu  
w/out specials

tables crowded  
business suits  
& plastic wrapped  
fortune cookies

5.

saturday night  
we stare at  
kool aid sticker  
on fridge

& we wait  
to ask mama  
when stranger leaves

when them  
frozen pot stickers  
will be cooked

## **Thug Sonnet #12: When I doe count the clock that tells the time**

when I cunts the time I slept at her side,  
and see remnants of thug life left behind,  
when I behold her dreams so hypnotized,  
and know love is more than wet bump n grind,  
when lofty trees blow smoke to obscure my fate,  
which hears me speak of bonds and newer days,  
when tabernacles plead I now negate,  
other flesh to forestall sin with her gaze,  
with strong arms she builds bridges to now cross,  
and her feet sink from my weight to carry,  
I must unfold parables of loss,  
seek in her eyes the daughter of Mary,  
relinquish me from my bastard child fate,  
to bond in trust to break my armored plate.

## **a Street Lector**

“Underground Hip Hop remains ‘CNN for Black people’” –Jerry Quickly from essay *Hip Hop Poetry*

Meadowview & 24<sup>th</sup> the circulation begins/ on the back of the bus/ tryin’ not to cringe/ at hooded man with blade ready to sin/ is a disciple of Ishtar/ two lions staring from his eyes/ his gaze crescent stars/ pockmarked by childhood beatings/ his indigence is liquid survival shot up inside veins/ & his head is screaming/ twittering amongst the time lapses of memory/ his body rocks forth in syncopation/ from gears in constant shift/ his search for polygamy/ is his ultimate quench/ amongst his granted heirloom/ war & sex his bedroom fixture/ blades and brass knuckles/ dance forcibly upon skin/ & blood is scripture/ to this man sitting at arm’s length

## “...Cypher”

cypher to cypher to cyphering to cyphered/ imagery explained on the go/ with an animate flow/  
& quite hyper/ is the revelation of this circle/ communionizing with words/ more Evangelical/  
than Christ or singing birds/ out in nature/ ‘cuz MetaDiscourse has set forth his lecture/ but its  
not premature/ only images filled with rapture/ but not the Christian one/ as the Salam Malakam  
prophet has begun/ to meta the discourse/ into branches of cypher/ for we do Allah’s chore/ with  
a love cupid sniper/ shooting love into our hearts/ branching together unity amongst all races/ so  
I cypher beyond Scientology/ to abort the grimaces/ of those not knowing themselves/  
MetaDiscourse & the Five Pillars is our only wealth...wealth...

## **The Underground Rapper**

Since high school, he has practiced his literary craft. Writing and editing and rehearsing, hoping to one day make his debut for Jay Z or Eminem. Being the opening act would suit him fine; moreover, he only hopes to put his flowability on display. One two. One two. He has gone over in his head the scenario so many times. One two. One two. On the wheels of steel, his deejay Rabioso. Putting the needle to the record. The needle to the record. The needle to the record. Cross fading and scratching. He has the mic in his hands to make them understand he will become known. He is ready to make it big now. He has saved up enough for his demo tape. He has a couple of tracks ready to drop. The bright headlines with his name are waiting. He comes out to a sold out crowd wearing a red North Face jacket with a blue durag on his head. The crowd is screaming his name. The ladies are throwing panties on stage. He is hyped and ready to drop mad lyrics. He can't wait to flow on the mic. He holds back the tears in his eyes. He only needs recognition. He only needs to be heard before his upcoming thirtieth birthday.

## Dimes n Nickle Bags

An ashtray filled with cigarette butts and a couple of unlit roaches sit inside a dark glass stained tray on top the coffee table. The stench of leftover fumes has now become permanent residents to his walls filled with Bob Marley posters. A grey-orange mixed cat sits on a stool by the far wall underneath Bob Marley running in black sweats and sweat shirt, dribbling a soccer ball. Marley's eyes look straight ahead, as if daring the viewer to try and challenge the ball away from him. The cat is busy grooming herself, licking her coat and awaiting for her human roommate to pour her some milk. Opposite the cat, sleeping on a long couch is a White Rastafarian. A long slender six foot and a supposed 160 pounds of ganja, black bean soup, and cashews and nuts vegan eating is portrayed by a white dreadlocked snoring body. The green velvet couch with its Jimi Hendrix mystique was bought several years ago as its original owner believed that Hendrix had spilt excess acid on the couch during his late night after parties. Thus, the couch was bought several years ago in order to claim that Hendrix had created his music while fucking some Anglo broads on this couch where the owner currently sleeps.

"Penelope..." the White Rastafarian calls out while waking up from his deep slumber and the mixed colored cat leaps from the stool to the coffee table. He rubs his eyes while sitting up to recognize a living room filled with empty forty ounce bottles, left over crispy crème doughnuts, and his two hidden roaches stashed away inside his ash tray. "Meow..." the cat asks for milk, but the White Rastafarian plays with his locks, smiling at the opportunity of a steady job and continuity in providing him self herbal medicine inside a nickel bag. He reaches over to pick up his pager from underneath the coffee table: 11:28. Two and a half hours till his Starbucks interview he thinks. He remembers how they do Free Trade coffee, and pay higher wages to their employees. Already, he has convinced himself that this is the job for him- to work for an employer dignified in all humanitarian aspects. He has heard as some of his friends have fed him info that Starbucks would be a good fit for him. He yawns and lifts himself up to go get Penelope her milk.

