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Is Jordan joining the Arab spring?



Violent protests broke out across Jordan last night as a result of anger at rising fuel prices after the government abandoned costly subsidies. In an unprecedented move, many of the demonstrators directly criticised the country's king, Abdullah II – breaking with a long-standing taboo and risking jail terms of up to three years in prison.

This was the scene at one demonstration in Amman, following the news that essentials such as cooking gas would see a 53% price hike:

Both the scale and fury of these protests – which have quickly swept to at least 12 cities – and the fact that citizens were willing to openly defy the king (chanting “Freedom is from God, in spite of you, Abdullah”, the Associated Press reports),

will have severely rattled this landlocked kingdom's leaders.

Late to the party?

During the first wave of the Arab spring, Jordan stayed relatively calm, thanks to a delicate balance of repression, promised reforms and deal brokering with the kingdom's various ethnic and cultural factions. But in recent months this precarious balancing act seems to be falling apart.

Mass protests in early October, organised by the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, demanded greater political freedoms: the king was forced to fire his government (again) and call early elections. It was another attempt to sap protesters' enthusiasm, but for many this was too little, too late.

The Jordanian regime has long been a staunch ally of the US and oil powers in the Gulf, de-

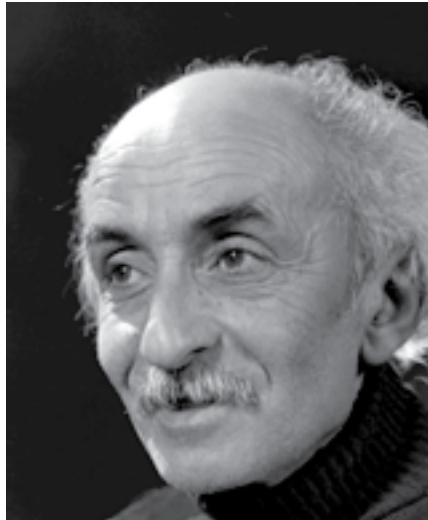
spite its poor human rights record. But the repressive tactics that helped it keep a lid on internal dissent when Egypt and other neighbours were supplying it with cheap energy may now prove insufficient. Citizens in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have risen up and won their freedom, and the democratic uprising turned civil war in neighbouring Syria has triggered a refugee crisis across its borders.

As Fadi Masamreh, a 23-year-old journalist who was jailed between 12 September and 24 October this year, told the New York Times: “The people will not be quiet. Those who want to fight for change have to present sacrifices. If my arrest will be invested towards this change, I have no problem being in prison again 43 years, not 43 days.”

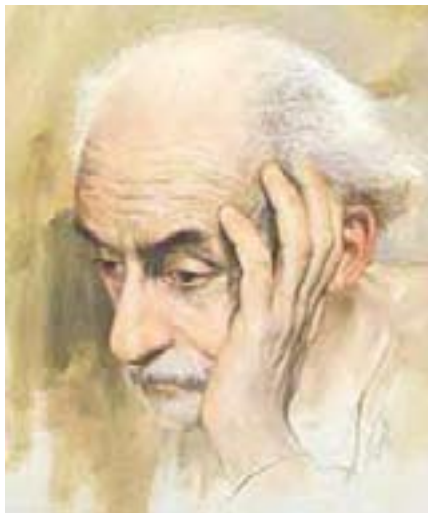
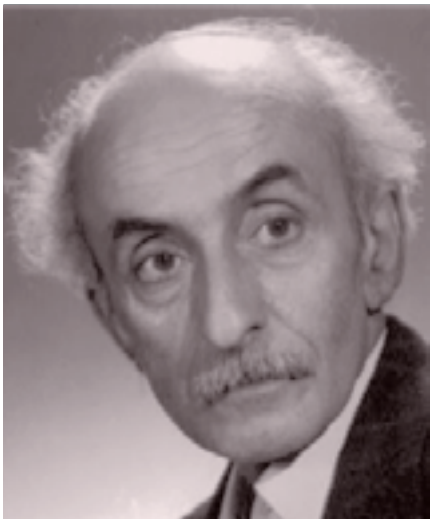
by Avaaz Team

Nima Yushij

Father of Iran's New Poetry



N Nima Yushij (1896 - 1960), who, his real name is Ali Esfandiyari, the eldest son of Ebrahim Nouri of Yosh (a village near Nour county in Mazandaran province of Iran), was born in November 12 1896. He was a contemporary Tabari (Mazandarani dialect) and Persian poet who started a new movement in Persian poetry called she'r-e no ("new poetry") or sometimes called she'r-e Nimaiei (Nimaic poetry).





