THE BRONX COCKED BACK AND SMOKING MULTIFARIOUS PROSE PERFORMANCE

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THE BRONX COCKED BACK AND SMOKING
MULTIFARIOUS PROSE PERFORMANCE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts
in
Creative Writing:
Poetry Concentration / Literature Focus

by
Alex Avila
June 2016
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MULTIFARIOUS PROSE PERFORMANCE

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by
Alex Avila
June 2016
Approved by:

Juan Delgado, First Reader

Dr. Kathy Ervin, Second Reader
ABSTRACT

*The Bronx Cocked Back And Smoking* is a collection of multifarious prose performances recounting the historical, personal, social, political and cultural constructs of a city birthed by violence. This body of work is accompanied by video, audio, photography, and theatre performance texts. St. Mary’s Housing project, in the Bronx, is the foundation where most of this literary work takes place. The modern day Griot (storyteller) is a Poet, guiding his audience through the social inequalities and disparities that plague St. Mary’s community. The Poet shares personal traumatic insights while simultaneously utilizing writing as a form of survival to the conditions of the Bronx. This multi-platform performance highlights the metaphorical and physical concerns with the cycle of violence. This question is answered through the Poet’s choice by selecting the pen over the gun.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Juan Delgado and Kathryn Ervin for your patience’s, guidance and commitment through this entire process you both help me see the light – it has been an honor. I like to give mad shouts out to the entire St. Mary’s Housing Project in the Bronx. Mad love to Mia Avila for holding me down throughout the years, David J. Kalke for instilling principles and values I practice ‘til this day, the entire Avila - Clotter – Mcdowell –Ragsdale – Stone – Ruff – Arzu – Buffong – Williams – Browns and Carter family. Yo Kenwood, Butter, Q, JJ, Blue, Titi - Stacey - Rich, Mrr. Red, Tone, Suga J, Jimbo, Melissa, Al Uno, BX Tim, Ray, Crazy Cynthia, Fly Guy, Big G, Stan, and all of my blood relatives out in the world. To all the SCIPP families and friends, The Fellas, Black Scholars Matter, CHICCCAA, All Saints Lutheran, LCM, 4e, Central City Luther Mission originals. The fam living in Iowa City – Rob, Sara, Valarie and anyone I couldn’t fit on this list. Much respects to Dottie for getting me the hook-up and Andrew in the English department, Dr. Terry Ballman and President Morales. Dr. Lewis King, Jean Kayano, Penny Newman, Kevin Cosney, Miriam Nieto, Rosemary and the fam with all respects. I want to give thanks to Daniel Walker, Ed Gomez, Lenard Lopez, and Mark Henry. Michelle Bracken, Rosie Alonso, Chance Castro, Michael Cooper, Elisha Holt, Orinda Pacheco, Tristan Acker, Lawrence Eby, KL Straight, Alex Avila, Nikki Harlin, Tim Hatch, Allyson Jeffredo, and Bolin Jue. To Chad Sweeney for your energy, creativity and support you dug us out the madhouse. Respects to Sunny for wearing ten different hats and helping us
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AP
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Building Legos

My brother and I were leaving the bodega. Our hands filled with Lemon Heads, Push Pops, and Now and Laters. Crack cocaine bathed every crevice and corner of the Bronx. Salsa, Reggae and Hip Hop vibrated the concrete jungle moving its residents with a symphonic spiritual hypnosis. Two blocks from our house we bopped our heads towards the sounds of the BX streets; jumping and kicking our feet with excitement. The St. Mary’s housing community has its moments when it felt good to live and grow up there. Across the street a young man yells at a group of people standing in front of him. We stop. PLAH – PLAH – PLAH – PLAH gun shots sang from the young man yelling at the group in front of him. Mothers with children in their strollers run and scream. The sky’s clear on this Saturday morning. The group in front of the yelling gunmen disperses like the pigeons above the train tracks. My body freezes like a coquito icy. I was seven, the oldest. My younger brother Jimmy says, “Run Alex, run”. PLAH – PLAH – PLAH the yelling man shoots his gun again laughing. He taunts everyone who runs for safety, “THAT’S RIGHT . . . RUN, CHUMPS”. We get to the twentieth floor of our building soaked in summer sweat. I tell Jimmy, “Shhh or no more
candy”. We enter our two bedroom apartment smelling with frying onions, green peppers, cilantros and eggs. We say nothing to our parents who are in the kitchen speaking Garifuna (a 500 year old language which both my brothers and I could not speak or understand). Jimmy in front of the television argues with our other younger brother, Tony, over Lemon Heads. On a bed that four of my brothers and I share, I write a poem about the shooting. I would write about many more shootings, stabbings, girls, fights, dreams, jokes, dances, sports, and lots more. It was therapy. It was a way to survive. These are some of the experiences I share today in the MFA program to complete my thesis project.

