I. The mountain is weeping – there is no one left to speak her mother tongue

Распукала, распукала Шар Планина,

Ајде, распукала,

The mountain

Svelte, in folds, trails lace

Waits on three exalting guests –

Spurred, she pastes on her coloured dress,

And smears on her chalky base,

And pricks up her drooping face,

And waits, for the herdsmen, to sound.

It had been so long, since she had heard

Another speak her mother tongue.

She chalks for them a narrow way,

Ensconced in thinly speckled snow.

She trims and hems a bounded trace,

And waits, from the dale,

The herdsmen, to sound.

The mountain hears, and begins to tickle, sniffle and spittle

She crackles and prickles as she hears,

The herdsmen, exalted, not from the dale,

Sound, from the peak.

The sneaks!

Распукала!

The mountain bellowed beastly,

‘O Mountain, Mellow!’,

But she would not, muddled, hear,

Hearing, could not understand,

Puzzled over their foreign garble,

Heaved and puddled into a tear,

Splinters into deep howling snow,

And swallows them down the dale.

Распукала!

Mountain, O, Mountain,

We have family.

Have you nobody?

That could mourn your body,

See, I’ve got a love, haven’t you, Mountain?

She’ll mourn all up to the day’s end.

I’ve got a sister, haven’t you, Mountain?

She’ll mourn all up to the month’s end.

But I’ve got a mother, haven’t you, Mountain? A mother, mourning mourns to no end,

I’ve got a mother, Mountain, haven’t you? Mother,

If you don’t let me go, Mother,

She’ll grieve now, even now, through all eternal, like no other.

Ајде, мајка жали.

The mountain is weeping – there is no one left to speaks her mother tongue.

II. The forest sheds her leaves to mourn with her dying sister

Зајди ,зајди јасно сонце,

Зајди помрачи се,

The sun settles into black,

The moon waxes and snuffs,

dusting, softly, brushing time –

And drowns.

The grove, bound downward, groans:

‘give me more time, I’ve just only grown.’

But the sea drank down the sky,

And the silence could not sound.

And the grove begins to cry,

Sheds leaves blot to the ground.

Then, a friend, friendly sounds, from the forest.

‘Why do you weep alone, forest?

Let us mourn in hand, forest, for us, our loss is grave.

You, for your leaves, forest,

I, for my years.

Yours are not lost, forest

They’ve entered the frost, forest,

Then they will return.

But I am lost, forest,

When my years pass, forest,

They will not come back to me.

When I pass, forest,

I will not come back to you.

When you pass, forest,

You’ll come back for me.’

Зајди удави се,

The forest sheds her leaves to mourn with her dying sister.

III. There is blood in the river

Море сокол пие

Вода на Вардарот.

Море сокол пие

Вода на Вардарот.

Our hero staggers. Thirsting, he sees

The Falcon drinks water from the river,

Trilling, our hero, speaks

‘Falcon, O, Falcon, bird of majesty, old friend,

Haven’t you seen my brother? He came this way not long.’

The Falcon, silent, dips his beak back,

Drips wordless to the water, but our hero, thirsting, speaks again,

‘Falcon, O, Falcon, bird of majesty, old friend,

It is I, the hero. Haven’t you seen my brother?

He’s fled this way not long.’

The Falcon drinks down the river.

Gargling no words, but bubbles a shriek, lodged in his throat,

the Falcon drinks down the river, and spits out red,

A dagger lodged in his throat.

Јане јане ле бело грло

The Falcon speaks:

‘Hero, O, hero. Your brother came here not long, old friend. Old friend, your brother, your brothers shot, nine times. Your brothers, hero, your brother, they shot, and the tenth, you, hero, stabbed a dagger in his throat.
Come drink from the red river, now, thirsting. Haven’t you seen your brother, Hero? He fell to this river. This dagger you lodged in his throat, now has opened mine to say – ‘human beings, I wouldn’t be caught dead with them’ and flapped and flapped and flapped away.

С нож е прободена

There is blood in the river.

IV. There is blood in the cup

Налеј, налеј, налеј, меанџике налеј.

Налеј, налеј, налеј, од рујното вино.

И ние сме деца, на мајката земја.

На мајката земја, на Македонија.

И ние имаме право да живееме.

Allay, allay, allay sister

Allay, allays the cup, with wine.

Rest, now.

The table laid for you, sister,

You our twelfth, and only one.

You remain.

Rest, now.

You lay out eleven empty chairs for us

In this empty tavern, along a white tablecloth,

Washed, pressed, and steamed this morning,

You pat pat pat to press out each crease.

There are creases, still, furled upward,

Betraying a life of joy that frame your grieving eyes.

You layed the table with ajvar, makalo, soft white bread, baklava, tulumba, rice pudding dappled with cinnamon,

You polished our cups, and brewed us each a cup of Turkish coffee,

Our absences are measured in the time it takes for each of our cups to run cold,

Each steaming cup contains at least two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, three hundred, two hundred, two, one breaths.

You remain.

'Never let your coffee run cold', you always told us.

You, remain in our land, mother land.

Keep it warm for me. Save me a seat.

Will you say a few prayers for me?

Breathe a few breaths for me, of that air where I gave my first breath,

Perhaps if you remain, then there will still be someone to gathers all those breaths,

Billowing, heaving together.

Do not let them run still.