Nima is considered the father of what has come to be known as *Sher-e Now* (the New Poem), a major poetic movement that, by undermining the conventions of classical Persian poetry, contributed to the emergence of modernism in Persian literature. Many critics, including Reza Baraheni, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof, have discussed different aspects of Nima's modernism while others, such as Taghi Pournamdarian and Majid Nafici, have examined Nima's poetry in its historical, social and political context. Taken together, the works of these critics produce a comprehensive account of the historical conditions and technical innovations that led to the formation of Nima's modernism. Although Nima's critics have provided valuable insights into his system of poetry and his response to historical circumstances, not all venues of critical approach to Nima's work are totally exhausted. One of the major attributes of Nima's poetry is its tendency to express social and political reali-

ties through a symbolic structure. According to Karimi-Hakkak, the desire to take Nima's poetry as an "esthetic sign for an existing socio-political climate governing Iranian society" was not really an intrinsic aspect of his poems or fundamental to their understanding; it was only one of the possible ways to read his poetry. If Nima's poetry assumed the form of apolitical discourse, it was largely due to the efforts of a group of poets and literary critics whose manner of engaging with poetry was motivated primarily by their "more or less overtly political agendas". These poets and critics, who came of age during the last years of Nima's life and dominated the literary scene immediately after his death, succeeded in turning "Nima's vision of a new poetry and poetics into a literary discourse in support of their own socio-political struggle". With the commentaries they wrote on Nima's poems, they gave birth to "a whole new interpretive culture" which showed interest in his work only as reflective of social and political conditions.

There is no doubt that Nima's poetry contains a socio-political dimension, but it is also constituted by other layers of signification and displays a unique aesthetic structure.

Inside Nima's poems, the surplus of seeing that the hero acquires in relation to other participants provides the basis for a particular sphere of his selfactivity. He contemplates a character, enters his horizon, co-experiences his life form within with him, and then returns to his own horizon. Having co-experienced the inner life of another character, the hero, after returning to his own horizon, can also perceive that character's outward aspect by framing him in an environment. In this sense, the hero partakes of a double perspective vis-à-vis other characters because he can conjoin the other's inner life with his exterior in a well-defined background, something that the other from within his horizon is incapable of accomplishing. This surplus of vision enables the hero to complete the other precisely in those respects in which the other cannot complete himself.

He grew up in his native village of Yosh and used to help his father with the farm and cattle. His early education in a *maktab* (traditional school taught by a Mullah) wasn't satisfactory and later at the age of twelve he was taken to Tehran. Niam was enrolled at St. Louis, a Roman Catholic School.

He began writing poetry when he was a school student. Nezam Vafa (1883-1960), one his teachers, took Nima under his guidance and encouraged him by reading

his poems and helping him to improve his poetic abilities. Nezam Vafa was himself a lyric poet who wrote simple love poems in the classical style.

Nima in his speech to the First Congress of Iranian Writers, 1946, in Tehran, Nima Yushij said:

“My first years of life were spent among the shepherds and horseherders who, in their seasonal movements from one grassland to another, every evening sat round the fire on the Mountainside for long hours. From my childhood years I remember nothing but savage fights, and other things related to a nomadic life, and the simple amusements of those people in an atmosphere of monotony and ignorance. I learned reading and writing from the Akhund [preacher and teacher] of the village where I was born. He used to run after me through the alleyways and, catching me, tied my thin feet to rough, thorny trees and beat me with long canes. He had made a scroll by pasting together some letters which peasants had written to their relatives, and he ordered me to learn the whole scroll by heart.”

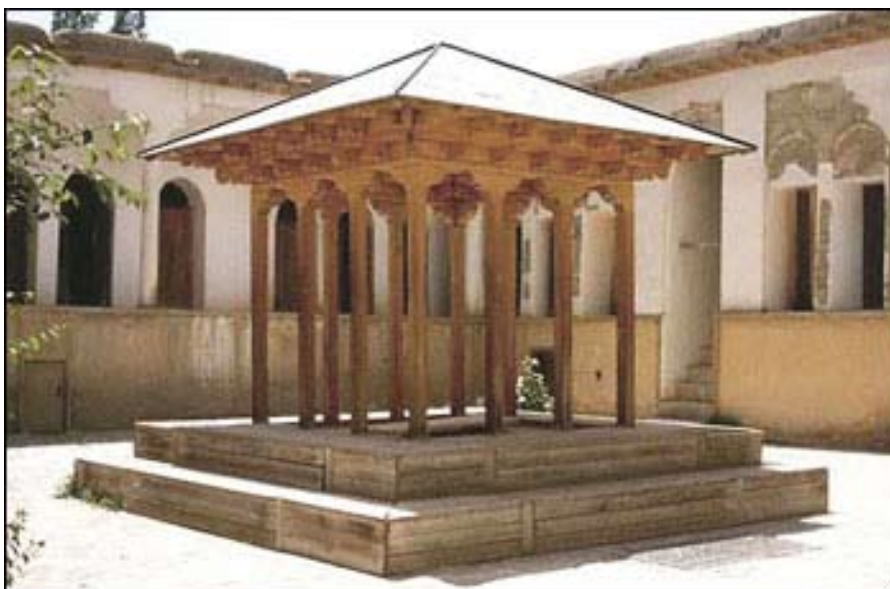
Nima was more emphasizing on the length of the line to be determined by the depth of the thought and not by the conventional length of a beyt (verse). Nima portrays his poetry techniques in this quatrain:

*With my poetry I have driven the people into a great conflict;
Good and bad, they have fallen in confusion;
I myself am sitting in a corner, watching them:
I have flooded the nest of ants.*

He took poetry out of the court's rituals and brought it to the streets. Nima added color and flavor to his compositions by using the natural speech of the people. What made Nima Yoshij a great, powerful guru for the young poets of his time were his innovations in form and style rather than the content of his poetry. He came to the scene of change at a time when all the conservative efforts of the Neo-classicists, Revivalists and others had failed to free Persian poetry from the long decadence which was, to a great extent, the result of the ruling power of prosody over subject matter.