This statement of purpose along with my manuscript will explore the sociocultural anthropology of my narrative prose from its: historical violence, African ritual, musical influences of jazz, funk, blues, salsa, merengue, and Hip-Hop, theory, linguistic instrument, and methodologies of survival. This work will be described from its inspirations, functions, and its intentions. My work is presented through hypermedia and multifarious prose performance. For the sample poems, I will provide an analysis of visual, textual and metaphoric symbolic elements. Each media platform serves a purpose to restore, document, and educate readers about how the conditions of St. Mary’s exist on a continuum. Some of the lyrical, musical prose pieces serve to engage the audience in the traditional African ritual performed by the Griot, storyteller, in a communal collaboration known as call and response. The call and response method is used to bring the characters alive. The videos use the Griot’s method
of storytelling to show the characters in their environment highlighting their social issues. One of the methods in which the photographs help to serve is to document real people and real locations. Each medium contributes to raising social consciousness reminding us of its perpetual cycle. In this manuscript readers will have the opportunity to witness the evolution of each piece with its errors, changes, and manifestations.

**Press Play To Hear Building Legos below:**
Building Legos (Photo Poem)

Boy’s Legos Build St. Mary’s Brick by block building blocks minds scaffold dreams with pencils sketch an emergency exit prop door open with Crayola box vomit words off rooftops let letters fall on winter spring forward burning ideas like the secret to staying young is building words on a page so that his inner childhood can remain unharmed on a stage built by Legos
This intermixed – media using photography and text in *Building Legos* is a **Multifarious Prose Performance** (MPP). There are four pictures blended together which is called quadruple exposure. Each picture builds a story. The first picture has three buildings where I grew up in St. Mary’s Housing projects. The second picture is of me sitting down and reflecting on my past. The third picture is a metal staircase; in the Bronx we called it a fire-escape but in this piece it represents escape. The fourth picture is of Lego’s replacing the clouds on top of St. Mary’s buildings. The text builds on the picture’s ideas capturing the thought process, music, and emotion of the young boy who wrote as a form of survival.

This text is creating a style of repetition which has been an African ritual used by the *Griot* (the storyteller) for centuries. The *Griot* educated, informed, and empowered tribes through storytelling. Some of the techniques the *Griot* mastered in storytelling were repetition, the use of allegory, symbol, call and response, and percussive instruments like the drum (which focused on rhythm and maintaining a beat during the performance). This same technique is how Spiritual Hymns, Blues, Mambo, Salsa, Merengue, Ragtime, Jazz, Rock, and Hip Hop were birthed.

African rituals and traditions have been used throughout the Americas to create music, linguistically code switch, food, art, fashion, theatre, and more. In my poem *Building Legos* I use the phonetic sound of [bi:] as a drum beat; boy’s, building, builds, box, burning, brick, and built. The phonetic percussion sound of [bi:] that we hear in *Building Lego’s* keeps the tempo and rhythm together. I
repeat the word build because like the Griot, I am interested in the community leaving with a symbol or a message. The message in Building Legos is that something is being built and needs to be protected. Repetition is used to maintain a rhythm and conveys a message. The word build in addition to the percussive sound [bi:], are intentional from a social cultural and spiritual context.

In the book The Drama Of Nommo by Paul Carter Harrison he writes:

Rhythm is the vibratory shock, the force which, through our sense, grips us at the root of our being. It is expressed through corporeal and sensual means; through lines, surfaces, colours, and volumes in architecture, sculpture or painting; through accents in poetry and music, through movements in the dance. But, doing this, rhythm turns all these concrete things towards the light of the spirit. In the degree to which rhythm is sensuously embodied, it illuminates the spirit. (p. 45)

This passage discusses repetition becoming rhythmic using vocal sounds, drums or whatever instrument can make a rhythm. The rhythm discussed in this passage, if done correctly, can connect to the audience as well as the performer spiritually. Like in the book The Drama Of Nommo, the poem Building Legos is sustaining rhythm through percussive sound and word.
The *Building Legos* poem is also a performance piece. This entire piece performs on multiple levels; from the photo, the text, even the stage – creating a **Multifarious Prose Performance** (MPP). The poem was inspired reflecting on the violence of St. Mary’s when I was younger. The poem *Building Legos* is a response to the violence I witnessed growing up in St. Mary’s housing projects. Violence continues to plague St. Mary’s Housing project, today. Violence has become a ritual in poor urban communities, still, today. The poem is an answer to the violence and social inequities that infects St. Mary’s community and abroad.

One of the ways I escaped the horrid conditions while living there was through poetry. Writing served as a tool to reflect and reassess who I wanted to become as an individual trying to make sense of my surroundings. My younger brother, Jimmy, and I witness a shooting as children which have had long lasting impacts as we grew older. This poem is an acknowledgement of this experience.

