

sylvia beato

ALLEGIANCES

and on those mornings when we opened the door wide to the garden green humid air of august endless the whirring of the fan a song so ancestral we blinked like baby jellyfish in air and soon the high whistle of the kettle and soon the comfort deep of the inkwell mug as we **promise to give up loyalty to other countries** and yet what do bones know of the places that come before them *el día que tu naciste* what do they remember as the tongue memorizes the 13 original colonies *fue el día mas feliz de mi vida* while in the corner of the mind we whisper our truths to the open book of myths *al hijo de Regina se lo llevaron* the book that **promise[s] to defend the Constitution and laws of the United States** *y nunca se supo lo que le pasó* and in response we unhinge our mouths to the papaya tree at the edge of el balcón over which possibilities are early and doubt has boiled the skin of the plantains away *seguro que se lo mataron, el pobre* what else besides our sleepy lashes muddy and slow what else besides this folktale of the frontier *y te juro que Regina nunca se recuperó* where we **promise to obey the laws of the United States** from nothing out of no one into something that “fundamentally changed the course of human history” that **promise[s] to serve in the U.S. military (if needed)** call upon we the people to bounce on the board then dive *por eso te ruego, hija mia, no te metas tanto en política* into becoming a singular **promise to serve (do important work for) the nation (if needed)** and dashing the lullaby languages loud stories and their heroes *al fin y al cabo, todos son ladrones y todo es mentira* to replace it all with narratives that keep running over ~~*there has to be another way you say there has to be a different change*~~ but quiet guard these mornings hush hush as we wake and we look and **promise to be loyal to the United States** and look into one another — *mira* — all is still for a moment we understand *porque no hay nada tan sagrado como la vida* and we kneel down for it