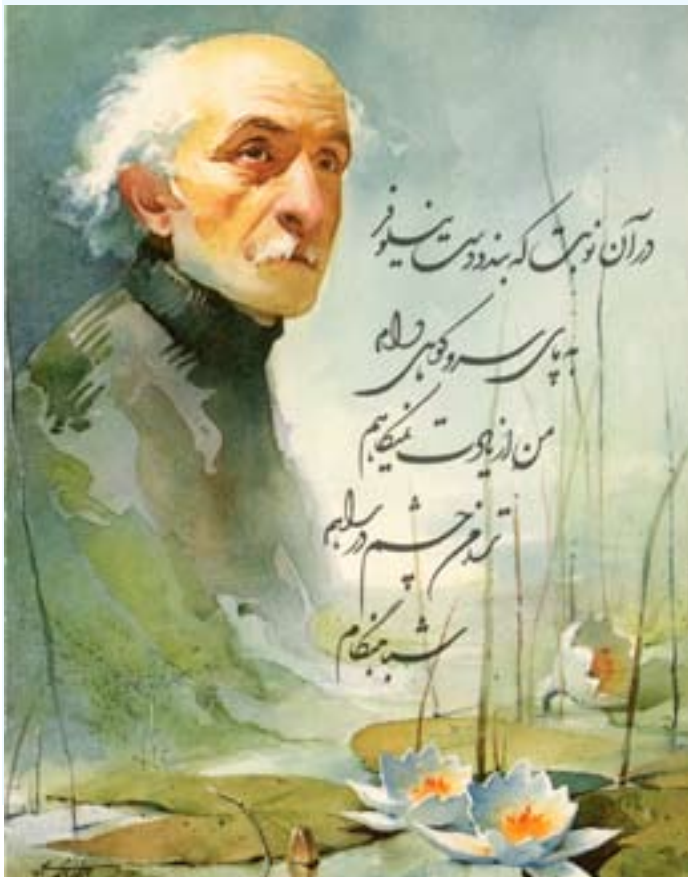


He died in January 1960 of pneumonia in Shemiran, in the northern part of Tehran and was buried in his native village of Yosh, as he had willed.



I am waiting for you

when I gaze waiting for you,
When the shadows on talajan branches
absorb darkness,
And that fills your spurned admirers with
plenty of sorrow,
I Gaze waiting for you.
At night,
in that moment when the valleys sleep like
dead snakes,
In that turn when the nuphar's hand entraps
the foot of mountain cypress,
If you remember me or not,
I never forget you,
I gaze waiting for you.
...at night



Hey people

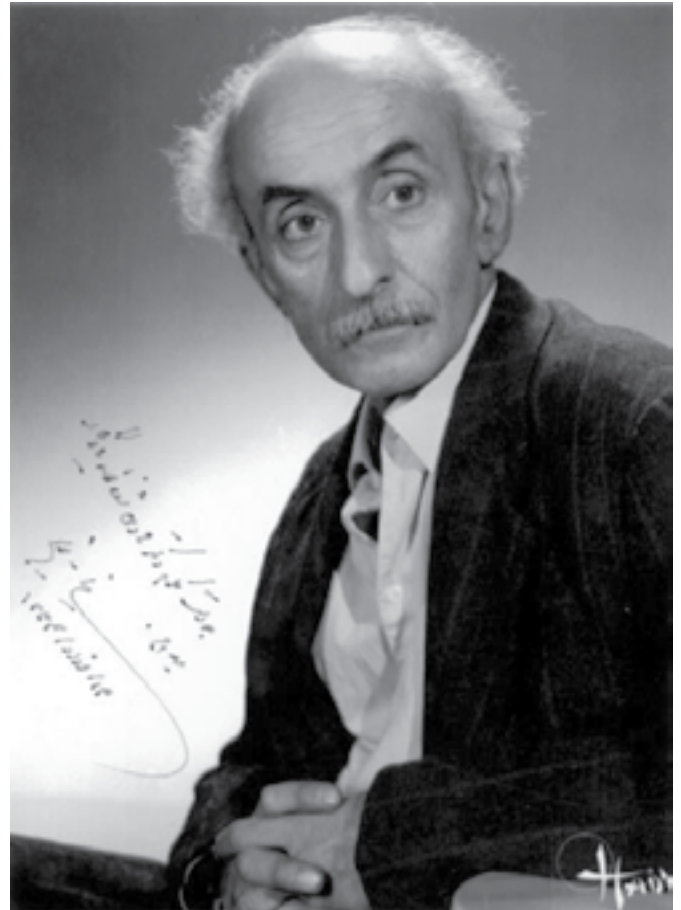
Hey people
Who are sitting on the shore,
Happy and laughing,
Someone is dying in the water,
Someone is constantly struggling
On this angry, heavy, dark, familiar sea.
When you are drunk
With the thought of getting your hands on your
enemy,
When you think in vain
That you've given a hand to a weak person
to produce a better weak person,
When you tighten your belts, when,
When shall I tell you
that someone in the water
is sacrificing in vain?
Hey, you over there
Who are sitting pleasantly on the shore,
Bread on your tablecloths, clothes on your bod-
ies,
Someone is calling you from the water.
He beats the heavy wave with his tired hand,
His mouth agape, eyes torn wide with terror,
He has seen your shadows from afar,
Has swallowed water in the dark blue deep,
Each moment his impatience grows.
He raises from these waters
A foot, at times,
At times, his head...
Hey you there,
He still has his eyes on this old world from afar,
He's shouting and hopes for help.
Hey you there
Who are calmly watching from the shore,
The wave beats on the silent shore, spreads
Like a drunk fallen on his bed unconscious,
Recedes with a roar, and this call comes from
afar again:
Hey, you over there...
And the sound of the wind
More heart-rending by the moment,
And his voice weaker in the sound of the wind;
from waters near and far
Again this call is heard:
Hey, you over there...