**Once Upon A Bronck**

*The sounds of their feet grew closer with each turn. The Black dummy is on the run again* are words pounding the back of my sweaty neck. *The twins are quick. Puerto Rican Joe is slow and carries the weight of both twins. A head fake breaks the chase temporarily. My feet spin moves by a wooden green bench. My eyes scan the park savagely like pigeons looking for cover from a falcon. We run towards the flagpole. Teachers, junkies, dealers are all distracted with their own issues. My mouth and throat dries with fear. My body jerks left and fakes right.*
My plea for help drown out by the hundreds of elementary kids at P.S. 5, running everywhere. It is lunch time. The Bronx is more jungle now than ever before. I have become prey to children who have learned to survive in the Bronx with their fists. One of the Puerto Rican twins kicks his leg towards the back of my ankle. Gravity abandons my entire body. My arms swim through humid air. I try to catch the edge of a cement block, holding up the American flag. Body thrust forward. Fingers miss the edge by inches. There is a loud smack. Head splits open. My body rolls over to find the American flag standing over me waving with arrogance among a seasonal breeze. Blood runs into my eyes. Everything goes red. My face is warm and wet. No tears. The only fear running through my bleeding skull is picturing my father beating me for losing another fight. Later, I will beat myself up for not being able to speak English like the other kids and learning to fit in. I promised myself to develop skills that would allow me to survive the Bronx.

My manuscript reflects multiple aspects of violence. Violence could be found on buildings in the Bronx and on the physical bodies of some of my characters in my manuscript. Growing up in the Bronx many people blamed violence on the drug epidemic, Hip Hop and Rock & Roll culture, lack of resources, slumlords who burned down their own buildings for insurance money, homelessness, poor education systems, and the list goes on. Some may say that America was birthed on violence and that the Bronx is just a product of its founding father. Perhaps getting beat up at P. S. 5 elementary school, for not being able to speak English, is part of a historical trend that goes back to the
Native Americans in the early fifteen and sixteen hundreds. The violence that has haunted me growing up in the Bronx, along with the characters in my pieces learned this from our father’s fathers and the fathers before them. Here is a poem I wrote that summarizes the creation of the Bronx in the sixteen hundreds:

**Press Play To Hear Once Upon A Bronck Below:**

![Play Button]

**Once Upon A Bronck (Poem)**

Rananchqua  
The Bronx  
home to Lenape  
whose blood color the soil brown  

rich iron fed  
trees greened  
fall  
red  
brown  
yellow
leaves

Jonas Bronck
peace sully
musket-fire volleys

Matrilocals
divided
like the Aquahung River

red black Mesingw's face
tear
drop

smallpox
put potato colored skin in pine box

Turtle Wolfe Turkey
met by Fire Drills
showered in gun powder

In the middle of St. Mary's project
The Lenape, Native Americans, occupied what was once known as Rananchqua. Jonas Bronck who was a European settler arrived in Rananchqua and believed that the Lenape were savages. Bronck was convinced since the Lenape could not speak the European language, did not comprehend the European culture, and especially did not follow the European Christian faith that the robbing, killing, and enslavement of the Lenape people were justified. Jonas Bronck and his army would exploit the Lenape of their resources, eventually murdering and exiling the Native Americans from their land. Jonas mission would be praised as such a success that Rananchqua land would eventually be called Bronck’s Place. After many years Bronck’s Place would later be called simply the Bronx.

Rananchqua
The Bronx
home to Lenape
whose blood color the soil brown

This stanza opens with a setting (Rananchqua), characters (Lenape) and a murder (blood color the soil brown). The second stanza is an exposition of what kinds of people were Lanape, Native Americans:

rich iron fed
trees greened
fall
red
brown
yellow

This stanza could be read as the Lenape people taking care of the land through blood sweat and tears. Another reading of this stanza is how their actual blood fed the trees through the changing seasons.

The next line is just a word leaves (11). Leaves refer to the actual leaves on a tree changing colors in the last stanza during the fall season. Another reading of the word leaves (11) could be seen as a conclusive choice for the Jonas Bronck and his army. Since the Lenape did not possess the technology to defeat Jonas Bronck, this left Mr. Bronck and his army to exploit the Native Americans. The next few lines of the poem particularly 21 and 22 describe briefly
what finally broke the Native Americans. Their breaking point was due to illness contracted from the settlers like smallpox (21) and being murdered - potato colored skin in pine box (22). The Native Americans were not given a proper burial. Many were burned, left to rot on land, or tossed into the Aquahung River (which today is named the Bronx River). I am using pine box (22) as symbolic and metaphoric meaning.