As he opens his refrigerator door, his doorbell rings. He wonders who would come over so early, especially when everyone who knows him understands that two o'clock in the afternoon is his usual wake up hour; he stands silent waiting to hear if the intruder will go away. Penelope starts meowing and runs to the front door. Time has zoomed in as 10 seconds has become an eternity. The land lord could be wanting his rent money or his mother's new girlfriend wants to get her monthly payment for his three thousand dollar loan.

"Dimes, are you in there," a loud squeaky voice penetrates his 9 inch wooden door. "Meow, meow..." Penelope continues as the White Rastafarian has to again become invisible. He and Ralph Ellison know about becoming invisible; he is now walking the plains of etherealness searching for a free land away from debt.

## Belly Blues

a man understands when it's all over/ no more love left/ not even if you had/ a four leaf clover/  
so I roam like rover/ try to keep sober/ for the pain never seems to go away/ 'cuz the other day/  
I saw her with her new man/ walking hand-in-hand/ shocked by her belly/ injected into grand/  
& under that circumstance/ I overheard about their wedding dance/ only being a couple months  
away/ & now alone I pray/ that she'll again be mine/ with all our bad left behind/ 'cuz in my  
mind/ I know that she still loves me/ why she got with him/ is beyond me/ so I live alone/  
trying to overcome our endless disputes/ & she lives in anger/ swollen by her belly blues

she used to be mine  
our love once preserved like wine  
& now I would give up every dime  
to be the father of  
her belly blues...(x2)

in any relationship/ there's always a doubt/ ss trust in full effect?/ as we silently pout/ unknowing  
if unfaithfulness/ is part of the game?/ staying up all night/ just to hear/ if she whispered his  
name/& if she did/ nothing will ever be the same/ so I try to tame/ my mothafuckin' emotions/  
add security to her devotion/ but the motion/ has already been set forth/ so I stare straight ahead/  
like I was headed north/ through the fog and morning dew/ 'cuz I can only picture her being all  
wet/'cuz of her belly blues

she used to be mine  
our love once preserved like wine  
& now I would give up every dime  
to be the father of  
her belly blues...(x2)

what's a man to do/ when love is hidden beneath the anger/ 9 months of contemplation and pain/  
unless revoked by the hanger/ & how do I untangle/ & approach it with the right angle/ 90  
degrees of her belly blues/ as I recline into obtuse/ to deliberately use/ the only words I have to  
profuse/ for she's still my passion & my fuse/ to continually light up my life/ 'cuz if she was my  
baby's momma/ the next step would be/ to make her my wife/ our vows sworn to be upheld  
under the eyes of god/ & we'll watch the grass grow together/ from the freshly put sod

she used to be mine  
our love once preserved like wine

& now I would give up every dime  
to be the father of  
her belly blues...(x3)

she used to be mine  
used to be mine

## **Keg**

Professor Jazz only came because he promised his students he would come to their graduation. Graduation night meant graduation party meant graduation juice. So, he stands by the keg in the backyard as young men and women and some of their siblings enjoy the celebration of four long years of education. Professor Jazz told his wife he'd be home early. He had promised his students he would come to their party only if they graduated with honors. So, he stands by the keg pouring himself and others bitter juice into red plastic cups. The students begin telling themselves that Professor Jazz was invited to help control their celebratory drinking and thus have begun calling Professor Jazz the 'Gatekeeper of the Keg.' As more graduates, family, and friends show up, Professor Jazz keeps pouring into his cup and into new cups arriving. As the night progresses, Professor Jazz starts talking to himself: "Leroy, why you leaving?" "Son, you don't need to go to Vietnam," "Daddy will be there for you." "Yes, I'm not your real dad, but I love you like my own son." The graduates, family and friends close the glass sliding door leading to the backyard. One of the father's ask: "Son, is that guy pouring the keg one of your professors?" The son shrugs, "no, I think he teaches at the community college."

## Hue Man

“I am you. You are me. I am also He. The Shepard raising bastard flock grazing in the streets.” –  
Saul Williams, *from The Dead Emcee Scrolls*

i am hue man  
bright light of colors  
born to be condemned  
for worshipping dollars  
trying to make amends  
for having ring around the collar  
as perfection is permeated  
by image imagined into imagery  
we are fictionally constructed  
to balance egocentric symmetry  
with illusions asking for pleas  
of security securing geometry  
praying upon our knees  
that our credit is approved  
to purchase a lifetime  
we now consider screwed  
but, the booze  
is filtered 80 proof  
to keep us addicted  
& sunlight from sunray  
is well scripted  
by meteorologists who foretell  
our horoscopes  
as once the rain fell  
& an ark carried our hopes  
inside an ancient book  
that has learned to sell  
its salvation with a faithful hook  
as hue man ity has been mistook  
by acid rain shot inside veins  
the prick of a needle  
is what comforts the pain  
remembering the Beatles  
as Eleanor Rigby walks along Main  
but now the DJ scratches with needle  
to mix alternate realities  
Pink Moon Red Sky  
are the casualties  
of a hyphy movement on ecstasy  
so we graze the streets  
wishing for a lobotomy

to help us think clear  
12 steps, in 5 nights  
believing we're sober  
with a can of beer  
at our side  
& I still believe & confide  
I am hue man...

