



SPIC CHIC
LUIS CHALUISAN

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Dedicated to Chasan Chaluisan

Forever on my mind till the end of time because
you're half of me in body and all of me in spirit.

Maria Hernandez

For all your help and love standing by me. For all
the times I've been locked up and you visited me
giving me hope. No one could ask for a better per-
son or match you as a friend, companion or muse.

Bill "The Irish Rican" Kerrigan

For encouraging me to do radio and television
news. Your lessons stretching back to my days at
Cardinal Hayes helped lay the foundation for
documenting this wild trip through America.



We're from the city
Of electric rhythms
Where bebop jazz horns
Ride on Caribbean
beats
As santero fathers chant
Blen blen blen
blen blen
Kes en queno
talin ganga
guini llare llare
And espiritista mothers
Kneel before
Home altars wearing
Flowered bathrobes
To pray for their
Children's protection
We're the future
Born in the past
It's a Latin thing
Of a people in love with
An experience
On the mainland
En el Norte
En el Bronx
In love
With this country
In spite of itself



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“I personally have never been part of the Establishment, and I probably will never be part of the Establishment although I hope to become part of the Establishment. Because the Establishment is what's happening! You know what the word “Establishment” means? That you’re established! Isn't that interesting? That's power. Everyone that's anti-Establishment is somebody trying to topple what is but I've been on the outside for so long as a Latino and as an artist - not being part of the mainstream - because an artist is never really part of the Establishment; an artist is always anti-Establishment.”

Izzy Sanabria
MC-Comedian-Publisher, Latin NY, January 1977

"We're fortunate to have a blend of Indian, Black and White bloods as Puerto Ricans. The mix is going on for generations, and so we're a new type of people. In any event, we're ourselves."

Rene Lopez
Musicologist, April 1977 on WAMH-FM
Amherst College Radio Interview

“I think a materialistic conception of reality where what you see in front of you is all that exists is dangerous. That's one of the reasons we feel powerless against materialism.

Everything around us seems so overwhelming that we don't have faith and confidence in our thoughts.

The power we have in our hearts is much stronger than any of this. While life in the U.S. appears in disorder, there's an order to IT.

We fit somewhere in this order on the mainland, and IT really has to do with self-realization.

We can take responsibility for each person to develop themselves. We're in a transition from something old to something new and that's always painful. We're growing up.

IT is always painful when you're going somewhere that you haven't been before.

Change is possible, but a lot of people just talk about IT, and very few people get down and do IT.”

Eddie Figueroa

Young Lord, July 21, 1977

Founder, New Rican Village, Loisaida, New York

For the record I have been a wayward son,
a terrible father and at times a perceived menace to
society.

I've drank, I've smoked and I've gambled
with my very life. I've lived the life I love, and
I've loved the life I've lived.

And I've always accepted that if it were all
to go away tomorrow – even if all were to all dis-
appear, I still would have my memories and my
dreams.

This work here, all these words that you'll
read, well, this is my life box. Let's go to the DVD
in my mind.

Why? Because I'm destined to be me. And
don't call it *déjà vu* because I see it all for the first
time, every time in real time.

Curious? Don't get lost, I'm just tripping,
and I don't need a passport. I have a language. A
language is a dialect that has an army and a navy.

A Nuyorican poet is a writer who reads the
top ten list of writers in the *New York Times*. But
those writers? They don't read him.

I've seen thousands of Nuyoricans in my
lifetime, and every one of us is a fresh tragedy or a
miracle of survival.

Opportunities and survival en la America.
Land of constitution, restitution and prost-perity.

Luis Chaluian, aka El Extreme, 2009

Johnny Boy
For Heriberto “Chamaco” Batlle

Johnny Boy is back in town
A creeper in bruised lives
A trader in sultry secrets
He has absolutely
No right to know

A metropolitan skyjacker
Taking hostage
The stray adventurer
He preys out of emptiness
A modern vampire of emotions

Johnny Boy has arrived
Brought by powers unseen
To change the course
A necessary evil
In a dirty little town
Of ruined directions

Skyscrapers amuse him
Pits invite the taste of his special
Manipulations

Have you seen him?

El Loco Cantinero
Of hyperventilated thoughts

Have you seen him?

He arrived naked at the party
Trying to check his clothes
And announcing to all

“I CAME TO DANCE!”

He seduces
The confused poet
The isolated lover
The struggling woman
The ambitious teacher
To tell him their stories

Johnny Boy dismisses boundaries
And uses the tragedy
Of a comedian
To ejaculate his venom
He performs on stage
Fully in charge
Sparks fly from
His steel tipped heart
Creating icons
Of indignity
Of impulse

Have you met him?

His eyes tongue a red haze
Of silver spikes and
Black velvet fury
A Catholic boy on
A rampage through Hell

A new-age saint
With a customized Rosario
Who sweats benedictions
As he rides her
On an elevator rooftop
With a pistol strapped to his back
Each thrust setting off a bullet
Up between her legs
Through her stomach
Past her heart
Coming out her lips into his ...

A wild shot of cold-hearted lust
As soot falls on them
Like soft black petals
Raining on both
The living and the dead
A rogue dusky
Decadancing on the edge of razors
He stalks runners with his boy
Yo Yo Montalvo
And tries ways
To avoid their own stalkers
Night bombers in silk shirts
And four-hundred-dollar shoes
Searching for keys broken off
Long ago in forgotten locks
Searching for
The Great Game
While compromising every truth
Along the way

Searching for a way in
He's been speeding so long
Marking time
Paying cops
Burying partners
Tricking queens
Cruising shadows
Whacking even priests

In dreams reality cuts loose
Avenues slice into boulevards
D-D-D-D-D-Dodge City
He jumps into his
Third-world club car
Reeking of polo and reefer
An artillery strapped
On every extremity
He's headed for a
Sell - A - Bray - Tion
Yo Yo is spinning
Dead eyes
Crazy glued on everything
A plastic mask for a face
Fifth in one hand and
Eight Ball in the other
A new kind of pool game
Without a cue
On guard
From what
Himself
He supposes

Yo, let's go visit the savages
In Brooklyn

But they never get past the border
Johnny goes for a hit
Takes a drink
Forgets to steer
And BAM!
Rams the highway divider

The savages aren't
In Brooklyn
They're trapped
They're in the car
They're on the mainland
They're here
They're Ussssssssssssssssssssss

Now I ask you

Have you met him?
Have you met him?
Have you met him?

I have ...

