

Solo el pueblo salva al pueblo

Estuve sin beber, ni comer, solo rezando.
Los coches flotaban como si fuese una pecera.
Era como si estuviera en medio del mar.
Luces rojas de náufrago.

Pasé por un grado de hipotermia, me estaba durmiendo,
de estar orinándome encima... Todo, todo, dentro del agua.
El paisaje era como una zona de guerra,
arrasando lo que la vida construyó.

Cuando me giré, mi hermana ya no estaba.
Ese garaje fue una ratonera.
Siete ancianos sin localizar.
Los subíamos en sillas mientras la corriente mordía las piernas.

Vecinos lanzaban sábanas a una mujer que el río se llevó.
“Necesito a mi niño, es mi niño”.
Nos acostamos sin luz ni agua pensando que, al amanecer,
estaría la Guardia Civil [...], pero al amanecer no había nadie.

Los políticos del siglo XXI apuñalan al pueblo,
con agua mineral y rabia acumulada.
Nos aplaudían al llegar.
Consiguieron verla. Vino el helicóptero y se la llevaron.

Cien voces cantaban para que el miedo no ganara la noche.
Sobrevivieron en la terraza de una gasolinera,
salvando a otros con cables y cuerdas.
Donde haga falta.

Aquí solo queda el pueblo. Y el pueblo vuelve.
Y cuando las nubes se retiren,
quedará el lodo en las calles y en los cuerpos,
pero habrá manos que limpien,
puertas que se abran,
ojos que busquen lo perdido.

Porque solo queda el pueblo.

Porque el pueblo recuerda,

Porque solo el pueblo salva al pueblo.

Only the People Save the People

I went without drinking, without eating, just praying.
Cars floated as if trapped in a goldfish bowl.
It felt like I was in the middle of the sea.
Red lights of a castaway.

I went through a stage of hypothermia, I was drifting off,
urinating on myself... Everything, everything, underwater.
The landscape looked like a war zone,
sweeping away what life had built.

When I turned around, my sister was gone.
That garage became a trap.
Seven elderly people, unaccounted for.
We lifted them onto chairs while the current bit at our legs.

Neighbours threw sheets to a woman the river took.
"I need my boy, he's my boy."
We went to bed without light or water, hoping that by dawn,
the Civil Guard would be there [...], but by dawn, there was no one.

21st-century politicians stab their own people,
with bottled water and bottled-up rage.
They applauded when we arrived.
They managed to see her. The helicopter came and took her away.

A hundred voices sang to keep the fear from swallowing the night.
They survived on the roof of a petrol station,
saving others with cables and ropes.
Wherever they were needed.

Here, only the people remain. And the people return.
When the clouds retreat,
mud will remain in the streets and on our bodies,
but there will be hands to clean,
doors that open,
eyes that search for what was lost.

Because the people remain.

Because the people remember.

Because only the people can save the people.

El Cielo se rompió en pedazos
The Sky Shattered Into Pieces

El Cielo se rompió en pedazos,
y los pedazos cayeron sobre nosotros:

*The Sky shattered into pieces,
and the pieces fell upon us:*

inflados,
macizos,
sordos.

*swollen,
solid,
muffled.*

Con la capacidad de cambiar de forma,
de ajustarse a otros cuerpos.

*With the ability to change shape,
to mould itself to other bodies.*

Si el pedazo de Cielo caía
dentro de una boca,
adquiría forma de boca.

*If the piece of Sky fell
into a mouth,
it took the shape of a mouth.*

En el cubo que la Abuela
dejó en el patio, se volvió
profundo y redondo.

*In the bucket that Grandma
left in the yard, it became
deep and round.*

Y el que aterrizó en el prado
permaneció igual de plano.

*And the one that landed on the meadow
stayed just as flat.*

Pero cuando el trozo cayó
sobre la Muerte,
se hizo tan grande,
tan vasto, que llegó a confirmar
lo que no sabía nadie:

*But when the fragment fell
upon Death,
it grew so large,
so vast, that it came to confirm
what nobody knew:*

¿De qué tamaño,
de qué forma es la pena?

*What size,
what shape is grief?*

My Home, My Place

Grandfather built this house
when all was still fields,
when the earth was new
and the sky had no cracks.
With calloused, clawed hands,
he tore fistfuls of soil,

and the seeds that fell from his brow
sprouted into pillars—
four arms of lime and stone
to cradle the weight of his name.

Grandfather raised the walls,
but it was Grandmother who carved the windows,
so the house could learn to see us,
so the sun could slip inside,
so the moon could keep watch
as you played barefoot in the dust.

We left the ground untouched,
soft with stones,
so you could learn from the snails,
so you could learn that life
exists beyond the walls of a home.

Years passed.
Two small mounds in the garden—
they are your grandparents.
The snails kiss the stones where they rest.
This house once gave them shade,
and in its coolness, gardenias grew,
as white as my wedding dress.

Do you know what memory is?
It is their hands on my belly,
everybody asking what you would be—
a boy or a girl.
We would find out when the day came.