marching along dark streets  
with my strap  
& my flock  
isn't hip-hop  
not in 'bama, cali or wall street  
selling stocks  
cocking my cock  
is my chauvinistic reality  
time struck by belligerence  
beating a bitch down  
for a calamity  
is the bravado taught to young men  
as the disparity  
of what man or pimp is  
is the weight of a fist  
pussy banging without a kiss  
leaving in the middle of the night  
into the abyss  
as you tell your boys... "she got dissed..."

i am hue man  
before the times  
of Columbus  
& a statue of unliberty  
'cuz we have been trained  
to be pompous  
by a society  
believing in a jesus  
wearing a mullet  
on the corner of one's mind  
biting the bullet  
hoping to capture, to rewind  
essence & fabric of hue man ity  
galvanized by music  
hip-hop, hippity to the hip-hop  
hypocrite

i am hue man  
born of seeds & hips  
earth, water & stone  
balanced by  
sun & moon

## Kicking it like Bruce Lee

Zoo chuckles at Crunch wearing his black karate shoes, “where you get those mein?”

Crunch combing his afro smiles, “just kicking it bro!”

“What, you kicking it like Bruce Lee or something dawg?”

“Yeah, home fries. What about it?”

“Nothing dawg, you just look funny and all. Like you trying to be a black guru martial artist with a fro!”

Crunch’s eyebrows lift, “you know, I be kicking it with my Jeet Kune Do/ Bruce Lee Style/ make animals like you vile/ so Zoo, step off my shoes/ before I deuce you into chops/ with my *Enter the Dragon* woo/ so you wanna step to me/ you singing your own death song/ I got many styles/ to prove you wrong.”

Zoo nods. He comes forward with a flying kick that he has perfected since his black belt days in his early teens. Zoo lands a foot away from Crunch and begins his dissemination. “You might have many styles/ but I have the *Fist of Fury* bro/ whip yo’ ass for miles/ with my rapid flows/ you be like, take my ass back to Hong Kong/ send you in paramedics after my freestyle song.”

Crunch:

Yes, you might call the paramedics/ but I’ll call the dog pound/ Zoo so ugly & animalistic/ you only make barking sounds/ when you try to rap/ I be like *The Game of Death*/ put you into a lyrical trap/ trying to catch your last breath/ before I snap yo’ snout/ & Zoo will be out like Macbeth/ after this cyphering bout

Zoo:

What bout but an about/ is how I’ll cue you in/ Zoo *The Big Boss* with the Guinness Stout/ or sipping on gin/ is my mercurial nature/ my Gung Fu so wicked/ you’d think me a creature/ beating you like a game of cricket/ with my bo stick/ ‘cuz it’s very evident/ you can’t compete with my lyrics

Crunch shakes his head no. “Not even close. But, speaking of Bruce Lee, I got some mad Cheetohs on a flick. You got time to watch, Zoo?”

## The Deejay

His love of music- on the turntables, on car speakers, on his iphone or in video games, was what relaxed him. Smoking joints came by less frequently with a son to raise. His love became a steady income as he deejayed weddings, parties, or he just took inventory of songs he had and those he needed. Music was the father he never had. It rescued and gave him advice from Curtis Mayfield to Santana to Tupac. Music gave him college degrees and let him time travel. He syncopated and mixed tunes to amplify his cognizance of rhythms that were for singing, dancing, or boycotting worldly affairs.

[With his left hand on the cross fader, his right hand baby scratches forward]

An hour into a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and his iphone keeps buzzing. “Your son needs diapers. Pick some up.” The wedding party is entering soon and needs to be introduced. Buzzzz! Buzzzz! “Call me,” he quickly reads the text. Checking the batteries on his cordless mics, and making sure that all cords are connected he is about to lower the music to fade in the intro music. Buzzzz! Buzzzz! His phone vibrates on the table. He looks around and sees the wedding party still taking pictures outside. He quickly reaches for his phone, “Call me now or no son visitation tomorrow!” He doesn’t want to lose his temper. He needs to announce soon. He looks underneath the table for his backpack. He puts it on the empty seat next to him. He unzips it and reaches for the bottle. Damn...he looks around and sees a waiter walking nearby. He calls him over and asks for a small Collins glass with ice. The waiter brings him one and he pours his Chivas Royal into the glass. The scent relaxes him. His lips anticipate the taste. The phone buzzing again. He picks up the iphone and tosses it inside his backpack. His head shaking...a sip...another sip...ahhhh...now, a quick refill before he needs to announce.

[With his left hand on the cross fader, his right hand baby scratches in reverse]

Beep. “You have one saved message.” Click. “Thursday 1139pm: I don’t appreciate you not calling me back when I need to talk to you. If you don’t care about me, that’s fine, but this was about your son. You said you weren’t gonna be like your father, and always be around for him. So why the fuck aren’t you taking my calls! Ok, well don’t get mad when you need to pick him up and I can’t find my phone. Grow up!” Click. “You have no more saved messages.”

