

Postscript 81

A Poem Always Arrives at its
own Destination

MANDANA MANSOURI

on *Royal Debris*

GELARE KHOSHGOZARAN

I started by collecting. It was supposed to be a found poem. I was going to put together some of my favourite lines from *Men of My Dreams*.¹ But it didn't happen. I couldn't finish that text. They killed Zhina. Revolution started. This text is interrupted by violence. I lost the order.

This text is stuttering.

¹Gelare Khoshgozaran, *MEN OF MY DREAMS* (2020), Super 8 film transferred to video.

"*MEN OF MY DREAMS* unfolds a series of vignettes that toy with the unstable ground between fact and fiction . . . *MEN OF MY DREAMS* delves into the artist's personal history by invoking a group of men that surrounded the artist through their writing, singing, filming and activism while growing up in Tehran and moving to the US , including: writers Edward Said and Roberto Bolaño; poet Federico Garcia Lorca; filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini; singer Farhad Mehrad; Iranian journalist and poet Khosrow Golesorkhi; and also Saeed, her father." (Eliel Jones, *MEN OF MY DREAMS*, 2020.)

This text has been written mostly in bed. It has been interrupted 475 times. From the day that I started to write until today, 475 Iranians—at least 65 children amongst them—were killed. 18242 individuals were arrested. Two detainees were executed. The second one, right now.

Writing this text took me much longer than I expected: writing this text is writing of a fear of writing. Writing of the history of the poets' exile and banishment. Writing this text is writing in "a world where poets are murdered every day."² Writing of the chain murders in Iran. Writing of a bus loaded with twenty-one writers who were going to fall off a cliff. Writing of poetry after Auschwitz. Writing this text is not only writing of a personal fear. Writing this text is writing with Lorca, whose bones were never found. Writing this text is writing with Paul Celan, who threw himself into a river. Writing this text is writing with Mohammad Mokhtari, whose body was found on the side of a road with a pen and a piece of paper in his pocket. Writing this text is writing with Ahmad Mir-Alaei, who translated *Sunstone*,³ who one day left his house to his bookstore and never came back. Writing this text is writing with Aras Amiri, who wrote a poem in prison. Writing this text is writing with Gelare Khoshgozaran, who knows all of this and "also knew the secret of the trench and of the star!"⁴

² Gelare Khoshgozaran, *Royal Debris* (2022), 16mm, Super 8 and digital footage, sound, color.

³ "Piedra de Sol (Sunstone)" is a poem written by Octavio Paz in 1957.

⁴ Reza Barahani, "From Ismael," trans. Poupeh Missaghi, *Asymptote*, 1987.

Vignettes

"A poem, as a manifestation of language and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the—not always greatly hopeful—belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland perhaps. Poems in this sense, too, are under way: they are making toward something."⁵

A Jewish poet once said that. The one who wrote in a ghetto, the one who cleared the debris of a demolished post office, who gathered and destroyed books, an exile, a writer with a pseudonym.

⁵ Edward Hirsch, "Message in a Bottle," in *How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry* (Durham, NC: Center for Documentary Studies in association with Harcourt, 2000).

"He loves the countries and he leaves,
I shall choose my place, and choose my exile.
My exile, is the backdrop to an epic scene.
I defend the poet's need for memories and tomorrow,
I defend country and exile"⁶

A Palestinian poet wrote that. He went into exile since his home was destroyed and occupied. He was seven, just started to learn writing.

⁶ Mahmoud Darwish, "Counterpoint, Homage to Edward Said," *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1, 2005.

"Black milk of morning we drink you at dusktime
we drink you at noontime and downtime we drink you at
night
we drink and drink
we scoop out a grave in the sky where it's roomy to lie"⁷

That same Jewish poet, who wrote in a ghetto, who cleaned
a rubble, who worked in a mental hospital, who drowned in
a river wrote that.

⁷ Paul Celan and Pierre Joris, "Death Fugue," in *Paul Celan: Selections* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 46-48.

"He says: I am from there. I am from here, and I am neither here nor there. I have two names which meet and part. I have two languages, but I have forgotten which is the language of my dreams."⁸

The Palestinian poet wrote a tribute to his friend. The friend once threw a stone at the Blue Line. A stone at the 30-foot-tall concrete wall.

⁸ Darwish, "Counterpoint, Homage to Edward Said."

"I saw her when she was temporarily out on bail. She was happy that she wrote a poem in prison. She told me she wrote it on a blank page in a book about inverse theology. She said she wrote it so quickly to not forget the words. A prison guard took the page away when she was to leave the prison for a couple of days. She doesn't remember the poem."

A friend told me that.

“What life have you had?
You left the known for the unknown.”⁹

A Polish poet wrote this. An Iranian poet translated it. His body was found in an abandoned area, on the estate of a cement factory, near the road. Nothing to identify the body but a pen and a piece of paper.

⁹Holan Vladimír, Jarmila Milner, and Ian Milner, *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1971).

"Anyone who left her language is a poet.

Every stranger in a language is a conceptual artist: she who has access to the ideas but not the words. She is a reverse to the growth, a regression, a recurrence, a different form of infancy.

Childhood is about learning words. Exile is the state of looking for words.

Every displaced person is an abstraction of the language: a letter."

A photographer wrote that. Once she lived in a camera obscura for 69 days, for all the days her friend was kept in solitary confinement in Evin Prison.

A conceptual artist once started a journey to go back home. A voyage on a little boat, a solo ocean crossing, an art piece, an odyssey. He was lost at sea. Son of a Dutch priest who helped Jews to flee. Son of a man who was executed.

A displaced body, a traveller subject, the one who navigates between languages, a sailor, the one *In Search of the Miraculous*.¹⁰

Is it possible to go back?

¹⁰ Bas Jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous* (1975), conceptual artwork.

"I miss my home
but everywhere is so ruined on this planet
that I feel at home anywhere."¹¹

She started a film with this.

¹¹ Khoshgozaran, *MEN OF MY DREAMS* (2020).



Still from *Royal Debris*, Gelare Khoshgozaran
16mm, super 8mm and digital footage, sound, color, 35 min, 2022



Still from *Royal Debris*, Gelare Khoshgozaran
16mm, super 8mm and digital footage, sound, color, 35 min, 2022

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Khoshgozaran, Gelare. *MEN OF MY DREAMS*, 2020. Super 8 film transferred to video, sound, color. 9 minutes 30 seconds. Sound design: Jimena Sarno.

Khoshgozaran, Gelare. *Royal Debris*, 2022. 16mm, Super 8 and digital footage, sound, color. 35 minutes. Sound design: Jimena Sarno.

MANDANA MANSOURI is a displaced Kurdish artist and writer. Her exile started long before moving anywhere. She started forgetting her mother tongue when she went to school in 1988. She is remembering.

As a physical being, she is an uninvited guest on the stolen land of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. In her mind, she is dancing with people in Rojhalat front of a fire.