He calls collect
From way
Inside

Loisaida

For Eddie Figueroa – founder New Rican Village

Por qué tú sufres

Si tú no tienes

Porque sufrir

Por qué tú lloras

Si tú no tienes

Porque llorar

Downtown

Stop Look Listen

It's now New Rican Village time

On Avenue A off Sixth

Loisaida

Alphabet City

New York New York

Big Butt Lulu

Slides across the dance floor

Earthquake thighs keeping time

With Andy Gonzalez' bass

As Nestor Torres' flute

Unleashes a dance hall trance

With a Valentino smoothness

Hilton Ruiz

The high priest of the piano

Arches in the darkness

Responds with tinkling caresses

That stream in between

The steady clave keeping time

For Jerry Gonzalez' drums
While Papo Vasquez fills with riffs
Notes thrust from
Every angle in the room
Penetrate
Lay sweltering
Just below my stomach
I absorb all eagerly
As music and being
Lock
For the climax
Welcome to Eddie Figueroa's
New Rican Village
Loisaida N.Y.
Temple of the New
Rican Renaissance
Lola Magdalena
Mambo smiles
Showing more teeth than Jaws
Yo Yo Montalvo
Swallows the evening
He's awaken to hunt
Billie Zombie passes joints
Laced with dust
And cases club members
To rob later
Suzie Sidewinder hovers above all
Mussolini in high heels
Little Lucie Blue Eyes
Waits for her Man
With the patience
Of a practiced killer

Wilfredo the Anointed Apostle
Is surrounded by a sea of estrogen
A man drowning on dry land
Kept afloat by Santa Ana
The turquoise dressed martyr
As Carmen Baby sits at home
Murmuring her mantras
To saints and candles
Behind blessed glass
And Johnny Boy
"El Malote del Bronx"
Well, he feeds his lovers
A thousand yards of tongue
Stingray shocks his prey
Then disappears in the mist

*Por qué tú sufres
Si tú no tienes
Porque sufrir*

*Por qué tú lloras
Si tú no tienes
Porque llorar*



Twisty Love

For Miguel Pinero. Tito Goya, Bimbo Rivas, and
Lucky Cienfuegos. First performed Aug '77 at the
Nuyorican Poets Café on 6th Street NY, NY

En el 503 of 161st street
Billie Zombie comes out
The side of his neck
Sells wolf tickets with glimmers
That peel the insides
Of lesser cobras competing for strikes
In the bush
Cubicle thoughts neatly
Arrange themselves
In Billie's mind
Crime does not pay
At least not the way
Lesser children try to pull it off
Billie Zombie is a dawn patrol jammer
From the giddy up
For him Suzie Sidewinder
Is Heaven on earth
The pale fall moon moans
As Billy makes love to Suzie
Never with her
Never with her
But Through Her
Suzie's lust is to linger with him
Suzie's lust is to rapture in chaos
Being swept far away
As Billie's Vice fills her
The stars desert the skies
And rush to fill her eyes

As Billie pumps her lips
Up and down
All around
With a circular motion
Swallows her whole
She comes hard
Sits straight up
In heated
Repeated
Suck seeded
Rushes of ecstasy

*Oh Billie
you can crawl
across my bed sheets
on your eyebrows
any time
Poppy*

*Mami
you may be
a bitch to others
but you're an angel
in my eyes*

Two caramel blackbirds
Singing little blue lies
Along the lazy side streets
Of a jungle gone mad
In between the sexing
Billie rides the loop

Night to Night
And with Suzie
Leaves little pieces
Of themselves
On the extreme highway
While pulling stickups
Each one richer
Bolder
Brazen enough to rob the restaurant
In the building they live in
Going back later for a midnight supper
Acting shocked as the cantina owner
Spilt his drinks and woes
Later picking up their check
For his most valued and compassionate
Customers
Crime does not pay
At least not the way
Lesser children try to pull it off
Billie Zombie
And Suzie Sidewinder
Are two Necessary Evils
In this part of God's wonder
Without them goodness would be
A bland indistinguishable routine
They apologize for nothing
They're not conceited
They're not conceited
They're convinced
That crime does not pay
At least not the way
I pull it off

Creativity
For Sandy Esteves

What's happening
When a person is creative
What's the imagination
Where does it come from
How does it work
How do you evoke creativity
How do we develop situations
And atmosphere to make
These things happen more
How do we transfer
That same creativity
Caught by the ritual
That happens
When the musicians play
Or the poets read
How do we make it happen
How can we be in that deep place
In ourselves in the midst of it all
That is the direction we're taking
It's a humanistic perspective
And it has to be one that sees
The human being in that light
It's about human values
That's all IT is
IT can be
Studied
Measured
And Done over and over again

La Vida – The Life
For Pedro and Carmen Pietri

There's one who can speak
The truth at all times
In the court
Of the Spanish King
During the days of
The Old Empire:
The Jester.
So is my role in the court
Of the New Empire.
The Light guides me,
I say what's on my mind
And at the end of the day
I dream Truths.
That way when I pass
From this Old World
I'll march right up to
Him in heaven and ask
What the hell was that all about?
And with my luck
The Elusive One will answer:
Do you remember when
We are together then before as One
You ask for IT — A human experience!
Do I deliver on your curiosity?
Travel on there's more ...
Just go ahead through the looking glass.
But, I'm scared Abba.
Trust me I walk with you.

I am who I am.
The true other.
The infinite center.
The universal unchanging.
The is that is.
The verb before the noun.
The sweet compassion.
The one soul.
The ultimate need.
The sacred reality within.

I reveal Dignity to Abraham
Love to Jesus
Unity to Mohamed
Serenity to Buddha
But I'm scared, Yo
Trust me I walk with you
And awayyyyyy We Go!



Redemption

For Chasan Chaluisan y Rodriguez

I spend my days
Making vertical and
Horizontal calculations
Along crooked streets
Of lights and shadows
Possessed by an
Arrogant ambition
To read
The mind of God
But there's a price to pay
Pain the toll
As I divide my time
Between chasing God
And chasing the Dragon
Combining lethal doses of
Horse beat with cane
A perverse boy meets girl
The gravity of my situation
Bending the light of reason
Cut off from others
Oblivious to their
Opinions and prejudices
I remain
A child at heart
Asking the simplest of questions
But obsessed
With the human equation
How did God make the universe
How did God make it right

How does one plus one equal
One
Solitude my choice
Because no one
Can take that from me
But as the temporal music
Of my solitude unfolds
So come
The visions and the voices
I listen and I'm transfixed

Listen:

*I am here before it starts
And
I am here after the end
I'm a hidden treasure
That desires
To Be Known
Therefore
I create you
The Creation
In order to be known
Trust me
I walk with you*

An interior illumination
That allows me to see
Through my soul's eyes
Becomes messages in "g" forces
That rip the air around me
Becomes a deep well I fall into

Eagerly drinking from its waters
Making a lasting moment
Out of a singular incident
Becomes a shrine
All have access to
I am exhausted
After all that spiritual stuff

I lay down
Perfumed in stolen flowers
And
Sodden lust
Rocked to sleep
By the cadence of
The Elusive One's
Breath
Song
And
Words
Words
Words

Listen
Here's the secret
You have to know life
To recreate life
And
One more thing