Nimas' Poem

In the cold winter night
The furnace of the sun too
Burns not like the hot hearth of my lamp,
And no lamp is luminous as mine
Neither it freezes by the cold moon that shines
above.

I lit my lamp when my neighbor was walking in a
dark night,
And it was a cold winter night,
The wind encircled the pine,
Amid silent heaps
She was lost from me, separated from this narrow
lane,
And still the story is remembered,
And on my lips these words lingered:
"Who lights? Who burns?
Who saves this tale of the heart?"

In the cold winter night
The furnace of the sun too
Burns not like the hot hearth of my lamp,
And no lamp is luminous as mine
Neither it freezes by the cold moon that shines
above.



My house is cloudy,
So is the whole earth.

Shattered and drunk
Whirls the heavy wind,
From the top of the mountain pass,
All wof the world is distorted by that...
So is my senses.

O piper!
Who have been carried away by the sound of your pipe;
Where are you?

My house is cloudy but
The cloud is on the verge of weeping.
In the memory of my bright days that slipped through my
fingers,
I cast a look upon my sun on the threshold of the ocean
And the entire world is desolated and shattered by the wind
And on the road, the piper continues to play his flute,
in this cloud-filled world
Walking on his path...

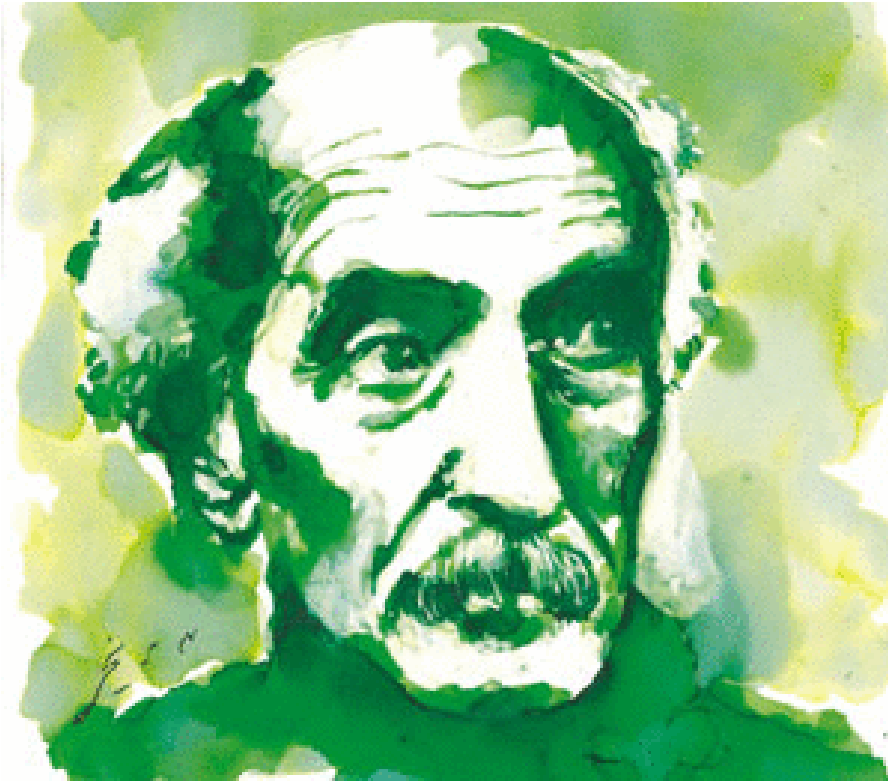
*Surviving from very distant nights
At a silent path towards the jungle
A little stove made of stone,
Contains some cold ashes.*

*Like my melancholy thoughts buried in the dust,
Bearing sketches of everything,
A tale whose fruit is but pain.*

*My sweet day that agreed with me
Has become an incongruous sketch,
It has grown cold and turned into stone
And the autumnal breathe of my life,
turns yellow the spring's face.*

*Still surviving from very distant nights
At a silent path towards the jungle
A little stove made of stone,
Contains some cold ashes*

برینز جانشین گل
سنگ صنی از اجاقی سرد
اندرون خاکستر سرد



Nature in Nima's letters

Nima has written several books on the issue of Persian modern poetry, and has overcome so much all the development peaks, that he is called as the father of Persian modern literature (Rypka, Jan.1968) However, it should be mentioned that everybody should be aware of the fact that Nima has left not only some significant works on poetry, but also he has left some elite works in the field of prose.

