

# front-tears

Zacamil | *Brown*

ACT I

## **CALICHE**

Comal petate manta  
huacal yagual nahual  
huishte  
chindondo cuma tecomate  
perol sahumero  
perol sahumero  
Tilinte bayuncada  
cantil cotuza  
cantil alicate  
cantil cojollos  
ishtulte

Cara-jada  
Cara-mbada  
Güimba cabuya

- ¡Tetunte!
- ¿Aloishte?
- ¿Buruca bayunca?
- ¡Chiribiscos!
- ¡El ajujuy!

Pacaya espelma tembeleque  
¡Jule-jule, Catalnica!  
¡Jule-jule, Pijuyo!  
Zarco L'Aurora chele

**BEGINNING**

I make you  
-in my own image and likeness-  
seed, love.

Yet, you love me,  
my genocide,  
the hand holding me steady in the dark.

God tattooed your name on my skin,  
but the Devil poured your taste on my tongue.

I was lost, a “canary rat”,  
sleep-walking in my soul.

## OJALÁ QUE LA AURORA

Quebranto.  
La medida de la emoción: humedad de mis ojos.

Una imagen, mil desigualdades.  
Cualquier tiempo pasado es mejor  
cuando se borran las caras y las penas  
para cederle el puesto a la nostalgia.

El horizonte se pinta igual para todos.  
El tiempo se va acumulando sobre mi cuerpo  
como escarcha, como escarpías  
las fauces de la luna  
doblan la ojiva de mi amor.

Ya no hay miedo al corazón,  
solo un silencio que persigue.

Perplejo,  
contra la corriente.  
El control no es lo que representa  
si la vida nos sustenta,  
arrastrar cadenas es el veinte.

¿De qué sirve un vientre  
que no germina?  
¿De qué sirve la sangre  
que me domina?  
Así es la realidad del sujeto  
cuando el predicado se queda sin verbo.

Perplejo,  
hojas sin flor.  
De morir el tiempo, de fingir sin tempo.  
Complejo es el ser  
que deposita su fe  
en el pasillo de la muerte.  
Horas secas. Hojas muertas.

Seco,  
en las brocas,  
con las uñas rotas,

con los dientes vueltos.

Hojas sueltas. Hojarascas. Ojalá  
que todo deje de ser un sueño  
para este ejército de un solo hombre.

## ID-ENTITY<sup>1</sup>

I was a boy or a girl when I was born.<sup>2</sup>  
But my parents let me choose.

In 1937 it was an undeniable advantage...

Today, I realize I have the sex of the angels  
... to fully play with the possibilities and ramifications  
with trauma and shame  
with pride and joy. Refusing to be pitied for...

This morning it's been 52 years since we said 'yes'  
to each other for life.

A lot of prostitutes get tired  
of the job after a few years.  
Those who stay in the business the longest  
are those with a different gender identity...

But, the satisfaction of work well done is incomparable  
in prostitution.  
I have done it all  
my life and I  
have no intention to stop.

Y'know, in my job I have the certainty  
that I have done what was right.  
I can tell, my body is a temple of flowers.  
I have lived my life accordingly.  
For that I'm in peace.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the first things that caught my eye when I came to live in the United States was the sheer number of newspapers from around the world that were available at any street newsstand. As an old-school journalist, it's almost impossible not to look at a newspaper cover and, if the content is good enough, I might even buy a copy just for fun. As the reader will understand, I come from a country where talking about certain topics results in a mix of a moral, social, political, cultural, and religious taboo. Reading the stories of these people who are different from me, their very honest voices, showed me a side of migration that I had not felt before. I was (still am) amazed at how much I don't know about others. As the years went by, reading on paper was not enough. In the end, reading on the web became a small voyeuristic guilty pleasure. Thus, these transcreative tributes were born.

<sup>2</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated by an article published in HuffPost under the title: *Meet Claudette, An Intersex Sex Worker from Switzerland (NSFW)*, By Priscilla Frank. You can read the full text on <http://huff.to/1s9QJ6w>.

**GARAGANTHA**

Mi voz cambió de estación.  
Pasaron por ella los años y la distancia  
de blanca mano.

Hoy es una lengua extranjera,  
con acento enemigo.  
llena de frialdad, sin campos floridos.

Es una cuerda ajena,  
rancia,  
lejana.  
que ya no canta,  
que ya no escribe,  
que la cortaron con ausencias  
y la fundieron,  
y la fundieron.

¿De qué me sirve esta voz de cigarro si estoy arácnido,  
agazapado en la orilla de un suspiro,  
inmóvil y a la espera del viento...?

De tus venas que se van enramando  
desde este tronco pecho  
donde, enterrada en mi corazón,  
estás...

La verdad es una hebra  
que se ha tragado el desagüe del tiempo.

Un día hablaremos de ella  
y descubriremos su extensión  
y los parásitos que se amamantan de mi teta.