## No Jim Crow

searching for the stars in the sky/ not the ones on our flag/ the red, white & blue can't testify/  
how my pants sag/ as I promenade through this ghetto/ built by their fears/ my mind my ammo/  
to answer the sneers/ of their stereotyping frames/ my knowledge is encapsulated/ as they try to  
detain/ my mental wealth/ saying it's good for our health/ to stay away from politics/ as they try  
to enslave us with Ebonics/ try to hook us on phonics/ but phonetically we lyrically be/ set a  
black man free/ like Harriet Tubman/ away from the oven/ 'cuz Jesus is only/ a white man  
republican/ or the republic/ & religion is a white man's institution/ gone public/ so is there a  
solution/ to solving this shit/ & the Beatles sang "Revolution"/ a number one hit

never gonna be  
a white man's bitch  
no jim crow  
don't need capitalism  
to make me rich

never gonna be, never gonna be...

watching "The Price is Right"/ every morning/ without ever questioning why?/ with Bob Barker  
so uptight/ advocating to control the pet population/ was no surprise/ 'cuz this show sold  
America/ materialism up on stage/ viewers wanting the plethora to engage/ in a Donald Trump  
life/ having and having/ new cars, dish water & chandeliers/ so the wife could stay at home/  
surrounded by her white picket fence/ the husband off to work/ 'cuz nuclear families make sense/  
none of this single parenting/ 'cuz minorities are only inheriting/ stereotypes & death sentences/  
never meriting freedom from the chains/ 'cuz the lord's book/ only explains/ that slavery wasn't  
a thing of the past/ & now we have Eminem/ sailing the masts/ & black hip hop, the outkast/ not  
played by transcendental media/ 'cuz gentrification only keeps us in the past/ with Jim Crow the  
law of the land/ & the Black Codes still have presence/ in today's racial profiling/ so a diverse  
population isn't the essence/ of the masons at the white house/ 'cuz their white Jesus never  
sought repentance/ for the genocide of natives & African Americans/ it's only about white power  
being the subject in the sentence/ & their verb agreement is being/ making that capitalistic dollar/  
uncaring if colored folk still wear chains/ & you only hear malnourished babies holler/ as 80  
proof injects inside their veins/ from an alcoholic nipple/ as they only look at us with disdain

never gonna be  
a white man's bitch  
no jim crow  
don't need capitalism  
to make me rich

never gonna be, never gonna be

## “...Wealth”

wealth to be told/ wealth to be sold/ or wealth to expose/ is the wealth of a rose/ red & prickly/ a thorn to my prose/ ‘cuz I must flow quickly/ from head to toes/ ‘cuz MicCheckMike is on the mic/ & I’m about to unfold/ the white guy rapper with a baseball cap/ & no necklace with gold/ only denim jeans & a hemp bracelet/ is the haps/ of a contemporary hippie/ using WhatsApp/ ‘cuz lyrical white boy is rolling craps/ with improvised rhymes on the jiffy/ MicCheckMike always ready to give girls a hickie/ ‘cuz I’m free flowing like water/ inside your toilet flush/ I’ll always reappear hotter/ smoking that orange krush/ just to puff/ away the fumes/ this white boy rapper is more than enough/ to consume/ your spiritual wealth/ emancipated by a skateboard/ ‘cuz living is about good health/ or else, you’d be dead after this track....track...

## **Lotto Scratchers**

They sit around in the living room filled with couches, chairs, and portraits of children. The three older ladies sit drinking coffee and eating pan dulce. They do not talk but hold a penny in each of their fingers. They are busy lotto scratching their fortunes. A young girl in a white flowered dress sits next to them watching something on YouTube on her Ipad. The young girl looks at them each time they switch their cards. "Did you win this time, abuela?" She asks each time the eldest of the three grunts. "No mija" grandma replies. Silence again. The sounds of scratching take precedence over conversation and babysitting. The other two ladies also grunt and the little girl smiles. She knows that they don't mind she's watching rated R movies as long as they have something to scratch. One day she will also be allowed to buy a scratcher she thinks and hopes to buy her abuela that house in San Cabo she's always talking about. "I'm done and didn't even win five dollars," one of the other ladies replies. "I'm on my last one too," the other replies. "You need to have faith," grandma replies. "But, abuela," the little girl replies, "you said faith is for dumb people."

## **Zig Zags & Quarter Waters**

Jerome stands by the counter of La Bodega with his empty quarter water bottle. Men come in and buy cigarettes, lighters, Old E or Colt 45. Jerome moves aside as these men pay. Some ignore him. Others ask him about his father. Jerome shrugs his shoulders. Some give him advice to not be a father like his daddy someday. Others toss him a quarter or hand him their coins. Jerome watches the older young men outside sitting on the benches roll zig zags. His mother told him to stay away from those boys so he only watches them from inside the store. A young lady and girl walk in. Jerome looks away because the girl goes to his school. Both girls look at him and the little one asks him why he just stands there all day. Jerome puts his head down. The older girl tells the younger one to leave him alone. She says: "His daddy doesn't love him. He waits here to see if his daddy's car arrives across the street." Both the girls leave and Jerome counts the change in his hands. He buys a grape flavored quarter water. He will wait until his mother finishes work and comes for him. His mother said she only had two clients today. The store clerk doesn't say anything. He just makes sure Jerome moves aside when the customers come in.