Nima, who knows himself "as the leader of poetry and prose novelty, without boasting to others" has achieved them in exile, and solidarity. He found this place and position because of observing well and writing continuously. He believes that writing is a source of entertainment and peace, and states, "*the only entertainment is with things I write, erase, and write*

again according to my taste" (Nima Yushij).

Therefore, it should be stated that the result of all the studies and poetic prose that are regarded as his habits and morality, there are various books that forms his written works.

One of the important issues that are presented in Nima's letters is his definite interest in nature. It has been stated that nature and the elements are the effects of the universe secrets, and have a chronic link with human. Although a new look at the nature, world, and natural phenomena is a clear characteristics of contemporary literature, this characteristic has much more aspect in Nima's works; because Nima is the son of mountain and jungle, and loves the nature and village very much.

Nima's link with nature is a kind of emotional link, and he has a poetic and artistic look at the nature. His attitude toward the nature has not been the common way of their predecessor whose consideration of nature has been functioned by their mentality. Nature has been generally considered in contemporary literature and it has been considered specifically in Nima's prose and poems. In Persian poem, many poets have focused nature. As Elizabeth Drew states, "the poem that talks about the nature, has been considered in all ages by poets. Although, its type is different by the diversity of poets' taste and sensitivity". However, it should be stated that the look toward nature has been changed by the presence of Nima. His way of speaking about nature is new

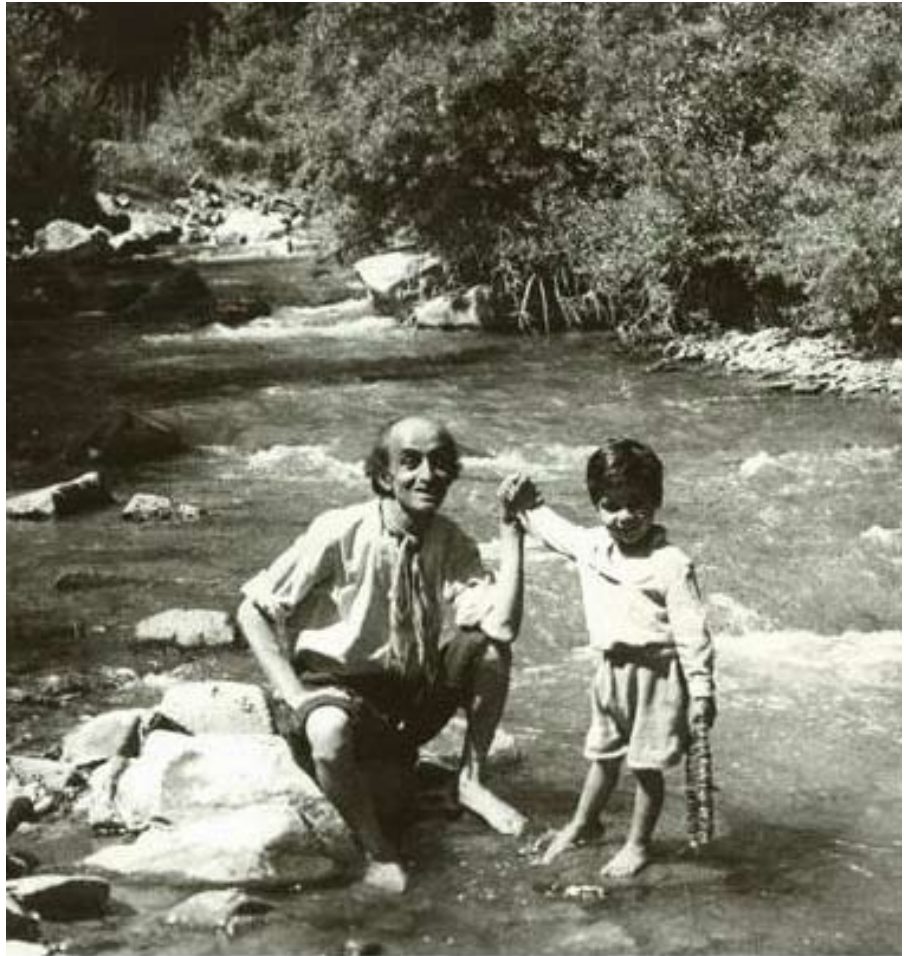
Nature in Nima's letters

and based on exactness, and it is not a function of poetic imagination like the poets before him. What

separates Nima's naturalism from that of other poets, is the fact that he gets the images from the world beyond the world of imagination, and overcomes the objectivity on subjectivity through his poetic and artistic possession. Nima is so much interested in nature that has assigned the title of "poet of nature" to him. In addition, Nima's look at nature is symbolic and intuitive. He suggests this type of look to others as well. Then he says, "*Do your best to write in the same way you see, and try your poem gives a more clear address of you than yourself*" (Nima Yushij a, 1972:50)..