I love you
I love you all

Wilfredo The Anointed Apostle
For Ron Chaluisan y Batlle

If you can see him through my eyes

His name his Wilfredo
The family calls him Don Wilfredo
But his downtown friends
Call him Willie
You know
WILLIIIEEE
Line me up
So I can go out and play

Wilfredo the Anointed Apostle
Is the master barber
At the Spanish American Barber Shop
On 117th and Lenox
Sepulcher of the blessed hairstyle
Walls adorned with pictures
Of
Machito
Muhammad Ali
Malcolm X
Hair he cuts
And sweeps for years
Keeping the clippings
At a secret altar to St. Lazarus
In the back of the Spanish American Barber Shop

It's not the only secret he keeps

For you see Don Wilfredo
Is said to be
A three quarter closet
Gay man

Homo
Queer
Fazzy Hole

Oh you laugh

Well now
Listen to his secrets
A lifetime of secrets
Words he dare not utter
Unless among his own
A scholarly appreciation
Of what we call

The Great Game
Such wisdom

Don Wilfredo
The Anointed Apostle
Has a special gift
That sears through the souls
Of the lives he touches
He consecrates the locals
While cutting their hair
Rubbing oil deep into their scalps
Alcohol along the edge of the cut

And menthol on their neck
To cool them down

All the while imparting
Knowledge and blessings

*You know
In the beginning
There's the Beautiful Game
Of Love and Wonderment
And that game
Is within the Light
And whoever reaches for that Light
Brings back peace
And to the extent of his reach
Is to bring back the Divine
Be careful my brother
You may be corrupting
The Beautiful Game
Into
The Great Game
And compromising every truth
Along the way*

Perhaps Don Wilfredo' solitude
Is really a special
Fulfillment from God
Something marvelous
A unique celestial attention
For Wilfredo is nothing less
Than a voice of love and concern

Isn't Buddha
Jesus
Mohammed
About Love and Concern

Since the days The Elusive One
First visits man
The Light sometimes arrives
With a disturbance
An offset of the unusual

So before we crucify him
With whispered nails

Homo
Queer
Fazzy hole

Stop and Think

Perhaps a person's lifestyle
Is really a blessing
For who are we
To know God's ways and plans

When we're walking together
People just stop and stare

But if you could see him through my eyes
He wouldn't be a faggot but a man

Innocence

For Ana and Federico Chaluian

It's fall in Brooklyn

1963

My mother and father

Search Dean Street and Hoyt

For their wild child

A turquoise dressed martyr

And a drunken fallen angel

Desperately driven

By the tears of God

Dónde está mi hijo *Where is my son*

Dónde está mi hijo *Where is my son*

Qué Dio lo proteja *May God protect him*

I escape from their world

Without so much as

A by your leave

The first step as a runner in

The Great Game

I escape

With my babysitter's son Richie

Who borrows me

For the afternoon

But doesn't say where we're going

Vente conmigo

Shhhhhh, come with me.

We climb ancient stairwells

To an afternoon rent party

A Brooklyn Heights holiday

I spy mommy and poppy

From the third floor window
And my silence cuts
Our umbilical cord
As Ricardo Maldonado
The Latino Mod
Plays his
Con-spic-u-us blues
His hands detonate
A jet black bomb
Of a grand piano
Whose sound swims
Through the crowded apartment
Where the musical notes come
Like wave after wave after wave
On a sunny day
At Coney Island
I'm scared and fascinated
I taste my fingers
Sweet with caramels
Cherry blossom and apple scent
Of the freshly
Painted rooms settle
On my seven-year-old body
I am seduced by
The beauty of Nuyorican music
Richie returns me home
Later that afternoon
Explaining as best
A twenty-one-year old could
That he loses track of time
Richie (Ricardo Ray)
The Latino Mod -- Starts time for me

Blue Winds and Cane

For Abuelita-Christina Batlle y Medina

She witnesses the world
Through pastel powder eyes
A sweet bird of paradise
That darts in the air
And splashes
On distant waters
She prays for all that are
Drowning on dry land
Her hope bearing
A mystical promise
That appears as a rainbow
After a storm of sensitive drops

Daylight breaks the night
And she drinks
From The Elusive One's well
Hidden deep in the tropical forest
Cool sips of hope and salvation
Her tiny blessed hands
Wipe her sanctified lips
And stretch outwards
Capturing the morning rays
That brings strength and
Permits her to pass the light
As she washes clean
Children's souls
We witness the world together
Through her pastel powder eyes

Separated by decades of time
And oceans of Life
Whose shallows expose
The spiritual paradise
That exists all about as

Desire
Fulfillment
And
Regret

It's hurricane season in Puerto Rico and a
wind of change blows through the tropics.

Grandma Cristina sits reflecting the Island
sun in her little blue house at the top of *La Quinta*
in Mayagüez. She patiently waits by her balcony
door for her favorite morning songbird to arrive
just outside her window. It's a long time ritual that
accompanies her morning prayers with her sister
Custodia. Sometimes she gets the feeling that God
sends the little bird to fly her requests back to
heaven. Abuelita's the seed on the island from
where I blossom - Borinquen. She possesses a
wrinkled light powdery face that sees me through
liquid blue eyes lit by the sunlight.

Titi Custodia spies me walking up the dirt
road to her house. The murmur of the nearby river
accompanies me.

I'm navigating a small sea of brilliantly colored countryside flowers tinted with violet, red, yellow, white and green petals. Little lizards run around just crazy everywhere. Dragonflies patrol around squadrons of wasps encircling the palm trees. Plucking small hollow reeds to blow soap bubbles out of later, I suck on some sugar cane grandma gives me earlier that adds to the sweetness of the air. The atmosphere drips with moisture so thick that I feel like I'm floating through a suspended lake. The tropical leaves wrap themselves around me protecting me like the little blue house protects Titi Custodia.

Custodia never leaves the house. A neighborhood *bandolero* rapes her at sixteen and the family forces her to marry him. Such is life in 1916. She loses the baby and divorces him immediately afterwards. Titi Custodia swears that she'll never set foot on the ground outside her home ever again. And she never does. When she has to move later in life, my cousin Davisito and his father Israel carry her to her new home down the block. Custodia is an acerbic woman but very spiritual and leads a monastic life praying and cooking each day for family.

Grandma calls out to me “Amor mío, ven aquí que te quiero hablar.” (*My love, come here that I wish to speak with you.*)

Once inside, she guides me into in her special room of blessed saints staring out from behind crystal glass.

Titi Custodia sits in a straight back chair looking out the open-air living room window. She's writing a letter. When she tires of writing with her left, she switches to her right. Her penmanship, perfectly balanced on each thought, doesn't change at all.

A deck of tarot cards is spread out on the lace-topped table before Grandma.

"What's that?"

"El pasado, el futuro y el presente ... sientate ahí." (*"The past, the future and the present ... sit there."*)

I've been crying all night because I want to go back home to New York. I miss my parents, but they're going through changes and have sent me to Puerto Rico while they work things out.