## Chicken & Waffles

chicken & waffles on a Sunday night/ with maple syrup & Louisiana Hot Sauce/ remedies my  
hunger plight/ & Rob Bass on the jukebox/ rapping “It takes two to make things go right”/ like  
chicken & waffles/ grease & sweetness the Apostle/ of soul food cuisine/ add some chitlins &  
shrimp or just some greens/ to make Sunday night pristine/ or delve into some Jambalaya/ with  
Oshun & Yemaya/ peering over the dining room fixture/ families here are always taking pictures/  
of their generational family lines/ chicken & waffles/ o’ what a good time

chicken & waffles  
at your neighborhood Roscoe’s  
chicken & waffles  
chicken & waffles

chicken & waffles on the back porch/ mama in the kitchen rollin’ the dough/ the southern skyline  
a dying torch/ with the chicken gravy on the stove/ & me boys playing dominoes/ waiting for the  
first batch to be done/ sipping on Hennesey & rum/ while nibbling on crumbs/ of yesterday’s  
cornbread/ the scent of good times/ is about to begin/ with beat boxing & rhymes/ & mama  
dancing in the soul train line

chicken & waffles  
at your neighborhood Roscoe’s  
chicken & waffles  
chicken & waffles

chicken & waffles for breakfast, lunch, or dinner/ you can eat it all day/ deep fried into simmer/  
the chicken crispy & tender/ mash potatoes low on the blender/ or add some Cajun spiciness/ a  
soul food of Afro-Blackness Praxis to practice/ for generations to come/ ‘cuz there’s no  
malpractice with the tom-tom’s/ only southern soul food cuisine/ ‘cuz Forrest Gump can run/ &  
Bubba Shrimp is frying sardines

chicken & waffles  
at your neighborhood Roscoe’s  
chicken & waffles  
chicken & waffles

## Taco Truck

Rogelio cuts onions, tomatoes, lettuce, avocado, and jalapeno peppers before his customers' even wake up. In the twilight morning, Rogelio prepares himself for another sixteen hour shift. His own business- *Estrella's Taco Shop* is a fourteen foot long taco truck parked on the corner of two vacant lots opposite the downtown district. The vegetables and salsa must be prepped. The four plastic tables and chairs must be set up for his morning business. His cousin Esteban must remember to stop by their apartment and bring the marinated pork from the fridge after his night time security job. This glorious Friday depends on his cousin not forgetting the meat because his clients love to eat pork on Fridays. As Rogelio starts setting up the grill for the arrival of the pork, he finishes cutting the boneless chicken breasts into cubes, and marinating the carne asada with squeezed juice from oranges and sprinkling pepper and seasoning salt. Rogelio looks at a portrait of his daughter in a wheel chair. He hopes to one day be able to send enough money for her to have a chance to walk again. Sixteen hours he dedicates to her every day. A girl must enjoy walking on the beach he thinks as his first order comes in.

## **“...Track”**

track upon track upon track/ we travel/ endless miles carrying sacks/ upon the gravel/ trying to breathe through the cracks/ trying to unravel/ the fact that we are barely living/ above the poverty level/ & thanks for the charity giving/ or else I'd be in trouble/ out in the streets/ without a dime in my pocket/ we struggle through daily defeats/ & science isn't about rockets/ only about the track us mice have been given/ through bread & crumbs/ is our daily livin'/ sometimes rice, sometimes chicken/ but too much we fall behind/ lose our house & our credit/ & all EM can do is bust rhymes/ to get into heaven...heaven...

## The Hood/Ngh Templar

Orson McDaniel Hopkins Solomon III sits inside his college dormitory eating Captain Crunch. He reflects on his lineage. Not because he's taking a social studies class and he has an assignment on his family tree, but because he recently asked his mother who his father was. She told him:

Yo daddy was a soldier. He stood in line and fought in Iraq. He fought for the dignity of this country. He helped Harriet Tubman build the railroad. He sat in the back while Rosa Parks took his instructions. He said "He had a dream" before Martin Luther King Jr. ever said it. So, you better not go bad mouth him. He was a special man. He was born in the watts riots. He had destiny in him. He was born in war and died in war. Now, that's a soldier son!

Orson McDaniel Hopkins Solomon III rejoices in his father's legacy. I need to do something with my life too, he thinks. This college thing isn't panning out. I need to be a hero or something. My black people need me, he thinks, while munching on a second bowl of Captain Crunch. He burps and finishes rolling his dragon dice. He is finishing making a fifteenth level Paladin. His fighter will be a Templar knight and will crusade for the goodness of humanity, elven kind, dwarves, and others in the spectrum of human allegiance. His cell phone rings. It's his mother. He pauses and lets it ring a couple of times before answering:

"What you doing son? You not sitting at home playing Dungeons & Dragons again? You find a girl yet at the college. Cuz mama wants grandkids! You here that boy!"

"Yeah ma"

"So what's her name? Have her Skype me."

"It's too early ma'. I don't want to jinx it."

"Well hurry son. Knock her up. Who knows she might start seeing someone else while you sit at home eating Captain Crunch!"

"Ok, ma."

"Good son! Just promise me you're not wearing that white Ku Klux Klan robe anymore."

"It's a Templar Knight mom."