Nature is always the effects of the secrets of the cosmos and has many works in it. Moreover, human and nature are related and have common properties because human is a symbol of nature, and can be regarded as a small world in comparison with nature due to having a world full of secrets.

Permanent presence of human in nature has led in a close relation between him and nature. Therefore, artists and poets have walked progressively toward discovering human and nature relation, call for assistance in their own artistic works, and deepen their own artistic works. One of the prominent features of new verse is the new look at nature and world, and the reflection of natural spaces and the local color in it, from the perspective of theme and content. This property is



completely clear in Nima's poems and letters. Because of innate link with nature, Nima has won the title of "the poet of nature," since he was fascinated by mountain, village, and jungle, and was disgusted by city and urban life. The footprint of this emotion can be seen in all Nima's works including the poems and letters of him.

*By these two loaves of village-made breads
By my painful mind mountain
I'm happy with the mountainous life
Because I've got used to it since my childhood
The urban life will fatigue me
Urban talk will hurt me*
In a letter, Nima addresses her sister Nakta and says, "*You are a pure villager girl. You have seized a corner of bliss. If you keep the situation you are in now, the wish of villager life, takes me to the village, whenever I miss you. Lucky you! Who are a villager girl, and owns a house in*

the village" (Nima Yushij, 1975: 87).

"Village is much better for me, since I am trying to know my people and nature. What I think about is to settle in a calm place"
(Tahbaz, 1984:72).

Nima's look at nature is modern. He looks at nature as an independent creature. Therefore, nature unifies with the poet in Nima's poems, while in the poems of predecessors, even when the poet is describing the nature, he deals with the poem at a far distance; i.e. the formal-literal look does not create a new emotional image. Nima describes his village as the following:

The village where I live is the place I was born, and I passed my childhood in it. It is situated in the most remote calm mountains and at the end of downhill period. The inhabitants serve

their lives by sheep grazing and working on farm... (Naficy Majid. 1997).

Nima's familiarity with nature and natural phenomena caused by the elements in his poems are dramatic manifestations. What Nima is describing, is the nature of Mazandaran. Nima applies such words as Tooka, Darvag, Makh, Oola, Zikza, Ooja, No Rang, etc in his poems, all of which show his intimacy with his birthplace, and this issues indicate the fact that "human finds a deep relationship with the environment s/he lives in. Human is a social creature that is habituated by the environmental elements as fast as possible, and led in his dependency to the environment. The means of the poet who has been grown up in a big city is different from the means of the poet who is living in a village. Nima is also not excluded from this issue. He comes from the nature, and is familiar with the mystery of nature";

All my taste is here... My viewpoint is remote jungles and deserts. Moreover, my house is near a farm. At night, frogs and karko, which is a kind of snake, sing for me. The nightingales' sounds combine with it. A lost cow occasionally pastures there. A nice villager girl following the cow comes to my window. I will pick violet flowers, and talk about my internal reflections with this lovely flower. My friend! What more delicate moments will be found in human's life?" (Nima Yushij).

No doubt, that the environment around every poet affects him and the effect is remarkable in his works. For example, "Manoochehri Damghani, describes the vast deserts around him; therefore, he is called the

poet of nature" (Zarinkoub).

Describing the nature, spring, garden, and flower is highly noticeable in Farrokhi's diwan. Furthermore, contemporary poets such as Bahar, Sooratgar, Sepehri, etc have described their environment. In Nima's expression, the elements of nature have been applied in explaining the nature, and have a symbolic nature. Sometimes Nima describes sea, jungle, mountain, etc symbolically and sometimes he depicts these scenes through description, and embodies the reality of that in front of eyes. "Of course, Nima describes the nature so faithfully, and his emotions are so naturally inserted in the village images, that his poem is float between complex symbolism and village realistic simplicity" Nima takes the advantage of strong emotion and a delicate and poetic soul. He says,

Even, the stones and the roots of small trees and bushes that crushed under feet seem completely touchable for me. Inevitably, I close my eyes, and watch the imaginative scenes toward which my heart always directs. Thus, if I dream, I dream the "Loo," "Ney Kala," and "Emzsnaser" mountains (Yushij,).

that the summer high mountains full of snow, win my heart."

Nima is a naturalist poet; however, his naturalism is not comparable with naturalism. "The elements of nature that are the symbols of his social poems are placed in a transformational mutation, rather than to remain at the level of symbol or metaphor" Nima believes that; *Human are not less than a partridge*

and an antelope. The partridge and antelope like grass, clear weather of the mountains, and clear water. Therefore, it is not weird to see human loves the mountain and place much more than animals... the situation of social life is forcibly affects this issue. Human may not be so crazy about the nature by accepting other situations to continue his life, in the future, but basically, the nature of human is never ever different from the natures of partridges and antelopes. The feeling that is left forever is the infatuation of weather, and flower. Thus as much as these feelings are trained they will increase in number. (Nima Yushij,).