Violence became the foundation of the America’s, especially the Bronx. Therefore, the blood sweat tears of the Lenape still remain in the soils of the Bronx. The last few lines of the poem represent the ghost of the Lenape in the form of crying wind (27). This ghost, I believe, still haunts the Bronx today through the virus of violence that has birth not just my neighborhood but the entire nation. This virus of violence is fed by currency, valued resources and the exploitation of the poor. A part of this manuscript is a reflection of how this ghost haunts the people of the Bronx today. Once Upon A Bronck helps set the tone for my manuscript. This poem is focused less on rhythm and more on connotations of words as key images and symbols. The Bronx was built by bloodshed and slavery. Thus, getting my head split open at P.S. 5 elementary school, in the second grade, represented a cycle of violence passed down from our founding fathers. I was different like the Lenape people. Therefore I was attacked under the notion of power, language and popularity.
St. Mary’s Stepchild

When I was in the Bronx recently, I took a photo of a young Black boy drying himself with a towel. He was at the Bronx public park which had a pool. He gave me a suspicious look. This look has become a custom and a common practice for people growing up in the Bronx. His look felt ancient. It was probably a look the Lenape people learned to develop with Jonas Bronck and his army: a look the African slaves must have brought with them from the continent of Africa, a look I wore many times getting in an elevator, a train, bus, especially in nice White neighborhoods. This look has been captured by African rituals through storytelling, theatre, music, poetry, and art. The look is one that studies someone or something. It raises concerns. The look questions trust, safety. I try to capture this look in my Multifarious Pros Performance called St. Mary’s Stepchild.

Press Play To Hear St. Mary’s Stepchild Below:
St. Mary’s Stepchild (Photo Poem)

St. Mary’s Stepchild is an accumulation of American historical experiences captured through photo, color, theory and African ritual in American art forms like jazz. There are five photos working together in this piece. These photos are not working together like the piece in Building Legos where the pictures are blended together creating multiple layered exposures. In these photos section are cut out and blended on their edges creating more of a digital collage. The flag in background is combined with a grunge silhouette creating a dark flag for the tone.
of the piece. When I looked at this young Black child, I began to recall the incident I encounter at P. S. 5 elementary school when my head was split open. This is why I have the flag waving above the child. The chopped tree in center is an allegory to all the people who were killed in order to build America (Native Americans, Africans, indentured servants, also women and children of poor immigrants). I wrapped the young Black boy with a river of water symbolizing the continuum of American violence in the addition to making reference to the Aquahung River (where the Lenape people used the river to fish and bathe). I kept the young Black boy and the brick fence he sits on from the original picture.

The lyrical poem is covered with theories of consciousness and Jazz influences such as lines like *Baby Boom Bloom*. Cabell "Cab" Calloway III was a masterful jazz musician and orchestra band leader. Mr. Calloway could make words, sounds; rhythms swing with style and still maintain the colloquial language of Black people intact. The sounds and the way the words swing in this poem stylistically are allusions to Cab Calloway. It’s an African ritual sophisticated by African American culture. The lines *keep cover / lay low / picaninni nap / sleep deep poppy root* (1, 2, 3, 4) are allusions to W. E. B. Du Bois essay in the *The Souls of Black Folk* on how Black people live with a double consciousness in America. Du Bois article is about how Blacks can never really be themselves in American society. Blacks have to cover and protect who they are; this is why I wrote *keep cover / lay low* (1, 2). The lines, *picaninni nap / sleep deep poppy root* (3, 4) describes how racial terms are deeply rooted in
American culture. The next line *shoot weeds* (5) is code for people of color that are like weeds being killed in an American garden. The death of Black people by the hands of police today is connected to the death of Lenape people whose murders were the result of order and power dynamics. I took parts of W. E. B. Du Bois theory mixed with Black American culture today and covered it with the spirit of Cab Calloway’s swing jazz to create an African ritual or lyrical didactic poem. Like in the picture, the text is a collage of theories, African rituals, and historical Black American moments.

Freddy Flip Time

_The rent is going up. Rent notices plastered throughout St. Mary’s housing project. The grief in my mother’s face tightens a muscle in my chest. My hands reach for a banana in the afternoon smoking kitchen. The Ol’ Heads used to pay my friends and I ten bucks to stuff bananas in tailpipes to block the car’s engine’s exhaust. At the age of nine I was good at this. Today I was doing it for free. “Mami, voy abajo para jugar basketball”, I say to my mother rushing out the apartment towards the elevator in basketball shorts with a couple of bananas in hand. I am calm but the anger in my chest pounds through the veins on my neck. We were on welfare recycling and patching up old clothes with six people living in a three bedroom apartment. My body explodes out the opening elevator door. The Sunday morning sun feels like a used oven. I walk fast and quiet. On my left a bootlegger is calling me._
“Young blood, Young Blood, ey –YOUNG BLOOD” he yells at me. I ignore him and focus on my mission. “Wanna hear a poem?” I stop with warm bananas in my hand.

“What”, I ask confused.