Nine years old and I feel my world is ending. Grandma senses my confusion

Once inside, she guides me to in her special room of blessed saints staring out from behind crystal glass.

Grandma speaks, "Brillante cabecita de dolores ... Primera luz de la mañana ilumina tu destino ... You are the beautiful boy. "

We remain quiet for the longest time as she breaks an egg, separates it in the shell and drops the whites into a clear glass of water. The way it suspends in the water tells a person how his life is going. Afterwards Grandma lights a white candle to La Virgen de Guadalupe and says a quiet prayer occasionally snapping her fingers. The chirping of the morning songbirds outside her window are the only sound I hear.

"Que me dicen las barajas, um? Que me dicen de este niño bonito ... Um, Aquí dice el que no pregunta no llega pero ay veces sin preguntar uno llega a un sitio nuevo. Ese es parte de tu destino ... Vas a cantar tu historia pero tiene que pasar por combate. Muchas penas y alegrías Empieza ... para ... empieza ... para pero al fin conquista la noche con los rayos del sol que amaneces."

"What do the cards say, um? What do they say about this beautiful child ... Um, It says here if you don't ask for directions you won't get to your destination but sometimes even without asking you arrive somewhere new.

This is part of your destiny... You are going to sing your story but you have to pass through a major struggle.

"Many sorrows and joyful moments.... You start stop ... start ... stop but in the end you will conquer the night with the morning light."

I feel like I'm being pulled up and forwards at the same time by an elation shared out of love and concern.

*The Angels cry in 7th Heaven
Their tears bead down
On their favorite son*

*Gone for a long time
The petals of their chosen
Struggle up*

*At times with a sigh of relief
For the angels were missed
When he was in need*

*The Angels cry in 7th Heaven
And encourage his re-birth
They never expected
Their favorite to return
The weeping saints had
Given up hope
For their tan rose
It was the passing of a plague
That killed so many others
The death of supple thinkers
Who forgot their brothers*

*The Angels cry in 7th heaven
Inspirations bead down
On their favorite son
The Angels cry in 7th heaven
And kiss
Their favorite child
Who squirms in a distant corner
Waiting what seems endless time
He prays for courage
Guidance his desire*



The Great Game

For Steve Cannon and Mark Diamond

I pray before the light
Of an atomic TV
Conspiracies echo
Test patterns
That flash
Between US
We survive
In purgatory
Souls adrift
Like the electric snow
On my twilit screen
A Dali dreamscape
Self-righteous terrorists
We treat fear as casually
As lit Marlboros
Inhaling desperate smoke
And blowing out arrogant circles
Go Go boys who explode
Like microwaved aluminum foil
Like blood on punctured wrists
Anchored on cotton crosses
In the deep dark black dirt
Of our self-pity
While Benzedrine soaked hearts
Finger our chests
And undo our shirt buttons
With the speed
Of a star 69 long distance

YELL!

We laugh at the spectacle

Bound by the Code of The Great Game

1: We're all going to hell Except You and Me
But even I have been a whore

2: Corruption has existed
Since the days of Adam and Eve
And the two gorillas that came before them

3: Needs are absolute

4: Rain forgives tears and thunder masks bullets

5: The easiest way to achieve complete strategic
Surprise is to commit an act that makes no sense
At all or is even self -destructive and

6: Remember,
We were vomited up
By the same seed
Blown west of the Canary Islands
A place not named for wild birds
But for wild dogs
And as dogs

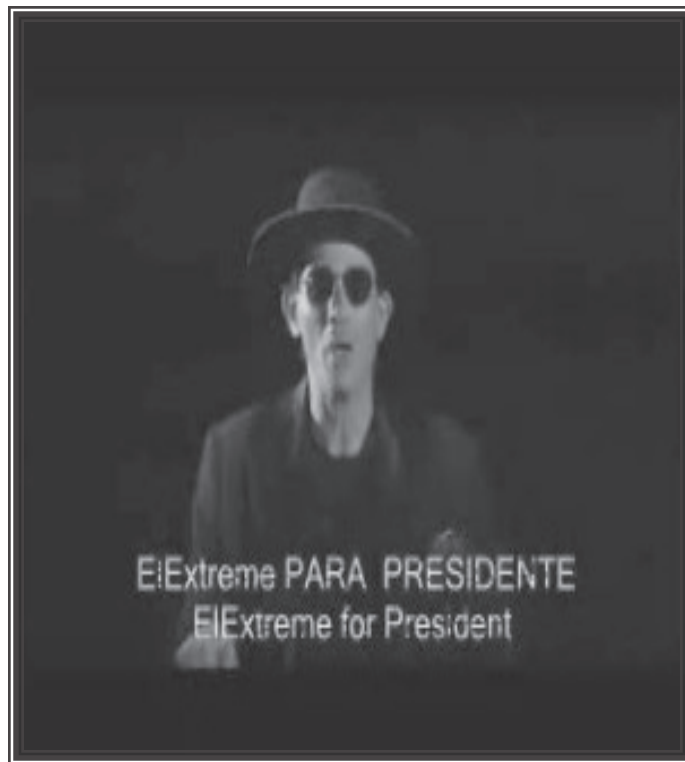
Mark our territory
Guard each other
And Roam To Conquer

El Gran Juego: The Great Game
(Spanish version for Jesus “Chu” Matos)

Rezo ante la luz
De una TV atómica
Las conspiraciones hacen eco
A patrones de prueba
Que se iluminan
Ante nosotros
Sobrevivimos en el purgatorio
Almas sueltas
Como la nieve eléctrica
En mi pantalla de atardecer
Un sueño a lo Dalí
Terroristas ato convencidos
Tratamos el miedo
Tan casualmente
Como Marlboros prendidos
E inhalando el humo desesperado
Echando al aire círculos arrogantes
Chicos a go go
Que explotan
Como papel de aluminio
Microondazado
Como sangre que emana
De muñecas laceradas
Anclados en cruces
De algodón en la tierra
Profunda y oscuridad negra
De nuestra auto pena
Mientras que nuestros corazones

Empapados en benedrina
Agitan nuestros pechos
Y deshacen
Los botones de nuestras camisas
Con la velocidad de una
Estrella 69 larga distancia
Nos reímos ante el espectáculo
Dictado por el código de
El Gran Juego
Uno:
Todos vamos para el infierno
Excepto tú y yo
Y un así yo he sido un puto
Dos:
La corrupción ha existido
Desde los días de Adam y Eva
Y los dos gorilas que los precedieron
Tres:
Las necesidades son absoluta
Cuatro:
La lluvia perdona las lagrimas
Y los truenos enmascaran las balas
Cinco:
La manera más fácil de lograr
Una sorpresa es cometer un acto
Que no hace ningún sentido
O que es aun auto destructiva
Seis:
Acuérdate la misma semilla
Que nos vomito
Llevada hacia el oeste de las islas canarias

Un lugar no haci llamado
Porque tiene pájaros
Si no perros salvajes
Y como perros
Marcamos nuestro territorio
Nos guardamos unos a otros
Y somos conquistadores