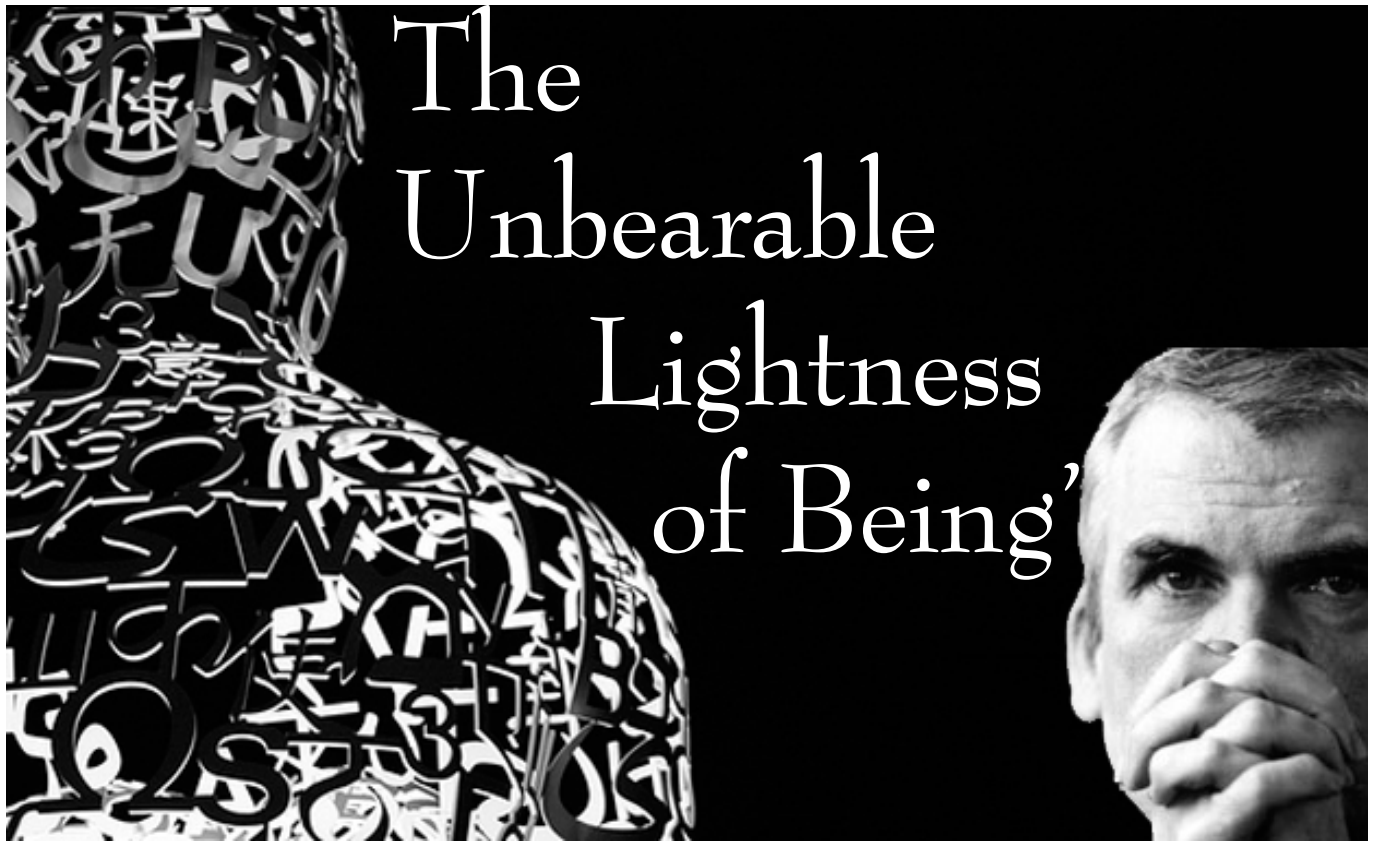
Nima who is addressing his wife "Alieh" in a letter and says, "When despite our beliefs, somebody or something absorbs us, we should not surprise. The general rule of this absorption is sometimes so much hidden in nature that the expectations are not related to this" (Nima Yushij,).

Nima believes that most of these events are metonymies of nature;

The chill breeze that shakes your hair is the voice of mine. It passes from you for a couple of times, and you will not recognize it! That is great! A transparent drop falls on your hand in the dawn, do not think it is rain. Nature is full of metonymies. When a lover is away from his beloved, many things will seem her in the future. The rain-drop that falls on the ground in the darkness of night sadly is like that lover's tear (Nima Yushij,).

Nima's naturalism is widespread and deep;

"My heart is poetic and imaginative too much, I mean my mind is Eastern. Behind this window, the jungles of Talesh Mountain and beyond.



The Unbearable Lightness of Being'

The problem with philosophical novels is twofold: firstly, philosophers might reject the medium of literature due to its often close relationship with aestheticism, while readers might find philosophy too dry a topic to base a novel on. However, Milan Kundera's thesis regarding the difference between lightness and heaviness manages to both intrigue the reader by being a very eloquently articulated new angle on life, and to put forth convincing philosophical arguments for subscribing to lightness in life. In the well-established style of continental philosophy, Kundera argues that we all have a choice – to either live our life lightly, or risk being dragged down by heaviness. Not a believer of Nietzsche's theory of the eternal return, he argues for lightness in Parme-

nides' sense: we only have one singular fleeting lifetime, so why try to imbue it with meaning at every turn? The lightness that results from our one chance at life is, to many, unbearable – we cannot bear the emptiness of our existence. Kundera contrasts lightness and weight by endowing his characters with them alternately, asserting that one should embrace the lightness, while at the same time showing the difficulty of such an undertaking; as the title suggests, he does not deny that a life without weight will to many seem like no life at all.