“A poem about Pettee Peako”, he responds with a suspicious grin. “I wrote it in jail. I want to know what you think about it.” The bootlegger reads his poem with rhythm and style sauced in street flavor. The poem is filled with repetition, music, and a story about a young man who made a mistake landing him in jail. My face flushes with amazement. My mouth opens without purpose only to expose my astonishment. “I know what you are about to do with that banana young blood. If you don’t wanna end up like Pettee Peako just give me one those bananas and you eat the other.” Too shocked to debate, I follow orders. This cripple who walks with a bad left leg and wooden cane feels like a superstar to me. I scan his thin muscular body and smooth shiny black bald head and say to myself, “but he don’t look like no poet.” The bootleggers name was Blue. He was officially the first person to introduce me to poetry. Blue was our version of the Griot for St. Mary’s project. He was an ex-con-pimp-drug user-drug dealer who had been in and out of jail for decades. He retired his hard crime days to sell bootleg; dvds, cds, glasses, and watches. In the play I have written called St. Mary’s: Return of the Sun, which is also part of my manuscript, Blue is a character played by Freddy Flip Time.
Freddy Flip Time: Playwright and Theatre Performance Sketch

What time is it?

Freddy Flip Time..

He sold watches by 3\textsuperscript{rd} ave

On 149\textsuperscript{th} street

\textit{I got your Rolex}

\textit{Rolex- Rolex}

\textit{that'll make your wrist Boflex}

\textit{and get any Mamacita to stop on the drop of a dime to ask you or the time.}

\textit{I got that Movado}

\textit{to add to your bravado…}

\textit{Como no..}
Un flaco
Y su piel was a bit blanco
A Boricua
who wore a do-rag on his head
trying to discipline his natural curls to wave
like the Atlantic ocean
or better yet like those black kids from Morehouse’s projects

What time is it?
Freddy Flip Time..

Puerto Rican flag tattooed across his chest
Black Panther fist on his right arm

Watches – come get your watches..
They’ll make your kids look cool

Going to school
I got everything from Mickey Mouse, Batman, and even that
Wolverine fool.
Como no..

He kept a fresh a haircut.
His lineup was straighter than a #2 train
going from the Bronx into the tunnels of Manhattan.

You found Freddy Flip
Uptown         Downtown       all over town
with his blue baggy jeans
New York Knick’s jersey
and a Yankee fitted ball cap
carrying a black brief case.

His watches never worked past two weeks
but peep
he made you feel good in the few moments he hollered at you in
the streets.

What time is it?
Freddy Flip Time..

_Pero coño    Mamacita    ven pa’ca_

*Did your man forget to call you beautiful today?*

*Let me help put that frown away.*

*I gotta watch for you worn by Queen Elizabeth herself*

*_pero you’re much     much        more gorgeous     de verdad_*
I lay this on your wrist and with your chemistry it’s like a time bomb,
she smiles.

The men will drop dead when it goes off boooomb!

I caught 2 heart attacks standing next to you now..

Como no…

In the gummy floored subways he called college kids looking for work “Mr. Wall Street”.

He told the shy heavy set girls on the bus stops how their dimples were deep enough to plant a seed and watch a flower grow.

Tourist brought watches from him because he made them feel right at home

He never sold cops or judges any of that fake stuff because they were sensitive you know.

No kids or family..

When Freddy Flip died hundreds came with their watches and when the Wall Street exec raised his watch at the funeral and asked the crowd

What time is it?
They responded

Freddy Flip ....

This theatre performance gets the character off the page and directly to the audience creating an even more intimate experience. The audience gets to witness simultaneously expressions, words, movement, sounds and share emotional experiences with the character.

The opening stanza “What time is it? / Freddy Flip Time..” (1,2) serves to alarm and inform the audience that a new character is taking over the stage. This intro also sets the tone and style of what kind of character is being presented which happens to be loud and invasive. Most importantly, this first stanza helps to set up a *call and response* between the speaker and audience. This technique known as *call and response* is another African Ritual that serves to engage its audience in the narrative as they consciously or unconsciously wait for their cue. The speaker in this case plays the role of the *Griot*. The interaction from *Griot* to listener is one that helps with the narrative pace and rhythm. The next two stanzas help the audience with a setting and the character’s motive.

He sold watches by 3rd ave

On 149th street

*I got your Rolex*
Rolex- Rolex

that'll make your wrist Boflex

and get any Mamacita to stop on the drop of a dime
to ask you or the time.

In the two stanzas above the importance of rhyme is critical in sustaining the lyrical sounds throughout the performance. Each exact – internal – slant – and end rhymes like; Rolex Bolex (5,6,7), stop drop (8), on of (8) and dime time (9) is designed to preserve musically Black linguistics often traditionally used in the urban African diaspora.