Move, and make, and shake, and breathe, and brew and cook and love and write and remember and heal and believe and break and stay and stay and stay.

I'm sorry that we left you.

Keep it warm for me. Save me a seat.

Remember for me.

Speak our language for me.

Make our coffee for me.

Pour a glass for me, of the richest, oldest, deepest, wine.

Aged, and ripe.

One day when we have all returned, we will say,

thank you thank you thank you,

To the ones who stayed.



A REFLECTION ON STANZA FESTIVAL 2023

Gabriela Milkova – Translation Residency Recipient

I would like to thank StAnza and the Edwin Morgan Trust for entrusting me with the opportunity to be their 2023 Poet-in-Residence with the Translation Award. The month-long residency challenged and inspired me to create new work in exciting and playful ways, drawing from Edwin Morgan's own expansive creative practice. For the Translation Award, I created a series of poems which I performed at the StAnza Poets in Residence Poetry Café. I wrote these poems with the festival theme, WILD: Forms of Resistance, in mind. I am from Macedonia, north of Greece on the Balkan peninsula where we speak Macedonian, a Slavic language. I intended the poems as interpretations and newly imagined adaptations of traditional Macedonian folksongs, many of which are based on conversations had between the natural world and the human.

For these poems, I also drew inspiration from the images in Morgan's scrapbooks in the Edwin Morgan Archive, and from his early poetry manuscripts, several of which draw connections between the manmade and the natural, and the thin line we walk together between comradery and harm. One of the folksongs I interpreted was *Распукала шар планина* or, "The Coloured Mountain (Shar Planina) Has Ruptured". Here, Shar Planina, meaning the colourful or coloured mountain, waits on guests. A focal point of Macedonian culture and hospitality is you must always be ready for unexpected guests. However, here the Mountain and the guests cannot understand one another because they no longer speak the same tongue, and the mountain begins to tremble in fear into an avalanche and entraps them in a reciprocally confused state. I also drew from Morgan's scrapbook imagery, where there were often images of mountains with a magnified micro-object beside them. The magnified objects often had parallel shapes to the great mountains. In the poem, I explore the relationship between the vast and the small, but also between the familiar and foreign, in the relation between mountain and shepherd.

The other poems reflect on folksongs about a dying human and a dying forest mourning for one another, a falcon encountering a wounded soldier, and the final poem is based on a folksong of a true story: in 1903, a Parisian waitress, Madame Madeleine, serves her beloved Macedonian friends, before they went to Solun, to fight against Ottoman occupation, and every one of them died. From then on, she was known as the silent lady whom nobody had seen smile, mourning over her Macedonian friends for many years, until her death in 1939. I interpreted this folksong twofold, reflecting both on Macedonia's history of occupation and current political struggles and problems with mass emigration. The poem is therefore also dedicated as a thank you to all those that remain in Macedonia and continue to nurture our language and heritage. When performed, the verses in Macedonian, which are excerpts from the folksongs, are sung. In Macedonian, the term for translating poetry is "препев", or "re-singing". My intent with these poems was to "re-sing" a heritage. In my interpretation of them, I aimed to highlight the drama, wildness, and poetry that these folksongs bring with them, and I carry with me.

As part of the residency, I also created a collaborative exhibit entitled "Peeking", made in collaboration with local St Andrews artists Jonathan Koetsier and Sarah Koetsier. The exhibit was installed as part of StAnza Poetry Festival 2023. Inspired by Edwin Morgan's concrete poems, the exhibit explored the notion of a corporeal language, where words and letters can be given texture, dimension, growth, and enclosure, extending across languages, English and Macedonian, and alphabets, Latin and Cyrillic, to invite new paths of visual and semantic meaning. Jonathan created

a series of book art in conversation with my poetry. In the books, words are playfully concealed and found, can be “peeked” through, “eat” through the page, or acquire new dimensions from different angles. Sarah created sculptural art in response as physical representations of the themes explored in the books and poems. The exhibit was an exploration of what happens to repeated or adapted words, homonyms, and letters, when they exist in different alphabets and languages or in different forms and mediums. Jonathan Koetsier’s creative response through experimentally cut and bound books explored how a poem can be written again, but be given a texture, dimension, and multi-sided form. Sarah Koetsier’s ceramic Ж and engraved Turkish coffee mugs were a further response as part of the exhibition of the contours of letters in sculptural forms.

I am grateful I had the opportunity to deepen my creative practice in these ways and thank the amazing StAnza team, Peter Mackay, my mentor, and everyone at the Edwin Morgan Trust for providing me with the support needed to complete the residency and to flourish creatively through it. During the residency, I discovered how much I enjoyed connecting visual forms to poetry, and have recently begun writing more ekphrastic poetry, with one of my new poems, *Two Gibbons Reaching for the Moon* having recently been published in The Ekphrastic Review. I have also maintained my bilingual writing practice, and recently had the honour of being featured in two new Macedonian anthologies published this year. One is *Самодиви/”*Samodivi” an anthology of Macedonian female poets, and another is *Ново раѓање на зборот/*”The Rebirth of the Word”, an anthology of young Macedonian poets, both published by PNV Publications.

The residency remains a highlight of this year for me. I look forward to following all the great poetry that will continue to be supported by and emerge from StAnza and the Edwin Morgan Trust in the future.