Las Pestañas de Mona Lisa
For Linda Rodriguez

¿Donde están las pestañas
De la Mona Lisa?
Un gran jurado se ha convocado
Para descubrir la repuesta
Del misterio que se reportó
Esta semana en el San Juan Star
Posiblemente están con las
Medias viejas de
Shorty Castro
O con las teclas
De William Manzano
O posiblemente
Hasta en los últimos suspiros de Mon Rivera
Cuando lloraba
PERO QUERIDO DIOS
¿Por qué darme el talento supremo y quedar así
En la cárcel de adición?
¿Donde están las pestañas
De la Mona Lisa?
A mi plin y a la madama dulce coco
Es más importante
Que preguntemos
¿Donde están los tainos?
Que crearon el arte
De las piedras descubierto en Ponce?
¿Pero qué sé yo?
Soy un boricua del Bronx
Pasando el invierno de mi vida
Entre el sol y las lluvias
De Borinquén

Lengua Larga

For Juan Francisco “Picolo” Batlle

In the annals of serial killers, he stands alone; unique in the execution of his craft. Lengua Larga utilizes neither blade nor poison nor steel-jacketed bullets.

This innovative assassin has transformed his tongue into the weapon of choice. His lips clamp shut and his eyes glint like a toad that has swallowed a fly as he daily plots his misdeeds.

Hidden behind the veneer of the quintessential hick: sandal-footed and pot-bellied, he lumbers through life balancing a slightly misshapen bald head. His three major “tells” (giveaways) are a tedious stutter whenever he delivers a lie accompanied by his index finger pointing upwards and his eyes – those ever squinting eyes – widening to the size of saucers.

Larga then drones on with a string of malapropisms and useless tidbits of info to literally bore his victims to death.

Lengua Larga spends eons perfecting his insidious approach; at first, learning the assassin’s code from his own family who lay down a foundation of gossip in their home as an attempt to further their own position in life.

Nothing is sacrosanct for even the heavens are subject to their insinuations. But character assassination is not enough to satisfy the lumbering Lengua.

In Larga's world, God is a delusion and there is no hope to speak of thus paving the way for his rationalization that other's lives can be lulled to the point of dissolution.

His victims are drawn from the realm of the elderly and the homeless, though, at times he has dipped into his own extended family.

At first he befriends his intended victim offering common day services like a walk to the supermarket. Ingratiating himself with the patience of a practiced killer he introduces his meandering soliloquies day after day after day after day.

Then, he pounces with all deliberate speed at a moment when both are isolated and upon completion, his victims simply fade away from listening to his unceasingly boring discourse - their mouths agape and eyes staring forward in bewilderment, silently acknowledging that they, indeed, have been caught by surprise.

La vida te da sorpresas - sorpresas te da la vida
(Life is full of surprises).

Surfing in the South Bronx

For Papo Vasquez and Louie Caballero

Papito wakes up one fine morning and decides that he's going to be a surfer! This-six foot copper man from the Island living in the South Bronx is going to ride the waves.

Papito has just had a big wet dream.

He goes and buys a second-hand surf board from the local bodega. Don't ask how it got there; it's a whole other story

He calls up his uncle Junito, "Yo Junito I want to be a surfer. Can you take me out on your boat?" Junito has bought a speed boat by selling things in the neighborhood.

They truck out to Orchard beach headed for the Long Island Sound; throw out a drag line and Junito takes off with Papito in tow.

Now they are not quite sure about all the nautical parameters that go with launching a surf-board so Junito decides to go really fast - he hits about a 150 knots. It's a real fast boat yo!

They start charging towards Orchard Beach from the Long Island Sound. Junito pulls starboard and lets loose.

Papito flies on the surfboard hitting that wave that comes off the boat. And for a moment Papito experiences the joy and freedom of riding the perfect wave.

Things change.

He rockets towards the beach; sails over the sand; bolts over some startled Ricans and goes right into the back of a paddy wagon waiting for him on the boardwalk.

The police lock him up and charge him with being an R.P.R.: “A Ridiculous Puerto Rican operating without a license!”

Surfing in the South Bronx ...



From Mambo To Hip Hop
For Izzy Sanabria and “Wild” Bill Kerrigan

Salsa
Is the truth

Life is a dirty
Lowdown shame
That shouldn't
Happen to a dog

Salsa
Is the things
New Ricans Do
In their lives
To bark at the Life

It exposes "el jibarito"
In the Big City

It's *Spic Chic*
Parading the runways
To a Caribbean beat
Steamed in a
A mainland cauldron
It's African spirits
Rising as aromatic mist
Freed to exact their
Due after surviving
The Middle Passage
It's a Taino soul
Tempering
That just anger

It's Freedom Land
And
Section 5 at
The Bronx Riviera
(Orchard Beach)

Salsa

Is oratories
That exorcise
Suffering

There are only
Fleeting bad moments
In life

Everything changes
And our sorrows
Are prayed away
In verse and song

It's a bronze
Statue of Liberty
Holding sheet music
And
A set of maracas

While Ricans stay in clave
And see the world
Awash in Renaissance perspective
Aware of the past in the present

Re-interpreting it
But holding true
To its lessons
Fulfillment
Fueled by Desire
Channeling Regrets

It's as much as Batacumbele
As it is Eddie Palmieri
Sharing the stage with Los Lobos
While Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz
Bless the congregation
And Ralphie Pagan
And
Hector Lavoe die
Powdered deaths
For Our Sins

Salsa
Is a lover's passion
caught by a musician's voice
It anticipates
Interactive media
In the computer age

Salsa
Is sensuously stylish
Latin dancing

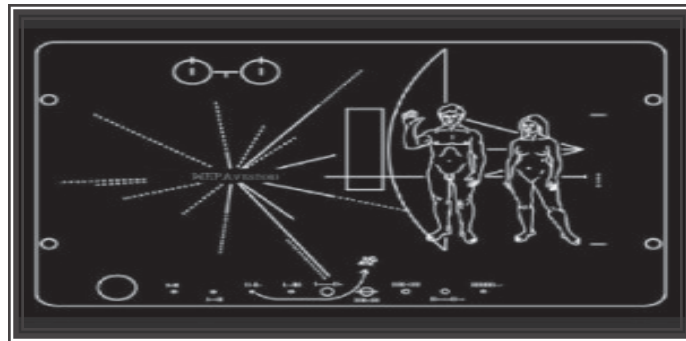
But don't get lost in the percussion

And miss the real deal in Salsa

The secret is
How the bass riff
And
The two dancers
Thrust against each other
Wrap themselves
Around the hips
To drive in unison
Across the floor
In its most abstract

IT

Is the switch between
The bass
The dancer hips
And
The left hand of the timbales player
Accenting the count
It's making love
With your clothes on
To a celestial metronome



Carmen Baby
For Carmen Rodriguez (wife #1)