Un flaco

Y su piel was a bit blanco

A Boricua

who wore a do-rag on his head

trying to discipline his natural curls to wave

like the Atlantic ocean

or better yet like those black kids from Morehouse’s projects

The fifth stanza above works as an exposition to give the listeners a mental visual of what Freddy Flip Time looks like. Although the actual person Blue who inspired this was an African American raised in the New York City jungle, I decided it was best to make him a skinny Puerto Rican with short wavy
hair, flaco (13) Boricua (15) natural curls to wave (17). This also brings into perspective that Black Americans and Puerto Rican Americans from New York also known as Nuyoricans share similarities in style and cultural features. In certain communities of New York City, especially the Bronx, you can find Puerto Ricans refer to themselves as Black Boricuas. This is an allegorical attempt to bridge the gap between Blacks and Latinos in the United States. Similar lines could be found in stanza seven with tattoos of his Puerto Rican flag (22) and Black Panther (23) fist on Freddy Flip Time’s body. The following stanzas are mostly monologues to help develop the character for the audience.

Pero coño  Mamacita  ven pa’ca

Did your man forget to call you beautiful today?
Let me help put that frown away.
I gotta watch for you worn by Queen Elizabeth herself
pero you’re much   much     more gorgeous     de verdad

Stanza twelve complicates the symbolic figure of the trickster and the archetypal empathic friend. Freddy Flip Time believes in both methods in order to sell his watches. He calls the young upset lady over with concern, Pero coño Mamacita ven pa’ca / Did your man forget to call you beautiful today? (45, 46).

Freddy Flip Time uses colloquial language seasoned with Spanglish to attract his customers. This use of linguistic style also helps listeners to hear the different
types of Spanglish coast to coast in the US. Freddy Flip Time performs with these goals in mind; one is to uplift the young lady and the second is to sell his watch. Freddy Flip Time also serves as a Shakespearean fool wise beyond his years. He is able to have an instantaneous impact on everyone he meets through his watches. Each message he leaves his customers is timeless.

When Freddy Flip died
hundreds came with their watches
and when the Wall Street exec raised his watch at the funeral and asked the crowd
What time is it?
They responded
Freddy Flip ….

The last stanza above sums up Freddy Flip Time's impact to the New York City community. This stanza brings the message home which is that we all need to use our time wisely. Freddy Flip Time is a mixture of mythologies, metaphors, symbols and rituals breaking the cycle of violence that once infected him in order to spread love. The Wall Street exec (67) at the funeral is an example of diversity in Freddy Flip Time’s customers. This touches on the issue of class. Class does not supersede death. Death is the common denominator of all life. This is what makes Freddy Flip Time’s character mystical and mythical. It is what we do with
time that lives on, not our bodies and this is the message from the Griot telling the story. When the Griot gets toward the last lines of the poetic performance, *What time is it? / They responded / Freddy Flip…* (69, 70, 71), the audience naturally finishes the line with one word *time*. The *call and response* in the end just reminds the audience how delicate time is for everyone. As the Griot on stage another one of my goals is to celebrate Blue’s life since I missed his funeral a few years ago and never have gotten over it. Blue died a horrible death and not many people speak of him whenever I return to St. Mary’s. Time had violently beat Blue down through hardship. The wears and tears had comprised his agility and health. Blue was no longer resilient to the conditions of the streets. The time he served in prison also shed half of his life away. Making Blue’s trickery compassionate character timeless is a way for me to acknowledge one of the people who have been significant to my writing and performance. Folks in the Bronx may have written Blue off as an abusive bootlegging junkie. To me, he was one of the reasons I started reading William Shakespeare and never became *Pettee Peako*.

**War Of Gods**

*Ms. Trish’s masculine voice forces my heart to skip a beat. The older kids scatter. My face flushes with embarrassment.*

“*Ms. Trish I wasn’t doin’ any –*” I walk towards her trying to lie.
“Get your Black behind over here. I told you not to be messing wit' 'em boys. They no good.”

“I wasn’t even…” I make another attempt.

“I don’t wanna hear it. Next time I catch you with them, I’mah beat the black off your butt. Now stay over here where I can see you” Ms. Trish scolded.

I was ten and a half years old pretending be twenty. The older kids were drinking and smoking on the side of St. Mary’s building. My mother asks Ms. Trish to watch me while she went work. Ms. Trish like many of the moms of St. Mary’s was a volunteer mom. St. Mary’s was filled with volunteer moms. These were moms who volunteered to watch other people’s kids who lived in the building. They grabbed you by the ear, slapped you across your head and beat you in public if you got out of line. The volunteer moms were worse than the police. Ms. Trish was keeping me away from the older kids who did and sold drugs. I just wanted to be cool. Although Ms. Trish only spoke English and my mom only spoke Spanish they could have a full conversation and have a complete understanding of one another. I saw Ms. Trish as a second mom growing up, until.

