



Jova Bagioli Reyes

NEW COMMISSION

Las calles recuerdan / The Streets Remember

In Summer 2022, Manchester Literature Festival commissioned Jova Bagioli Reyes to create a new poem inspired by protest, resistance, identity and home in their role as a Multilingual City Poet for Manchester UNESCO City of Literature. Jova's response was the powerful 'Las calles recuerdan / The Streets Remember', written in their mother tongue of Spanish, then translated into English.

Jova performed 'Las calles recuerdan / The Streets Remember' for the first time at a special Manchester Multilingual City Poets showcase at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation on 19 October for the 2022 Manchester Literature Festival. Anjum Malik and Ali Al-Jamri performed alongside Jova and read their own translations of 'The Streets Remember' in their mother tongues of Urdu and Arabic. You can also download PDFs of their translations.

Jova Bagioli Reyes is a queer, neurodiverse immigrant hailing from Colombia and Chile. Their poetry and music are heavily inspired by the long struggle of Abya Yala (so-called Latin America).

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Las calles recuerdan

(Spanish Version)

Las calles recuerdan la sangre
vertida con cuidado por sobre adoquines
aquellos mismos que avistas entre el asfalto quebrado
cuando vas regresando del trabajo

Las calles recuerdan a Peterloo
Y la estampida de la vil policía
los sables laborando tal como el carnicero
y el espanto de un pueblo masacrado

Así es como los recordaron
Con lamentables gradas y consuelo
la delusión que hoy no podría suceder
algo tan imposiblemente violento

Sin embargo las calles recuerdan aún
el rehusar de algunos obreros
Solidaridad con un pueblo encadenado
Aquí ese algodón rojo no es bienvenido

Las calles recuerdan las hadas reunidas
Que lucharon contra la bruja maldita
Por el derecho de existir
sin censura
sin cordura
Locamente como se quiere la una a la otra

Asimismo las calles recuerdan estar repletas,
hace muy poco tiempo, de convicciones
¡A la mierda la renta!
¡Las vidas afro sí importan!
Y recuerdan el miedo de gente muy poderosa

Personas que gozan de salud y lujuria
Que las calles nunca han conocido
Sino por sus acciones, sus miedos, los mismos patrones
de siempre cuando se sienten amenazadas

Ahora las calles se las pasan
inundadas
prisioneras
maltratadas
abusadas

Ahogándose bajo una marea de cerdos
Que pisotean con botas y metralletas a la mano
Comandadas por hombres que juran ser parte del pueblo

Esas mismas calles que se están marinando en el delirio
Llenas de plaga alentada por la indiferencia de ejecutivos
Y sus amigos
que han dejado edificios vacíos
desparramados como basura
Y celosamente protegidos

Las calles que hoy en día las obligan ser presentables
por las olas de consumidores
y negocios respetables
mientras ellas trabajan de colchones y ataúdes
por lxs que no tienen refugio
...viene el invierno
...y abunda el miedo

Tal como yo, las calles recuerdan a Bexley Square
Cuando el trabajo era escaso y los sueldos miserables
En ese entonces también nos golpearon
nos repudiaron
A personas que no tenían ni como comer

Pero las calles también recuerdan
A Moss Side
Y a Oldham
Cuando las víctimas de la supremacía blanca se rebelaron
Y quemaron - sí que quemaron! -
Los camiones de los policías
que protegían a los fascistas
y abusaban de nuestra gente con impunidad

Escucharán, lectores y oyentes, de algunas personas respetables
que esa no es la manera, que hay que ser pacíficos
Pero las calles recuerdan cuando el estado no lo era
Y recuerdan también el poder que llevamos dentro
Y te dicen:
"Recuerda que la protesta no es obra de teatro
Es una lucha
Es revuelta
Es amenaza."