**ANCIENT**

Alone, in the dark,  
me as a black spot,  
I can feel my thorns, the ones left...

Even in the solitude,  
they hurt, *la mort*,  
as the origin of my-unknown.

That told me Pops  
when I learn we came from Jah's land

we were, we are, we will...  
the eternal slaves--  
taken from the Eden--,  
the ones who become the foundational ones,  
The Buffaloes,  
The Octoroons,  
The Eves.

And now, we are nowhere-men, a black-island,  
burning,  
screaming within your eyes.

From this seed,  
that Garden sounds so distance.

Once I realized I started to lose my roots  
I couldn't avoid the scramble in my soul,  
like a spider sucking poison, the sky of my mind.

Yesterday, it was a time of obscure primroses,  
one of flies tasting my rotten flesh.

Today, my name is Legion  
for we are as many...

I'm the generation next.  
A lost one.  
The one left.

**REGINA MUNDI**

Murió un sueño con la mundana,  
el nacimiento de un siglo,  
la medida de la sangre  
todo lo que corría por sus venas,  
se apagó como su voz.

## **DISGUISES**

A lot of men have fun by pretending to be women<sup>3</sup>...  
That's why I do this:  
I dress up, put this mask on and the wig...

One guy -in particular- that I trust at work,  
he knows that I put on the boobies!

It's like an extension of another persona within me...  
it might be not so much for you, but for me  
it's like being something...

So, I make up my priorities and sometimes  
other people are not happy about my choices

Society in the area we live in is very, very against it  
and that sometimes means make-up and fingernails in private

When I'm in my male mode, I go out in public  
and I just blend in, trying to find ways to fit in...  
If I walk down the street, people don't pay  
any attention to me

That's why you kill a man over a doll,  
'cause not everyone is quite so understanding.

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<sup>3</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated by an article published in Daily Mail under the title: *Lingerie company invites its male employees to wear E cup 'breast weights' for a day in an effort to better understand women*, by Miranda Bryant. You can read the full text on: <https://bit.ly/3uCNZ8N>

**FADE OUT**

Mi abuelo era un bastón...  
Pero en el monte no existen tales nombres.  
Hablamos de un bordón,  
un yugo para caminar a tres piernas los hombres  
cuando naufragan el invierno de su existencia.

## **DIVORCE**

I was afraid of what life would look like now without you.<sup>4</sup>  
You have been the one constant... the voice in my head.  
but life speeds words unspoken...  
So we really dodged a bullet there.  
You deserve a much more peaceful life, and I'm excited you get that.

Even though it feels normal to me,  
being married and also "in ministry" is often a nightmare.  
In many ways, my life has been a room full of dynamite...  
Let death be a surprise when it arrives.

In the meantime,  
my friend signed me up for something called Grindr.  
... Dating again is going to be interesting...

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<sup>4</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated from an article published in HuffPost under the title: *An Open Letter to My Now Ex-Wife*, by Michael Cheshire. You can read the full text on: <http://huff.to/1vaCujB>

**EXPAT**

Salí de ahí por la puerta trasera,  
como un fugitivo,  
apenas con lo que traía  
puesto encima, con la mano  
en el corazón y el mendrugo  
bajo el brazo, sin saber mañana o arribo.

Tengo miedo de despertar.  
Cada que cala el sol,  
la mañana sale a tapiscar almas con su guadaña.

Me está dejando sin enemigos.

No habrá herencia que reclamar.

¿Otra vez estoy muerta?

Deberé arrastrar el alma  
con carne que ha enraizado  
como pústulas, como cáncer.

Forastera de mi propio fuego  
en lenguas del tiempo.

Aquel sahumero de la memoria  
servirá de tumba para las rosas.

## **FOOD**

... why don't we love Mexico<sup>5</sup>?  
Maybe we are embarrassed.  
They know our darkest desires.

In the service of our appetites,  
just in the past few years, 80,000 dead

Our brother from another mother.  
Look at it. It's beautiful.  
We will look around and remark, for the hundredth time,  
what an extraordinary place this is.  
But there are heroes out there who refuse to go along.

People who are standing up against overwhelming odds,  
demanding accountability, demanding change -- at great,  
even at a horrifying personal cost.

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<sup>5</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated from an article published in CNN under the title: *Under the Volcano*, by Anthony Bourdain. You can read the full text on: <http://cnn.it/1vHOPeG>

## **CÁPSULA**

Cuando niño, me amamantó la muerte;  
durante un año fui agonizante feto,  
encadenado al suelo por el peso de mis alas.

Dios conmigo dejó sus dados a la suerte,  
y mi madre puso en marcha un plan imperfecto,  
uno donde las semillas crecerían humanas.

Y el amor llegó a su óbito,  
puntual, como armadura.

Hoy veo cómo se le desprenden los dientes a mi padre,  
como quien se lava la culpa de la cara.