When I was fourteen Ms. Trish was on the project benches drunk and high out of her mind. I was coming from football practice at Dewitt Clinton high school. Her kids were left alone upstairs. It was almost eight o’clock on a Monday. Her body was slumped on the wooden bench and she mumbled nonsense. It looked as if she peed on herself. It was embarrassing. I thought, all these years you
were preaching to me about hanging out with the wrong crowd. What a hypocrite. I stared at her with prejudice. I stormed upstairs never speaking of the matter. Months later, my mom’s brought her to our church, St. Anselm. My mom was trying to help kick her addiction through church. I never spoke to Ms. Trish after that, just the occasional hi and bye. I never thanked her for keeping me away from drugs. She would continue coming to church and relapsing. She was a good person; I felt she just worshiped the wrong God.
War Of Gods (Screenplay / Short Film)

FADE IN:

EXT. Black backdrop with disclaimer (Please Do Not Try This At Home
Medical And Professional Assistance Were On Set For The Entire Shoot)

CUT IN:

EXT. The logo for rating for short film displayed.

FADE IN:

EXT. The Film’s title “War Of Gods” is flashing across the screen with birds in flight.

CUT IN:

INT. In CHAVO’s garage the camera scans a treasure box. Camera pans a treasure box and a bible. PREACHER MAN is pacing thinking to himself. THE POET is speaks.

THE POET (voice)

Preacher Man
hid in Pablo’s garage
for two weeks
five blocks down from St Mary’s
said he had beef
like raw steak
that bled through scriptures
He was Youtubing

Facebooking

for God

CUT IN:

INT. PREACHER MAN lowers head in disappointment, talking to himself, praying, and cursing.

THE POET (voice)

but when he looked

all he saw was cobwebs

on light fixtures

collecting dust

like offerings

often

orphans

knock on his door

CUT IN:

INT. PREACHER MAN on his knees close-up. PREACHER MAN holding his cross and rocking his body while he is still on his knees
THE POET (voice)
apartment 12 B
asking him to break bread
instead
he gave them crumbs

CUT IN:
INT. PREACHER MAN's close-up of mouth while praying. There's a close up of bible.

THE POET (voice)
and stashed the loaf

Forgive me fa-jshah
for I stole your daily bread
to feed me instead
en el nombre del Padre
nananana nuuum nuuum nuuum

CUT IN:
INT. PREACER MAN on his knees rocking making a connection with the bible in his hands.
THE POET (voice)

Preacher man’s father and grandfather lost their
lives to smack dope
that wrung like noose around wrinkle necks

CUT IN:

INT. PREACHER MAN standing cursing the world. PREACHER MAN Slides slowly
to the floor with his back to the treasure box and carefully takes a spoon out his
left pocket, followed by a lighter from his right pocket.

THE POET (voice)

Their Adam’s apple crushed
seeds of addiction stuck
in a generation of esophagus
finding it hard to swallow
and stomach a sober reality

Forgive me fa-jshah
for I stole your daily bread
to feed me instead
en el nombre del Padre
Preacher man’s a check from being homeless borrowed three hundred dollars from Chavo the drug dealer to pay last month’s rent got evicted out his church last week property’s under foreclosure

Preacher man’s being in the unemployment line twice this year He washes his only suit in the kitchen sink with Ajax and a toothbrush for breakfast it’s peanut butter jelly with communion bread lunch is chicken noodle spread
INT. PREACHER MAN on his knees with back facing camera. Camera pan over the PREACHER MAN’s back and shoulder with his right hand light drug content in spoon until liquid bubbles.

THE POET (voice)
Forgive me fa-jshah
for I stole your daily bread
to feed me instead
en el nombre del Padre
nananana nuuum nuuum hmmm

CUT IN:
INT. PREACHER MAN is sitting on his behind taking off his belt, wrapping belt around left arm, and pulling up his sleeves. PREACHER MAN taps left forearm with right hand. Inserts needle to vein with heroine (really it’s saline).
PREACHER MAN nods off.

THE POET (voice)
You can catch him on the six, the four, or the five line
Preaching the gospel on the iron horse
While passengers’ text message and Instagram their friends

Who Prays for the Preacher Man
Who Prays for the Preacher Man

Who is praying for the Preacher Man

nananana nuuum nuuum nuuum

Credit Roll.

This visual performance serves to give the audience a physical experience of the character in his environment. Unlike text, photo, and theatre performance the video experience provides another avenue for the audience to have a closer look into St. Mary’s community otherwise left to their own imagination.

In this short film there are two characters, the Poet who is narrating the story and the Preacher Man. The Poet is another form of the Griot and the Preacher Man is performing another form of violence. This form of violence expressed in this short film is one directed at the body of the individual. Violence has taken on many dimensions as I have shared throughout this statement of purpose. The difference with this form of violence is that the victim and the attacker are the same person. This is another allegorical piece focused on self-oppression.