There are two things
God knows that
Carmen Baby knows

One
She is beautiful

Two
The value she places
On her life
And on the lives
Of the ones she loves

I glide precariously
Alongside her path
At once tender
Then off-center
When touched by
The moonlit madness
That fuels my mind

Two binary stars
Dancing in the night sky
Drawn in and then out
Held together by the magnetism
Of our daughter Chasan
The ark of the covenant
Wherein Carmen keeps my soul
Three universes drawn together

By a special mystical plan
Which I manage to corrupt
With the panache
Of Foghorn Leghorn
On steroids:
I Do I Say I Do I Say I love you

Carmen replies You say You do
But at night I cry and
No tears come from my eyes

Carmen prays
And drifts to another place

In that world
Chasan is safe to roam
I am at ease
And she is free to love
But those dreams are corrupted
By my impetuosity
Corrupt fascination
Bent Brilliance
She doesn't lose her temper
She finds it
And yet she still loves
Because she has the
Blue Eyed Ark with her
Because she has
The Princess tucked away
As I travel the byroads
Writing my lines
As a Dantian reporter
From the underworld

Delilah Blue

For Tina Laton (Wife #2)

I meet her in a Union Gap, Washington diner. A bitch to others but a salty angel in my eyes befitting her Sicilian roots. Damn, I always go for those island girls. Sitting next to her I try to get her attention underneath the table by tapping her leg for a half-hour. Finally, she swivels toward me.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m trying to kick it to you.”

“Well, you’re not going to get my attention tapping that kicker!” and, with that, raises her trousers and exposes a prosthetic leg “it’s got a fifty-thousand mile warranty.”

A couple of nights later I hustle some cats in a pool game and take off into the parking lot. They follow and prepare to attack. Suddenly from the shadows I hear,

“Hey, get away from my friend,” and three shots ring out BOOM BOOM BOOM! Delilah whips out her pistol and scares them off. I marry her three weeks later.

You just have to hook up with someone who blows a cap for you.

I'm
An unbroken cowboy
In love with
The open ranges
In love with
HER
Small town
One-legged
Dance hall girl
Known as
"Delilah Blue"
A sensuous comet
Streaking across
My sky mind
22 Raven
On her hip
Blackjack
In her pocketbook
A stiletto hidden
By the prosthetic
Of her Little Leg
The sun rises
Every time
Delilah's eyes open.
She speaks
And my soul is fulfilled
Delilah can figure out
My little boy secrets
With her spirit
We meet
In a mountain desert

But are far
From being dry
On our first date
I ask Delilah
Hey Baby
How you lose
Your leg
She wryly responds
I tire of it
It weighs me down
Later
Bathed in incense
Candles
And the
Sticky
Bittersweet smell
Of love-making
I peek into
Delilah's soul
And
Witness a lifetime
Of breaking
And resetting
A body that God
Does not quite complete
One leg shorter
Than the other
A spine
That can't support
Her height
Which rises

Above the turmoil
The final straw
Comes at the hands
Of five drunken marines
Who rape
Burn
And
Torture her

At the hospital
The doctor says
We can save your life
But maybe not the leg
Cut it off immediately
Cut away the past
Walk into the future
I cry that first date
Hearing HER story
And lay the foundation
For a year of
Twisty Love
I understand her wildness
She consecrates my abandon
Our need to
Be bad
Be with each other
And
Be in love
Outweighing the risks
At the Metropolitan Museum of Art
As I dive into the torture
Of Van Gogh's face

Delilah robs a Belgian tourist
Of 3000 dollars
Presents it to me

Here Poppy
Here's my dowry

Past indiscretions
Come calling
For Delilah and me
During a
Rum and cocaine-choked
Celebration
Of our first
Year anniversary
I find Delilah
Dazed
On the bedroom floor
Boozy sighs pouring
From her lips into my ears

Oh, poppy
The pain is so bad
Even my conscience hurts

It's spring
And
We're blind
I know I have to act
And lay a path
For Delilah to escape

And save myself

Delilah
Who can always figure out
My little boy secrets
Acts
She walks into
A local bank
Makes a .357 withdrawal
Leaves me a note
And
Flies back west
To rest
Under the Volcano
Thanks for the star-spiked rodeo
Poppy
But I'm fatigued
It weighs me down
I cry reading that note
But understand
Because Delilah shows me
By her example
By her courage
Cut away the past
Walk into the future
You see
You can't enjoy
The light of reason
Unless you first
Experience
The Dark Night
Of the Soul.

Twilight Time

For Belencita Zayas y Batlle

*Heavenly shades of night
are falling
It's Twilight Time
Out of the mist your voice
is calling
It's Twilight Time*

And She
And She
And She

Embraces her dying father
With the grace of a Madonna
As he whispers to her
Relieve me of this life I'm leaving
Relieve me of this cancer
That's killing me
She squeezes dry skinned blood
From the tube in his arm
Onto the floor
Each drop
An instance of his time
As the bloody sea rises around her
She sails back in time
And is seventeen again
Wife of a barrio gang prez
Mother of a two-year-old
And
A new baby

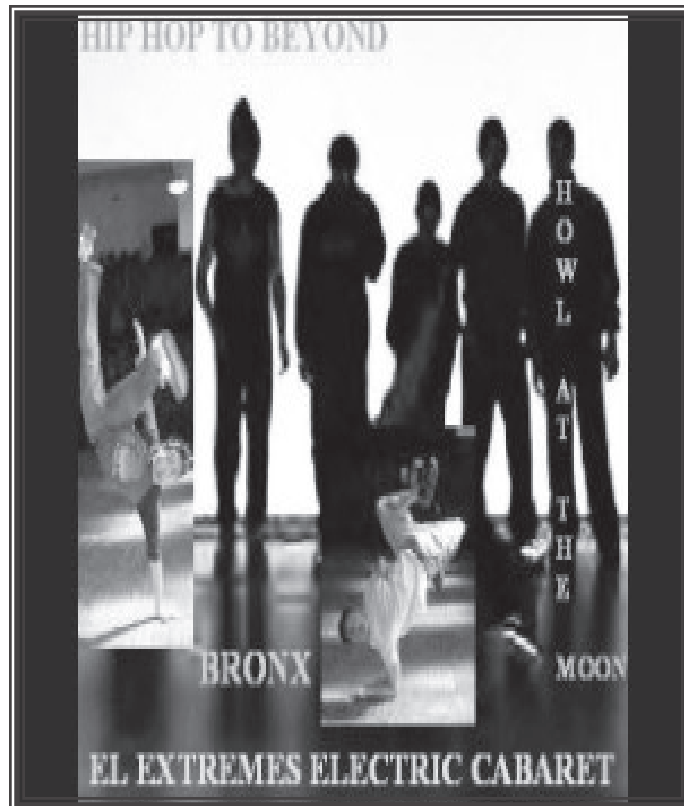
That floats inside of her
But fear grips her heart
Because the baby is not her man's
But that of a gang rival
What to do
No legal abortion in those days
She tries everything
To keep her secret
Eats handfuls of
Humphries 98 pills
Nothing
Tries jumping up and down
Nothing
She tries everything
Then the day comes
Three months in
When she accepts her
Sin-tuation
She hops on the bus
With her main grrrrrl
To escape her troubles for the day
At the amusement park
At Freedom Land
The day wears on
She tries to have fun
As they get ready to go home
They hit the bumper cars
As the ride ends
She stands up
And suddenly feels a wetness