El tiempo le cambia la estación hasta al más duro de los robles

## **RELIGION**

If there's one thing I'm an expert in, it's lying<sup>6</sup>.

I told my first lie when I was seven,  
because I wanted to be like them.  
It was my first secret date. With a boy.

I lied because I couldn't trust  
that's what's my life has been about  
... As a ( ) Muslim girl, I wasn't allowed to talk to boys, go on dates.  
I couldn't show the contours of my body, nor of my mind.

I discover my place in the world when I was just a 5-years-old kid:  
I wanted to be an astronaut but was informed that girls didn't fly around in space.

When I get 15... They stood neatly, wrapped me, like Christmas presents  
for the husband they chose after me.

I had no place for love or disagreement  
I had no choice  
After all, marriage is the reason why ( ) women exist, Mother says.  
But I couldn't spend my life being a wife  
to someone who had a predetermined mold  
of who I was supposed to be: a dainty,  
obedient woman, who made perfectly round chapatis.

My lies kept me safe.

I was sent to an English school for education,  
but my cultural rooting came from home.  
Miss Hamilton put an unwrapped condom  
onto a large banana  
in front of the entire class, explaining the facts of the animal  
kingdom.  
I could never tell my parents what had actually happened in the classroom.  
They would have beaten me with the banana  
and forced me to eat it, as I begged forgiveness for my sins.  
This wasn't the kind of freedom I had envisioned.

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<sup>6</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated from an article published in CNN under the title: *Burqas, Bikinis and Blow Jobs: My Life As a Muslim Woman in the West*, by Nadia P. Manzoor. You can read the full text on: <http://huff.to/1rY5Hxd>

My lies kept me safe.

That's why I had spent most of my time "performing."  
Sometimes behind a burqa,  
or behind a bikini,  
or behind a wall, or a mind, or a culture,  
trying  
simultaneously  
to find and conceal  
myself,  
but -ultimately- always running.  
This wasn't the envisioned kind of freedom I had.  
But, my lies kept me safe.

**NAUCOSPIA**

Cielo gris en el horizonte.

Dejé de llover hace meses,  
tengo reseca la cara,  
cercenada de sonrisas.

Cielo gris de piernas abiertas,  
trágate mis pupilas,  
lléname con tu tinta de cordero  
y olvídate del mal agüero.

¡Llévate mi nombre, llévate el veneno!  
No me dejes caer en el intento  
y líbrame del mar.

## **PALABRERO**

Me avergüenzan las palabras que no caminan  
con el barrio, discriminan  
la prehistoria del trovador,  
que se hunde en la tristeza del abecedario,  
cuando le deshojan la virgulilla,  
el acento,  
con sus manos de cemento  
como si tener lengua fuera un estorbo,  
como si usarla fuera un adorno.

Aquí no vale el maestro  
si la calle no te enseñó respeto,  
razonas como autómata  
porque no hay dónde poner un sombrero.

Se quemaron las raíces de la mata,  
vas de vuelta al hormiguero.  
Se acabaron los zompopos de mayo,  
ya se han ido los *warriors*.

## **GOD**

Before we understand science, it is natural to believe that God created the universe.

But... science offers a more convincing explanation:

'we would know the mind of God',

we would know everything that God would know,

if there were a God (which there isn't).

So, in consequence I'm an atheist<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated from an article published in CNN under the title: *'I'm an Atheist': Stephen Hawking on God and Space Travel*, by Alan Boyle. You can read the full text on: <http://nbcnews.to/1rmFXu9>

## **DOMICILIO PARTICULAR**

Amanece la bestia en calma;  
sin hambre, sonámbula,  
llena de recuerdos bajo los rieles  
donde descansan los muertos.

Silban en la distancia,  
un grito de ausencia.  
Huyen de esos dientes,  
huyen de su presencia,  
de las penas ardientes.

Despierta con la lengua alzada,  
sacudiéndose la calma de la frente,  
dispuesta a devorarnos.  
Con sus nubes de calzadas,  
con sus jergas urgentes,  
prepara sus gargantas  
con las que irá a violarnos.

**PEACE<sup>8</sup>**

when I leave this Earth,  
the only emotion I want to feel is peace....

the tipping point...  
but my anger has been building steadily...

I've been a human-powder-keg for a while,  
just waiting to go BOOM!

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<sup>8</sup> This poem has been inspired and transcreated from an article published in abcNEWS under the title: *'After Shooting, Alleged Gunman Details Grievances in 'Suicide Notes'*, by Pierre Thomas, Jack Cloherty, Jack Date, and Mike Levine. You can read the full text on: <https://bit.ly/2mnmOj>

**I'M-MIGRANT**

As a Christmas present,  
I was handcuffed on my 18th birthday.  
That's the law of the land  
for the poor, for the tired  
for the huddled masses yearning to be free.  
That's the law of the money  
in thy kingdom  
when you enter through the backdoor.