Repetition is another African ritual used throughout this short film. This technique is important to maintain the rhythm in the poem. In addition, this repetition is replicating a spiritual prayer:
Forgive me fa-jshah
for I stole your daily bread
to feed me instead
en el nombre del Padre
nananana nuuum nuuum hmmm

This repetitive form is a combination of English, Spanish and new words in which the sounds provide meaning. For example, fa-jshah when pronounced is father and nuuum means numb. When you bring just these two words together it creates a new meaning suggesting that the father is numb to pain.

In this repetitive stanza we have two fathers. The first father is the mortal man and the second father is a spiritual God. The human father steals from the spiritual father in order to feed himself. Traditionally, the bread is symbolic for sharing in the Christian community but in this instance this symbol is reversed to shed light on the exploitation of capitalism. This repetition is vital for the Poet to drum the message home to his listeners.

Preacher Man
hid in Pablo’s garage
for two weeks
five blocks down from St Mary’s
said he had beef
like raw steak
that bled through scriptures
He was Youtubing
Facebooking
for God

The first stanza of this short film provides a quick reflection on how people seek help in this technological evolution. The Preacher Man is looking for God on Youtube and Facebook (8,9) as a desperate measure. What prompts the Preacher Man on his quest for God are the problems that complicate his life with lines like, said he had beef / like raw steak / that bled through scriptures (5, 6, 7).

In the video Preacher Man paces and sweats profusely reflecting the tension we hear in the text. The poet then begins to break down some of the Preacher Man’s stresses:

Preacher man’s
being in the unemployment line twice this year
He washes his only suit in the kitchen sink
with Ajax and a toothbrush (51, 52, 53, 54).

The stanza above describes Preacher Man’s poor conditions which is not just a regional but also a global reflection. Although this issue of poverty is
prevalent in the text, this was purposefully not depicted in the short film in order to keep the audience focused on one theme. The theme raises questions about one’s faith while being overwhelmed by struggle.

Through this visual performance I wanted to show the process of struggle. The Preacher Man’s visual performance was filmed from a close angle as an effect to show his character falling apart. All extra special effects were taken out in order to reduce the distractions and keep the audience’s attention on the character. This was done with the intention to immerse the audience’s emotional experience through the witnessing of Preacher Man’s destruction.

Yes, the Preacher Man is loosely based on Ms. Trish. The Preacher Man and Ms. Trish shared similarities of unemployment, potential eviction, and depression. I often wonder as she prayed and preached for everyone else, who was praying for her besides my mom? This is why the poem ends with a similar question, Who Prays for the Preacher Man / Who Prays for the Preacher Man / Who is praying for the Preacher Man (65, 66, 67).

Breaking The Bronck’s Cycle

This multifarious prose performance synthesized through the Bronx experience has given me an opportunity to shed light on the colonizer and the colonized. This colonization is one that has evolved through technology, academia and an economic exploitation. The Bronx is an example and reflection
of the affects colonization has had on the psycho-social development of the people it has successfully marginalized.

This cycle of violence continues to undermine and exploit Blacks, Latinos, LGBTs, women, and children of my community. My goal is to use literature along with other creative artistic platforms to promote civility, build community, celebrate diversity, develop future scholars, and to break the cycle of violence. As a teacher and a student one of my pedagogical duties is to help shape a nation through literary action and reflection.

For many years I had to endure being harassed and beat up for speaking Spanish. Perhaps my pedagogy is influenced from my learning multi-languages as a form of survival. Learning multiple languages like: Spanish, Spanglish, Garifuna, Ebonics, and English have given me a wider perspective of St. Mary’s housing projects and the world. Learning multiple languages reduced the amount of violence that was done to me as I have gotten older. I coined the term Multifarious Prose Performance (MPP) to capture the various ways one can express and reach out to others through art. MPP can help others learn how to build their own Legos. In a similar fashion, I am using MPP not only to reduce violence but to encourage civility on all platforms. MPP incorporates a multiple intelligence approach in order to reach and teach a wider audience.

Hopefully, this artistic and scholarly art form instills values that rebuild faith and confidence in order to combat against oppressive forces that entrap our psychological and physical development. Hoping this person’s work would go on
to do the same for someone else, that this will prevent someone from picking up a gun, needle, or fist. The gun should no longer be cocked back in someone's hand but collecting rust by the Atlantic Ocean. That one day the smoke from the barrel of the gun would stop clouding our communities.
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APPENDIX

I HATE SCHOOL
HATE SCHOOL

OVERCOMING THE STRUGGLES OF IDENTITY CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

BY ALEX AVILA BOOK OF PROSE

COMING SOON
APPENDIX 2

EVOLUTION AND SAMPLE PROCESS OF

THE BRONX COCKED BACK AND SMOKING
EVOLUTION AND SAMPLE PROCESS OF THE BRONX COCKED BACK AND SMOKING

Alex Avila