“Temple? Yes and don’t forget to go to church son! Or else you’d be one of those ungrateful niggas out there. Know Christ loves you.”

“Yeah, ma”

Orson McDaniel Hopkins Solomon III hangs up. He pours himself a third bowl. Where was I at, he thinks. Oh, yes, I gotta save my hood, he thinks. I am a Solomon. Solomon III, the next grand master Templar knight. Yes, I need to wash my Templar robe, he thinks, as his dungeon master will arrive soon.

## Senegal

Senegal left his beloved homeland because his footballing could not support a family of four younger sisters and a disabled father. His mother a part-time hotel worker could barely feed them all. Senegal who played football a couple of seasons on the Sub-20 national team for the country whose name he was blessed after had to jump ship during a tournament in Miami, Florida. He left his hotel in the early morning with another teammate who both had received \$35 US dollars the day before as pre-tournament wages. Senegal and teammate caught a cargo train headed for Jersey. Senegal had to make a decision of continuing his attacking mid-fielder position on the national team or escaping into the night to seek a better tomorrow for his family. His split chin and contagious smile would easily earn him a job in an Ethiopian restaurant. Each time the customers asked to turn the television set to a football game, Samuel Eto'o playing forward for Mallorca, Barcelona, Inter Milan, or Chelsea, Senegal would sneak in from his dishwashing room in the back to watch the game. His idolization of the Cameroonian footballer reminded him of the opportunity he let go to make minimum wage and to be able send money home and to buy a weekly phone card to talk to his mother and younger sisters. It has been six years now and his only touch of the spherical ball is the one he touches every day in his closet. His dreams of playing are tucked away beneath work uniforms and saved letters from his sisters. "Goal!!!!!! Eto'o!!!!!!" Senegal rushes from the dish room to see the replay. These moments have become many reminders of that long train journey in the night, and his youthful smile no longer the same.

## **An Evening with Miles**

Professor Jazz calmly whispers through brass  
echoing the resonance of ancient dust  
blowing years  
of his peoples slavery & humiliation  
into an audience  
that depicts his soul and blues  
as a historian writing a manuscript  
portraying an auction block  
where forefathers agonized  
after being sold....

he plays  
screeching note by note  
the turmoil's inside his veins  
twisting his trumpet into a pretzel  
crying for lost siblings  
blaring hysteria and sadness  
into a somber b flat note  
silently thumping rhythm  
with the blinking of his eyes  
dispersing tears  
the flavor of jazz...

he plays  
through moments of fear  
exasperated by empty lungs  
under hot lights  
rejuvenated by a crowd's applause  
understanding  
his mercy for vengeance  
is a solo  
that speaks  
the language of dreams...

calmly, he releases his chains  
stares at his shadow on stage  
& believes  
his silhouette  
has taught him  
to be free

## On the Lowdown

he lights  
remembering the dead  
so many zigzags  
on kitchen table,  
dirty ashtrays

] smeared lipstick  
on unlit roach

used condom  
preserving fatherhood  
] inside refrigerator

Curtis Mayfield  
& Rick James,  
"Super Negroes"  
] his Compton "Criptoknight"  
Blues

spinning vinyl  
without a sound  
with empty forty  
& lotto scratchers  
next to his drugged out ] bitch

## “...Heaven”

heaven/ is where them people went to/ from 9-11/ the US sweeping dust under its shoe/ covering up its dirt/ at the cost of families hurt/ from their beloved ones gone/ & all that is left is a sad song/ & a falsified commission report/ covering up their wrong/ with a document to abort/ that these people ever existed/ on highway to heaven/ their souls will be uplifted/ & all America can do/ is reminisce about such terrorism/ but Swift Knowledge rebukes white house terrorists/ masquerading under heroism/ calling it patriotism/ as brick by brick/ a city and livelihoods/ have to be rebuilt/ & it's never good/ when there's not enough room on a quilt/ to remember the names of those disappeared/ 'cuz the blood spilt/ stems generations deep/ Kennedy, Doctor King and Malcolm X/ were the first guinea pigs to peep/ into being assassinated/ by their own governing creeps/ & the sharpened blade of an axe has penetrated/ inside our veins/ blood loss for blood sport/ to extort/ those not wanted/ the idea of freedom & equality for all/ is an idea haunted/ by US masochism/ & the only rendition of justice/ is just us/ the kind sent to the back of the bus/ the immigrant and darker toned bunch/ and so finish your mothafuckin' Cheetohs/ cuz it your turn Crunch....crunch...

## Miss Emory Forecast

With dark shawl over her head, she sits on a plastic chair on her third floor balcony. She doesn't stare at the street below her filled with: children playing jump rope, the flower shop delivering bouquets, a group of neighborhood watch women staring at her from their front porch steps, nor any of the locals who take a quick glance at her before moving on with their daily routines. She wears her red flowered gown which most observers believe hasn't been washed in a couple of months. She is silent and looks into the cracks of the brick building next to her. Wind, rain, or bright sunshine is not enough to move her from her place. No one can recall seeing her eat or drink. She sometimes gets up and enters inside her flat then comes back and resumes her sitting position. Observers think that she at least has enough sense to use the toilet. Those who live close enough to her can view her holding an invisible infant. She raises this child to her nipples and appears to be humming quietly. The close observers watch during these feeding times. When she goes back to staring at the brick wall, they go back to their daily routines.