A dizziness
And she
And she
And she
Sees blood dripping
From between her legs
Onto the floor of the ride
Each drop an instance
Of a time that never would be
Imagine that
God's Hand in Freedom Land
As the bloody sea rises
Around her mind
She sails back into the now
Through a gallery of memories

Come on Belencita
We're cutting out of school today
And catching a show;
Poking my fingers
Through the prison mesh
To touch him;
Poppy holding my son Jamesy
After he got out;
Poppy giving me away at my
Marriage to Bill;
Graduation Day at Harvard
And the smile on his face;
Poppy correcting my papers
Encouraging me to finish;
The doctor telling us ...

Her dying father's time comes
She kisses him
And his soul
Sweeps through hers

*When purple curtains
mark the end of the day
We're together at last
in Twilight Time*



The Word
For Daycha

When you hit that spot
Where everything flows
From character to type
There is a moment of virtue
The words outgrow
Confined Meaning
Become transcendent
Landing in supreme company
And then pass still higher
Image to archetype
Awakening a ravenous love bite
In the center of my mind
Where I have been blind
For so long

I stand corrected

Drained from the terms
Of all my adventures
Life is in order once more
Moving towards supreme wisdom
Passing from solitary to solitary
Until captured in the
Hyperspace of my mind

Homegirl Deluxe
For Lady L and Lefty

I possess the eternal mind
Stuttered re-re-remembrances
And immediate realities
Of an intimate crime
Against myself
My words spill forth
And evaporate
In the ready battle
Permeating my body
Ripping apart what is whole
I sit
Just finished doing a dub
Unrolling and licking
The dollar bill
For the
Third
Fourth
Fifth
Time
In the last
Six
Seven
Eight
Days
Who-who-who knows
I'm sitting here battling
Not knowing anything
My everyday existence

I'm taking it for granted
Not knowing where to go
How have I gotten here
But
I know all that
I've sold my body
For lots of money
At times
I've sold my soul
For frozen bliss
At times
Done b-b-blow jobs
For an eight ball
Gone out
Turned a trick for a hundred
90 Bucks
Whatever
Just so I could get what I want
I look inside of myself
And I see a light
But discourage it from coming out
Have had plenty of opportunities
But either too scared
Lazy
Or just down right stupid
Afraid to understand
What life is
What it's like to be a human being
And yet I talk about
The profound feelings I have
Of being part of the Universe

How I understand things
That other people just gloss over
I embrace the lies of despair
In my own words
Because I've never stood up
Faced them
Looked at them
For everything that they claim
I pray
I think
I don't feel I'm being a hypocrite
To God
To Myself
What is it like to really sit back
To say who I really am
Do I have to tell everybody
Do I have to alleviate the guilt
By thinking there is someone
I can confess my sins to
And I sit and I say
I understand
How people think
And how they feel
Caught in my own trap
That's the real sad part
How do I justify lying to myself
Is that being human
Or a pity onto myself

The Life and Loves of Lola Magdalena
For Maria Hernandez

Lola Magdalena walks this earth with big brown eyes, wet red lips, tremendous hips and a full 36 C Chest. She always stands naked before her dresser mirror and puts on her high heels first then her lipstick before getting into her evening clothes as she eats Violets to make her breath special.

Lilac oil shines on her body, "If things go right at some point in the evening I'm going to be standing at the foot of the bed after working out poppy chulo and I want to make sure he never forgets me. And what man can forget all this when I'm looking at him with nothing on but my heels and my red lipstick?"

Lola's a natural-born series of adult novels that keeps her lines in hardbound journals and books of dreams. She spots a good-looking policeman one-day on 17th Street and walks up to him waving "hello" with her hips. "I've been a naughty girl, and I need to be arrested."

She keeps on walking but soon she hears the snap of a handcuff on her wrist, "Maybe we need to discuss the penalty for your crime."

She spends a wild evening with him trying all kinds of positions dressed in his uniform shirt, handcuffs and nightstick. Then she doesn't see him again for a couple of months but when she does she treats the chance meeting with typical Lola Magdalena aplomb.

When cocaine begins flooding New York in the eighties, Lola and company are right there sniffing on the front lines. Her friend, Coriana, becomes a vacuum cleaner one night and starts panicking that she overdosed; her heart's racing too much. They flag down a cab at 10 in the morning still in their party dresses and head for Bellevue Hospital. Lola Magdalena was born there and she figures that's where she's safest. Besides, she doesn't want to go to Misericordia Hospital in the Bronx because she's afraid someone from the neighborhood might see them. Once at Bellevue, the emergency room doctor administers some Valium to Coriana and insists that Lola undergo a test too because she has a faster heart rate than Coriana. As she's lying on the emergency room gurney, Lola looks up and who does she spot but the policeman she spent the evening with a couple of months earlier.

"Cori, look ... can it be? That's the cop I slept with!" and begins laughing hysterically as she pulls the hospital bed sheet over her eyes still shaded by her sunglasses "Do you think he'll recognize me?"

Coriana, who disrobes under the hospital sheet because there are good looking interns around, dryly responds "how can't he ... look" and raising her toes exposing her waxed bikini line points to the emergency room tally board where their names appear in bright red marker "Lola Magdalena - Coriana Alacran."

Never one to miss an opportunity no matter how inopportune a moment Lola writes her number on her discharge papers and passes it to the cop on the way out. He never calls.

You can't judge a book by its cover or even the first few chapters. She may party too much, have married lovers and run herself into the ground clubbing. But she still has a level of self-acceptance and nerve tempered by her own code of rules that makes her one of the few women I meet in my life who really has big balls.

As they pass from their party girl phase, Lola Magdalena and Coriana begin traveling different paths.

I lose contact with them for a few years, but come to find out that Coriana drifts away with some Colombians at Lopez's after-hours club on Webster Avenue, while Lola Magdalena goes into the sex business with some Russian gangsters as the times change. Starting off as a barmaid at The Corso and part-time stripper at the topless clubs, Lola answers an ad one day in the *Village Voice*

after the Corso's owner is popped by the Feds for heroin trafficking and the club closes. She becomes a 300-dollar-an-hour call girl. "We always have tight security at The Red Room so it's hard for the cops to bust us. The place is next door to a restaurant and you can enter the building through a side door near the kitchen. So no one can tell if you're going to eat pasta or pussy.