Recuerda que las calles son nuestras
Hay sólo que tomarlas

(Literal Translation)

The streets remember the blood
Poured carefully over cobblestones
Those same ones you glimpse between the broken asphalt
When you are returning from work

The streets remember Peterloo
And the stampede of the vile police
The sabres labouring just like the butcher
And the terror of a massacred people

That is how they/you remembered them/you
With pitiful steps and relief
The delusion that today couldn't happen
Something so impossibly violent

However, the streets remember still
The refusal of some workers
Solidarity with a chained people
Here that red cotton is not welcome

The streets remember the gathered fairies
That fought/struggled against the damned witch
For the right of existing
Without censure
Without sanity/sense/sensibility
Crazily like one loves one another

Likewise the streets remember being full.
Not long ago, to the brim of convictions
To hell with the rent!
Black lives *do* matter!
And they remember the fear of very powerful people

People that enjoy (good) health and luxury/excess
That the streets have never met/known
Save for their actions, their fears, the same patterns
As always when they feel threatened

Now the streets are
Inundated
Prisoners
Mistreated
Abused
Drowning under a wave/tide of pigs
That stomp/trod with their boots and machine guns in hand

Commanded by men who swear to be part of the people

Those same streets that are marinating in delirium
Full of plague encouraged/emboldened by the indifference of executives
And their friends
That have left buildings empty
Strewn like trash/rubbish
And jealously protected

The streets that today they force to be presentable
For the waves of consumers
And respectable shops/businesses
While they (the streets) work as mattresses and coffins
For those who do not have refuge
...winter is coming
...and there is plenty of fear

Just like me, the streets remember Bexley Square
When work was scarce and wages miserable
At that time, they beat us too
They condemned us
People who didn't have how to eat

But the streets also remember
Moss Side
And Oldham
When the victims of white supremacy rebelled
And burned - yes they burned! -
The vans of the police
That protected the fascists
And abused our people with impunity

You will hear, readers and listeners, from some respectable persons
That that is not the way, that we/they/one must be peaceful
But the streets remember when the state was not
And they also remember the power we carry within
And they say (to you):
"Remember that the protest is not a work of theatre
It is a fight/struggle
It is rebellion/riot
It is (a) threat."

Remember that the streets are ours
We only need to take them

The Streets Remember
(English Version)

The streets remember the blood
poured carefully over the cobblestones
The same ones you spy between the broken roads
On your way home from work

The streets remember Peterloo
And the stampeding hooves of callous police
The sabres at work just like the butcher's
And the terror of a massacred people

This is how they remember them
With pitiful steps and sighs of relief
The delusion that something so impossibly violent
Could not ever happen today

And yet the streets still remember
The dedicated refusal of some workers
Solidarity with an entire people in chains
That red-speckled cotton is not welcome here

The streets remember the fairies
That fought against the wicked witch
For the right to an existence
Uncensored
Unrestrained
Freely just as we love one another

Likewise the streets remember being packed,
not long ago, to the brim with conviction
Fuck the rent!
Black lives *do* matter!
And they remember the fear of powerful people

People that bask in good health and in excess
That the streets have never had the displeasure of meeting
That only know them by their actions, their fears, the same patterns
they partake in when they start to feel the pressure

Now the streets are perpetually
inundated
incarcerated
mistreated
violated

Drowning under a sea of swine
Their boots stomping, gun in hand
Dispatched by men who swear to be one of us

Those same streets that have been thoroughly marinated in delirium
Bathed in plagues emboldened by the indifference of some executives
and their friends
that have left buildings empty and abandoned
Strewn like litter
Yet jealously protected

The streets that today have been forced to be presentable
For countless waves of consumers
and moste respectable businesses
While they themselves moonlight as mattresses and caskets
For those who have no refuge
...it will be winter soon
...and fear abounds

Just as I do, the streets remember Bexley Square
When work was scarce and wages were miserable
They beat us back then too, berated and condemned us
People who couldn't even afford to eat

But the streets also remember
Moss Side
and Oldham
When the victims of white supremacy rose up and revolted
And they burned - oh yes they burned! -
The police vans and police cars
The coppers protecting the fascists
And abusing our people with impunity

You will hear, dear readers and listeners, from many a respectable person
That that isn't the right way, that we must be peaceful
But the streets still remember when the crown and its servants weren't
And they still remember the power that we hold within ourselves
And they're telling you:
"Remember that a protest is not a piece of theatre
It is a fight
it is a riot
it is a threat."

Remember the streets are ours
We only have to take them