## **Da Hi Coon**

Professor Jazz Speaks  
William Henry Harrison  
Whig Party raccoon

### **Thug Sonnet #41: Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits**

oh, those pretty legs that are free to roam,  
when I cannot help but take a quick peek,  
am wondering if I can take you home,  
to spruce you into my ultimate freak,  
but please don't get me wrong, you are so fine,  
I'd bust caps on those who you want me to,  
lay them down six feet under the sunshine,  
so I can be yo' thug, an you my boo,  
aye me yo' captain'sailin' to your shore,  
and chide thy thighs wit my dark long paddles,  
for it is you who I want to explore,  
O'Where there art thongs, I must straddle,  
You be thy bootie which rides my stiffy  
give me a holler to break a fifty.

## “...Crunch”

He puts the last few Cheetos in his mouth. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Then he puts his pick into his afro and blows into his hands...eyes closing...head bobbing...silence from the other emcees as they also bob their heads in unison...

got to eat the last of my Cheetohs/ before I embark on this lyrical journey/ that we have gotten to know/ started with the word ‘Diplomatic’/ carried yonder on a gurney/ to an erratic innocence/ but the ‘polemics’ were not quite heavenly/ but tragically immense/ without a pretense/ & Mexicans are still climbing over a fence/ just to continue fulfilling their dreams/ the immigrant track to wealth/ is still being stitched at the seams/ and this nigga is crunching on Cheetohs/ instead of sipping on a forty/ ‘cuz Crunch dawg rhymes faster than speedos/ & MicCheckMike gives women hickies cuz he’s horny/ on his skateboard mobile/ but white boy rapper has skills/ to earthly dethrone/ anyone with a microphone/ & EM won’t get to heaven yet/ for he my boy & I don’t want to regret/ him not being here anymore/ so I rhyme to open doors/ feed niggas chicken and rice/ at my residential store/ uphold the honor of an emcee/ blessed with the love of the word/ ‘cuz from sea to sea/ I’ll be that adjective and verb/ that will get you through to the next day/ I’m not gangsta’ so I don’t need an AK/ only my true love for hip hop/ for my flow is nonstop/ & nonviolence is my crew/ because when I pop pop/ it’s the popcorn I give to you/ with some butter or without/ Crunch is on the mic/ howling like Scooby Doo/ but do you know my flavor?/ it’s sweet and spicy like grilled shrimp/ filled with images & fashionable décor/ dressed to impress unlike a pimp/ ‘cuz I don’t treat women as whores/ only with love and respect/ Crunch the lyrical Dillinger/ so don’t forget...mothafuckas’

## Unseen Traffic

a backpack ready to go/ with stilettos, photos & cash flow/ she now refuses the spotlight/ no longer wanting to be the star of the show/ on the poles are on their laps/ her life had been inventory/ with swallowed mishaps/ a part of her story/ as she once dilated a womb/ for an allegory of continued independence/ & now her body is found near a gutter/ the proof of the forensics/ was the only admittance/ that she had been strangled from behind/ hand cuffs & rope marks/ sounds as bitter as lime/ but putting the tape on rewind/ the security camera caught her pimp/ inserting his manhood up her crease/ she was tied up with bloodstains on her knees/ 'cuz she wanted to leave & be free/ from the nightly scores/ of selling her pussy on the streets

she wanted to get away  
live her dreams  
be a famous model  
with bling bling up the seams  
& now she's only remembered  
for her moaning & her screams...(x2)

she died a lonely death/ no family at her funeral/ an ordinary casket due to no wealth/ her life a statistic/ to add to the numerals/ of trafficked women/ dying over here as sex slaves/ cuz domestic violence has no beginning/ & no end to this trade or charade/ as countries refuse to participate/ in stopping these crimes/ & poor Eva's pimp/ not enough evidence to incarcerate/ as he continues to lure women/ with imaginary jobs/ brings'em over to the states/ & their livelihood he robs/ so many women trafficked on the daily/ & without any protection/ only a whispered Hail Mary/ is not enough for a greedy erection/ & so death & abuse can't be parried/ or their numerous STD infections

she wanted to get away  
live her dreams  
be a famous model  
with bling bling up the seams  
& now she's only remembered  
for her moaning and her screams...(x2)

from travesty to travesty/ 3<sup>rd</sup> world women are shipped in as cargo/ for a patriarchal majesty/ to overlook a supply n' demand embargo/ as buyers try to emulate the lifestyle of the Great Gatsby/ but paying for a sex slave/ is still a crime that should be punished/ in this land of the brave/ as America's image refuses to be tarnished/ by continual overlooking of these crimes/ as they never existed/ but as media hits primetime/ condolences to these families are misfitted/ as these women are rather accused of prostitution/ then as victims/ yet, what is the solution/ when the system is set up for pimping/ & the evolution of our next generations/ are being influenced to mistreat women/ so ask a preacher for a revelation/ the same patriarchy upholding Manifest Destiny/ to figure out the religious equation/ that men rule & seek out polygamy/ as they keep shipping in these vaginal products/ 'cuz they see women as objects/ so from travesty to travesty/ countries continue to act pompous/ as if nothing occurs/ & there's no need for justice

she wanted to get away  
live her dreams  
be a famous model  
with bling bling up the seams  
& now she's only remembered  
for her moaning and her screams...(x3)