Once you get in you have to give the security guys your name, a business card and your work phone number. That way they can check you out if you're for real. If the guys suspect anything they'll take you into a room and make you smoke a joint. That way they can tell if you're a cop or not. After you get through all that you can come in and see the girls who can be pretty superstitious.

We never leave a handbag on the floor because that could be bad luck - your money can walk. And a lot of us throw dollar bills under the phone line next to the "in call" receptionist so we get some good clients that night. Sometimes the dates can get really weird.

These eastern European guys like to check you out like if you're a horse or some vegetable at the market. I put a stop to that right away. I'm no melon to be pinched; I'm a passion fruit ready to get eaten."

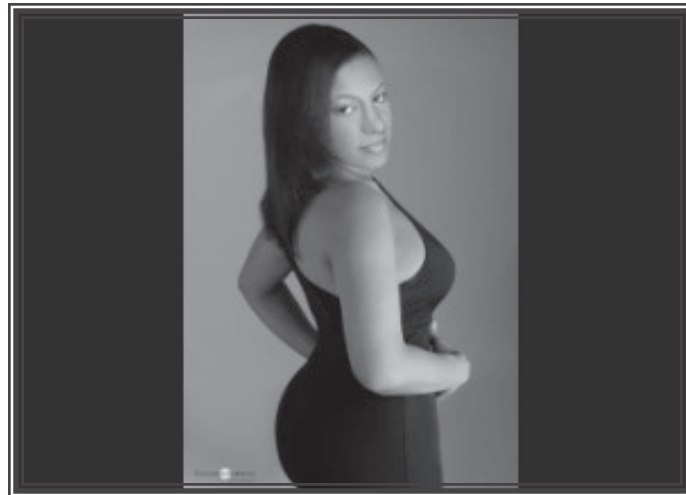
Celebrities don't phase her. A running buddy from her building hooks her up on a special call with a young Academy Award winner. "You know I could have really exploited that but I didn't. When I got there he was passed out on the floor in his boxers. He got up but that was my coke hell days. I just wanted to score. He understood and my running buddy drove him down to Harlem where he's got a honey stashed. Yep, my girlfriends told me I should have gotten some cash or a mink or something out of that because you know that kind of guy pays to keep you quiet but what the hell. He's just another guy trying to get his shit off." Lola goes from wild child to dominatrix by the time she's 27 and it bothers her.

She chills out for a while in New Mexico, then plunges back sober with a vengeance into the outcall business in New York . Lola's going to get hers and get out. She lines up a couple of rich businessmen as regular clients; their new-age courtesan, "I'm constantly looking for a third millionaire to round it out but a girl only has so many hours in the night ... I always wanted to work the houses and out-call because it comes with a sense of power. I get what I want and make some serious dough by doing what I do." I'll tell you what kind of power she has tapped in between her hips, lips and fingertips. Hanging out one evening at her apartment on Magenta Street, Lola Magdalena got a call from the Saturday night DJ's on la Mega FM. They talk with her for a little bit just to tell her that they're going to dedicate some music to

her and within ten minutes Lola Magdalena's name is blasting over the airwaves. Lola Magdalena never calls anyone. They call her and let the world know that Lola is in the house. 27 calls to home girl's private line from Lola's school of romantic gladiators follows that Mega shout out. Lola gets out of the call-girl/mistress business by launching a successful candle empire at age 30 with the help of her main client. Today she supplies small stores from New York to Miami and they even flicker in the houses she once worked lighting the path for wayward sinners and adventurous souls.

Lola Brillante
Wax Art and Candles
Miami - New York – Singapore

She teaches me local celebrity is just as good as universal. It's all a matter of perspective.



Lola Is Home
For Maria Hernandez

Lola's shocked
Because I'm so calm
When she calls
After six months
Of both of us being
Missing in action
From each other
And answer the phone
With simply

Hi Lola what's up?

In a lazy baritone
That makes
Even fog horns
Openly bleat with envy

Lola is home

No need to ask
Where we've been
Because if it's not
Interesting
We won't tell you
Anything about it
But if Lola's
Ready to pop
She'll blow her top

Opening up her
Passport of dreams

Lola is home

Every evening
She plays dress-up
In front of
The living room mirror
Wearing Flamenco dresses
And silver-mirrored
High-heel evening shoes
Lit from head to toe
Swinging her hips
To a Middle Eastern
Salsa Jam
That switches from
Arabic to Gitano Spanish
Like she does
She serves
Mango ice cream
And we exchange kisses
Right on that spot
um um um umum
BOY am I in love

Lola is home

The girl works tight
Rocking for that green
And I'll do anything to

Make our world right
That's right anything to
Make our world right
All Lola has to do is ask

From 9 To 5
I'll be the houseboy
If she wants
The maid
The cook
But after 5
She crowns me
Her flaming hetero
Whatever that is

Come here poppy
Let Lola open up your head
And make our world right

With observations
About everyday words
I never give
A second thought to
Check it out

As Bobby Blue Bland
Sings about getting
On his knees
During a tortured blues
She asks me if he's

uh – Praying
uh - Doing it doggie style
or
uh - Asking for a blow job

While on those bended knees
Serving up possibilities
That never occur to me

Lola is home

I write my lines as
She dances in front
Of the mirror
Our world becomes
The circle at the bottom
Of the exclamation point
Formed by the *Empire State Building*
This night lit in Red
In faraway Manhattan
The E on her
Apartment door
Standing for
The living End because

Lola is home

At 11 PM
Her friends come
After we consume
A late supper and each other

To say hello
To drop their
Troubles and woes
And we straighten them out
Becoming Super Ricans
Fighting for
Truth
Justice
and the Aguacate Way

With a wonderment and
Curiosity of
A couple of operators
Coming into their own

Together
After Fourteen years of
touching and losing base
touching and losing base
touching and losing base

We exchange whispers
That echo brilliant dreams
And Big Stuff
Captured in the white lights
Beaming
From the Manhattan skyline
That sways in the night
Just outside her window

THAT IS IT!

I tell you, you witness just about anything once you're on the mainland and hang with Nuyoricans. You're stuck with us and our strange experiences in this strange land. If that's not enough we've got a whole mess of cool cousins coming for the holidays from all points south. Don't worry, "It'll be a revelation, my little friend. Something you'll write about for many millennia." Buena Noche Che Che. It's been real!

Forever on my mind and in my dreams: Don Luis & Chasan Chaluisan, Heriberto & Belencita Batlle, Dona Cristina & Custodia Medina, Eddie Figueroa, Richie & Ray Maldonado, Izzy Sanabria, Leyla/Lefty/Rocky & Soledad Barreto, Isa Diaz, John Aller, Judy Kash, Steve Athanas, Maureen Davis, Ron Wagner, Chuck Curry, Walter Riggs, David and Adam Amram and Freddie/Ron/Debbie/Emily/Tito/Chris & Ana Chaluisan, Brian Tully, Bill "The Irish Rican" Kerrigan, Mike Tapp, Tito El Alacran and Coriana.