

## notes on the seasons

in spanish, we don't naturally occur. the seasons differentiate us from natural people. when there are no seasons, let's say, when we are a caribbean country, better yet, when we are a territory, we aren't allowed to use the *x*, except for the word *xylophone*, because who uses a xylophone? and who wants us? every time you think these questions aren't the same, you recognize that you never met me, despite the *i've seen you before* and *somewhere*.

if i'm going to explore my nationality, i have to be recognizable. this is what everyone knows. in fact, if i'm not recognizable, it's as if i had no nation.

i wrote the following in a letter to the lions of the mayagüez zoo:

i know that right now you are lions, and you've spent a lot of time in the heat, but when you become snakes, no fence will be able to contain you. they'll have to put you in a glass cage. they call this cage a fish tank. they'll decorate the cage with rocks. you'll no longer be able to roar. but don't worry, when you become spiders, you'll be able to leave the fish tank. you'll climb up to the roof. maybe it'll take you many weeks to find a window, but in the interim, you'll eat mosquitos, since these are abundant, despite the aromatic candles.

i wrote them this letter because i know what it's like to wait for transmogrification.

i wrote them this letter because i know what it's like to wait for transmogrification in captivity.

outside of the fish tank, there is a room. outside of the room, there is a zoo. outside of the zoo, there is a hometown. outside of the hometown, there is a colony. outside of the colony, there is an empire. outside of the empire, there is the king of seasons. if you kill the king, you kill the game.

## memories of the good daughter

pitorro is what cows use at night to remember day.  
god's wine hangs from balconies to signal it's safe.  
tourists buy towels with parrots,  
on their way to my town.  
if they even pass through my town.

my town, which is my mother's town.

we stop by añasco's post office.  
we have a task list.  
i still have hair.  
they recognize me as sotero's granddaughter.  
we climb up the stairs to a tobaccoed sofa  
full of withered flowers as if this were maría.  
they bring us coffee and soda crackers.  
i listen to unrecognizable names,  
and learn these are my blood.  
i don't speak this language,  
but they lend me the words.  
how is yoli? and school?

my first girlfriend is from a similar town.  
we text each other in the bathroom.  
i tell her i miss her.  
she tells me they're going to the church retreat.  
when i come out, my body molds itself  
to certain postural expectations.

morning's dimensions are tricky,  
a word i acquired in california or nebraska.  
it means my uncles enter and leave the house,  
so i can't watch tv by myself.

múcaros divide the land amongst cousins.  
they fly according to lines drawn in the treaty.  
i go into town to buy eggs and on the way  
i roll down the front seat window so the humidity

can enter with cold peach light.

i don't understand what sort of memories i'm supposed to have.  
one where i didn't go with my boyfriend to the movies every friday,  
where i didn't waste my time looking at shoes or eating at el mesón?

maybe one where i didn't lie to my family for years,  
faking i was the good daughter,  
or one where they don't tell me it's okay,  
as they step outside to water the plants.

my grandmother's hand on my chin says qué linda.  
with this accomplishment, the fossils rest and i rise.  
but i wasn't asleep, nor good, nor a daughter.

### **While they sleep (under bed is another country)**

oh to be white, america  
oh to be white america  
ode to being white: america:  
ode to being white america  
or to be white in america  
or to be white america  
or to be america,  
white  
america[1]

[1] "puerto rico puerto riiiico  
es mi tierra natal  
no la cambio por ninguna  
aunque me paguen un capital"

how far will we go to believe we will save everyone with a box of rice and beans?[2]  
should i forgive myself for the cruelty i showed when i was most beaten down, clawing  
up the walls of my heart with an icepick? i saw over an arm that reached down to me  
from the edges of my chest, saw your face, a sudden burst of hot water in the winter air.  
the pick pierced your hand and the pick was my hand, a long nail reaching out of my  
flesh into yours until you were wounded. i did that because you are white and i had

been living at the bottom of this heart eating the ashes of my ancestors and the children  
i bore in silence. i promised them a whispered vengeance. you'd been living in the  
outside world, seeing films, laughing, being overworked, living, paying bills. how could i  
just move on?

i am sorry for the things i said when i was broken that autumn when so many of us were  
killed and cremated. i'm sorry i said you didn't care, spit in the cactus, and broken a  
plate against my chest when you weren't looking. i'm sorry i was afraid to burn a flag  
because i had nowhere to return. instead i cut across our sheets, planting red seeds in  
the cupboards.

arroz con pollo

she arrived three years ago

she is now married to a white man

she lives in allentown

he arrived five days ago

he is now living with a cousin

he is still looking for work

she arrived one year ago

she got a job at target

she takes pictures on the train

and wears long johns

they arrived a month ago

they broke up last week

they are depressed

they can't remember when they arrived

they keep threatening to move back

i can live without electricity

i've done it before[3]

[3] repartiendo pastillas como chicles

not a single blue tarp in heaven[4]

[4] pero sobran cielos plásticos en el paraíso

***in puerto rico we inherit your wars***

maldita sea we fight them and what did you give us

under the church in mayagüez there are taíno bones  
the father knows it  
all the fathers

he said take this ribbon and measure the church dimensions  
tell me if it's worth  
destroying faith for some bones  
what i saw when i walked around with my ribbon  
were old women praying to papito dios  
with tears of faith for his creatures  
malformed by desire  
    airs of bettering what isn't enough  
i saw the faces of saints some sweet and others  
as arbitrary as abstinence  
more than anything i saw the gold the cruelty

i went back to the father after covering the church  
with the ribbon the scene of a crime  
and bendito i didn't ask for forgiveness  
nor could i explain  
    the newfound hate