We brought you home in the blanket I wove,
your father nailing the crib firm

so the wind could rock you,
as Grandmother's vine curled around the beams.

But the vine snapped.
The leaks grew large—
no longer tongues,
but open throats.
And when the river forgot its path,
it did not ask for forgiveness.

But we will return.
Because the snails still know the way,
because a vine can sprout from a single shoot,
because the windows will keep watching
from the memory of their holes.

We will rebuild it all,
with calloused, clawed hands,
digging into the earth like wild beasts,
those roots that couldn't be erased.

As Grandfather said:
"This is my home, because this is my place."

Lament of the Rain

I didn't want to, I swear I didn't.
I tried to resist, biting my tongue,
but I swelled and swelled that day,
a day that seemed so ordinary at first.

From the sky, I came crashing down,
not like a veil—no, like a slab of cement.
I struck the earth, already drenched,
with a heavy, hollow blow.

I promise, I never meant to—ask the birds.
They watched as I held my breath,
trapped deep inside me.
I shattered schools, I took the elderly.
People screamed, disbelief in their eyes.

Lorries skidded through my lips,
the sludge of death clung to my fingers.
That day, so normal at first,
I stained it all.
But I didn't want to, truly.

Lamento de la lluvia

Yo no quería, de verdad que no.
Me negaba, aguantando el aire,
pero acabé hinchándome entera
sobre ese día que parecía normal.

Desde el cielo caí de golpe,
no como un manto, no, como una losa.
Me estampé contra el suelo, tan húmedo
con un golpe seco.

De verdad que no quería, creedme.
Preguntad a los pájaros, ellos vieron
cómo contenía mis lágrimas,
atascadas en mi estómago gris.
Reventé colegios, arrastré ancianos.
La gente gritaba, no lo creían.

Camiones resbalaban en mis labios,
el fango de la muerte en mis dedos.
Ese día, tan normal al principio,
lo ensució todo.
Pero yo no quería, de verdad.
Os lo prometo.

LAMENTO DE LA LLUVIA

Yo no quería,
de verdad que no.
Me negué, aguantando el aire
pero acabé hinchándome entera
sobre ese día que parecía
normal.

Desde el cielo caí de golpe,
no como un manto, no, como una losa.
Me estampé contra el suelo,
tan húmedo
con un golpe
seco.

De verdad que no quería,
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Reflection piece: Poet in Residence at StAnza

Being the Poet in Residence for the Translation Award at the 2025 StAnza Poetry Festival was an incredible opportunity. It gave me space to connect the fractured stories of my homeland with the boundless, shape-shifting possibilities of poetry. Thanks to the support of the Edwin Morgan Trust, I had the chance to explore Morgan's archives—tracing his daring spirit, his joy in breaking language open, and his deep commitment to translation.

What struck me most was that Morgan's work was never just about language—it was about politics, resistance, solidarity. He didn't translate at random. His choices—Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Lorca—were deliberate. He wanted to carry voices of revolution and heartbreak and hope across languages, and that felt deeply relevant to what I was trying to do too.

Like him, I wanted to stretch language until it could hold both grief and survival. His Spanish translations—especially his versions of Lorca and Borges poems—showed me how poetry can move across borders without losing its pulse. In the flood testimonies from Valencia, I felt echoes of Morgan's own urgency: poetry not as decoration, but as witness. As rescue.

The heart of my project, *Still Rising: Voices from the Flood*, came from a place of helplessness. In 2024, I watched from afar as the DANA floods devastated Valencia. I wasn't there. I couldn't help. All I could do was listen. But at StAnza, I began to build a bridge across that distance. Using the words of survivors, I created collective poems, bilingual elegies, and brought in the powerful voice of Valencian poet Laura Giordani.

The residency also changed how I write. It pushed me further, made me braver. Working with translation, with collective grief, with stories that weren't my own—it widened the frame of what I thought poetry could hold. It reminded me that sometimes my job as a poet isn't to explain, but to listen. To hold space. To shape language in a way that makes people feel less alone.

It also opened me up to new forms. For the first time, I explored concrete poetry—taking inspiration from Morgan's belief that “typography is just as important in poetry as metaphors.” That idea unlocked something visual in me. I wrote *The Lament of the Rain*, a piece that mimics rainfall on the page.

This experience wouldn't have been the same without the warmth of the StAnza team, who welcomed me so openly. Nor without Ilisha Thiru Purcell—my fellow poet in residence—whose work, so rooted in place and memory, constantly inspired me to go deeper. And of course, there

was St Andrews itself: the sea, the cobbled streets alive with words, and that feeling that poetry was everywhere, just waiting to be found.

But above all, I'm grateful to the survivors—Karol, Amparo, Juan, Hilario—who trusted me with their stories. Translating their grief into English felt sacred, like carrying something waterlogged and fragile to higher ground. One woman told me, “Nunca pensé que mi dolor podría cruzar el océano”—“I never thought my grief could cross the ocean.”

And yet, it did.

And maybe in that crossing lies part of the answer to Edwin Morgan's question: What can a poem do?

It can hold the weight of a broken sky.

It can be a rope thrown across waves.

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