Kundera's style is genuinely modest without sounding prosaic or detached, as many authors are apt to do in the attempt to create a semblance of objectivity regarding their arguments. His philosophical pas-

sages sound far from contrived, instead they seem like something Kundera thought of, which he thinks we should know. The novel's distinctly self-conscious style, which in many other works is the basis for self-importance and even pretentiousness, only serves to reinforce the feeling of honesty that the reader experiences throughout. He borders abstraction only in the novel's dream episodes – an excusable detail, considering the delightful playground dream scenes are to authors. Although the novel is largely a philosophical one very focused on its characters, Kundera successfully incorporates the historical context of the Prague Spring and the ensuing Soviet occupation, without overambitiously interrupting the novel's simple style with excursions into the

The Unbearable Lightness of Being'

realm of politics. The inclusion of Czech history is effort- and seamless; it does not detract from the novel's emphasis on the inner lives of its characters. Although his characters hold different opinions as to lightness and weight, they are very obviously lovingly crafted by the author: There is Tomas, the philandering surgeon who cannot grasp why anyone should live with heaviness in their lives, yet also ultimately can't escape his love for his wife Tereza, who, bogged down by Tomas' infidelity and her own mother's legacy of shame, laments Tomas' ways and her own weakness, needing above anything else to be valued for her individuality. Then there is Franz, an idealist of the first order who seeks refuge from his restrictive wife in the arms of Sabina, who eventually rejects him, unable to share in his quest for meaning in life. Franz remains the sub-

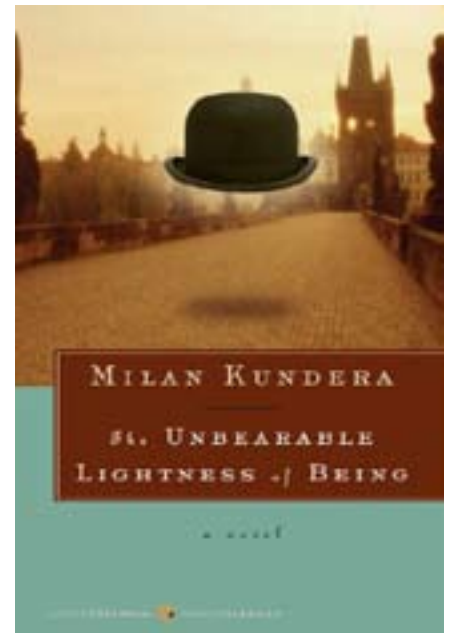


ject of his wife even in death, while Sabina chooses the road of betrayals, believing that betrayal is tantamount to the ultimate liberation.

The novel does not lack debatable issues – whether love

really can be utterly separated from pure carnal desire, whether kindness and loyalty have any true value at all, or whether betrayal really is the way to true freedom, to name a few. However, Kundera manages to create three-dimensional characters who, though surely repellent to many in their views on life, retain their humanity and relatability, mainly due to their intricately constructed psychological profiles. Even though Kundera highlights different stages in the four main characters' lives only intermittently, they are drawn up with so much care as to enable the reader to gain profound insight into the forces that shape them. Tomas is not reduced to an unfaithful husband, the identity of Tereza goes beyond that of the suffering, wronged wife, as shown for example by her bizarre admiration of Sabina, Tomas' primary mistress. Franz elicits empathy while also appearing pathetic at times, and understanding Sabina becomes one of the reader's main endeavors. The characters at all times preserve their humanity due to their inconsistency – an inconsistency willed by the author, to further enhance the human struggle to find meaning in life, or to accept its nonexistence.

The brilliant dichotomy between Tomas and Sabina, constantly teetering on the edge of nothingness and relishing that feeling to the fullest; and Tereza and Franz, who desperately try to cling on to the scraps of meaning they created for themselves in life, leaves the reader torn between lightness and weight; yet it is impossible not



to realise the truth of this duality. To put it in Kundera's own words: "Anyone whose goal is 'something higher' must expect some day to suffer vertigo. What is vertigo? Fear of falling? Then why do we feel it even when the observation tower comes equipped with a sturdy hand-rail? No, vertigo is something other than the fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness below us, which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall, against which, terrified, we defend ourselves."

While many students see philosophy as something rather removed from English Literature, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is a prime example of both areas of study coalescing perfectly. Kundera questions the very premises we assume to be self-evident in our lives; he has an unusual aptitude for making the reader nod every few lines. Even if the reader does not accept his case for lightness, he raises issues that cannot be ignored in good faith.

Stefanie Lehmann



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This Works is dedicated to **NASRIN SOTOUDEH**. We salute you for Your Bravery, for Your Courage, and for Your Resistance. You did not bear the shame. You resisted, sacrificing your life for Freedom, Justice, and Equality.