## **HisJazzRaptoMe**

Professor Jazz waits for her return. He has been waiting for eleven years now. Today, he is cooking her favorite soup. The aroma should have her running through the front door any minute now. Tomorrow, he will read for her their wedding vows. He wants her to know he will always be there as promised. Yesterday, he almost took down their pictures hanging in the living room wall. But, he remembered every memory inside those frames. Today, he will stop drinking. He had promised her for so long. Tomorrow, he will clean out his bar and dispose his bottles into boxes for disposing. Yesterday, he drank a whole bottle of cognac and two glasses of red wine. Today, he will play their wedding song which they first heard when they met in Kansas City. Tomorrow, he will visit their son's grave. He will play his trumpet one last time. Yesterday, he drank gin and whisky and a couple of Martinis to celebrate her birthday. Today, he hasn't gotten out of bed, but a Bloody Mary is calling his name. Tomorrow, he will go see the doctor as he had promised her. Yesterday, he didn't cancel his appointment or neither did he care. By his fourth drink, he began talking to the pictures on the wall. Professor Jazz will stop drinking today, tomorrow and yesterday.

## **Bonus Track: In the Dayz of Wayback**

“Em, you got the first verse. Yo’ Rabioso! Start that mothafuckin’ track!” Crunch puts his pick inside his afro turf dome while MicCheckMike bumps his head to the beat.

Em:

back in the dayz of wayback/ joyriding in my Maverick/ bumping tunes on the 8-track/ cuz the radio has static/ & can’t listen to DMC or Roxanne Shante/ ‘cuz freestyling is my habit/ today & everyday/ my verse is like magic/ a stress free getaway/ from the landlord or mischievous police/ dropping dimes as I pray/ for another miracle feast/ not knowing who, what, or how/ but as faithful as a priest/ I continue to plow/ shuffling through the break beats/ to disavow/ that Em isn’t a thug or criminal/ just a hip hop artist on the border of subliminal/ so you know my flow/ is congenital/ born inside a chateau/ with French bloodlines back in the day/ you wanna battle me/ you better run away/ aint that right MicCheckMike/ take this microphone away...

MicCheckMike:

I’ll take this microphone away/ & stash it inside my backpack/ & skateboard to state throughout the United States/ & restate the Hip Hop Union of Address/ without a speech/ ‘cuz all the girls I quickly undress/ like a president ready to be impeached/ for bedroom misdemeanors/ & his lie was he hired a pipe cleaner/for his presidential parts of speech/ ‘cuz if I was president/ back in the day/ MicCheckMike would only be a resident/ of Pelican Bay or Alcatraz/ cuz a white boy on a skateboard/ is only known as white trash/ so hand me a hefty bag/ & I’ll clean yo’ shit up/ & my pants I sag/ ‘cuz it’ll be easier to kiss my ass/ when all my homies you call fags/ cuz they show their butt crack lines/ & hip hoppers are doing time/ ‘cuz the United Snakes of Amerika/ still want to lynch my darker skinned brothers/ but Crunch please tell these Whigga Party members how we do/ & light the microphone fuse to refuse...

Crunch:

I light the microphone fuse to refuse/ the genocide of millions of jews/ back in the day/ as history can’t be reviewed/ high school books tell one point of view/ of their governing forefathers/ of a stolen America/ so why even bother to refute/ the United States of Gomorrah/ when terrorism is how this country disputes/ the evils of a diaspora/ & slaves shipped to this governing plantation/ to crucify family values/ was the beginning manifestation/ of making us shallow/ with a self-made man success story/ a biblical allegory/ of Nathan’s prophecy against David/ a government statutory/ of citizens needing affidavits/ to prove they own themselves/ if not the puppet master imbues us with capitalism/ & all we have left to choose/ is nothing but fascism back in the day/ also known as today

DJ Rabioso:

Sorry but I gots to get in this too/ yall rapping about politics/ when back in the day it was homemade brew/ DJ Rabioso taking the mic to sample in some statistics/ about what hip hop can do/ to stop 5-0s from canceling local shows/ I select records for the crew/ to deploy antonyms and synonyms through ebb & flow/ just the beginning of hip hop consciousness/ & emcees set the stage/ for vinyl viciousness/ scratched & crossfaded into perfection/ simmer break beats & violins/ into a resurrection/ of a hip hop rebirth/ & lyrical confessions of living on mother Earth/ Dj Rabid known as Rabioso/ on the wheels of steel/ gunning down Mafiosos/ who consider themselves too poderoso!..

Crunch:

Oh shit! Rabioso on the mic/ giving the people what they like

Em:

Without a violent fight/ like Ghandi he resuscitight/ through oral scripture

MicCheckMike:

& MicCheckMike will end this picture/ with a sonic boom/ view the panorama/ & consume lyricism/ from Earth to Jupiter to your Mama's.

Crunch:

Your Mama's? MicCheckMike, you just killed it!

Em:

It's all good. Rabioso, did you get a good take?

There is silence as DJ Rabioso looks over the DAT system. He slowly smiles and starts to rub his head.