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We hereby recommend that this thesis by

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Entitled:

**A Comparative Study of the Lives and Works of William Wordsworth and
Nima Youshij**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Literature

Date of Approval:

February, 2012

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فرم گرد آوری اطلاعات پایان نامه ها

کتابخانه مرکزی دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی

عنوان: بررسی تطبیقی زندگی و آثار ویلیام وردزورث و نیما یوشیج		
نویسنده / محقق: ادیس رنجی		
مترجم: _____		
استاد راهنما: دکتر کامران احمدگلی / استاد مشاور / استاد داور: دکتر بهزاد قادری / دکتر رضا دیداری		
کتابنامه: دارد	واژه نامه: ندارد	
نوع پایان نامه:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> بنیادی <input type="checkbox"/> توسعه ای <input type="checkbox"/> کاربردی	
مقطع تحصیلی: کارشناسی ارشد	سال تحصیلی: 1389 - 1390	
محل تحصیل: تهران	نام دانشگاه: علامه طباطبائی	دانشکده: ادبیات فارسی و زبان های خارجی
تعداد صفحات: 116	گروه آموزشی: زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی	
کلیدواژه ها به زبان فارسی: ادبیات تطبیقی؛ شعر رمانتیک؛ شعر نو؛ انقلاب		
کلیدواژه ها به زبان انگلیسی: Comparative Literature; Romantic poetry; "New" poetry; Revolution		

چکیده

الف . موضوع و طرح مسئله (اهمیت موضوع و هدف): شباهت هایی که در زمانه، زندگی و آثار ویلیام وردزورث و نیما یوشیج وجود دارند و

رویکردهای آنان به مسائلی مانند وضعیت جامعه، شعر، نقش شاعر و تلاشهای این دو شاعر در دگرگون کردن وضع موجود ادبیات و اجتماع در دوره ی زندگیشان بسیار قابل تامل اند. با توجه به نقش ادبیات تطبیقی در ایجاد پیوند بین فرهنگ ها و کارکرد آن در شناساندن ادیبان این مرز و بوم به مخاطبین سایر کشورها، این پژوهش بر آن است تا به بررسی تطبیقی زندگی، نظریه ی ادبی و اشعار این دو شاعر بزرگ پرداخته و به نتیجه گیری درباره ی تاثیر آثار آنان بر ادبیات و جامعه در این دو دوره ی تاریخی انگلستان و ایران برسد.

ب . مبانی نظری شامل مرور مختصری از منابع، چارچوب نظری و پرسش ها و فرضیه ها: با توجه به نبود روش شناسی مناسب در ادبیات تطبیقی و کمبود پژوهش های انجام شده در زمینه ی موضوع مورد نظر، پژوهش حاضر به بررسی مقابله ای دوره های زندگی، تاثیرات فلسفی مشترک، نظریات ادبی و اجتماعی دو شاعر و خوانش نقادانه ای از اشعار دارای موضوعات و بن مایه های مشترک آنان می پردازد. در این راستا از آثار منتقدانی مانند بلوم، آبرامز، هارتمن، کرمود، بیتسون، پرکیس و دریل در مورد آثار وردزورث؛ و اخوان ثالث، شفیعی کدکنی، براهنی، پورنامداریان، باباچاهی و حمیدیان در مورد آثار نیما استفاده می شود. با در نظر داشتن این نکته که هر دو شاعر تحت تاثیر انقلابات اجتماعی که در دوره ی زندگیشان رخ دادند (انقلاب فرانسه و جنبش مشروطه) در شعر راکد زمانه ی خویش دست به انقلاب زدند، و با توجه به تاثیراتی که جنبش هایی مانند سمبولیسم فرانسه، که به عقیده ی صاحب نظران ادامه ی جنبش رمانتیک محسوب می شود که وردزورث یکی از چهره های شاخص آن در انگلستان به شمار می آید، بر نیما و شعر نو داشتند این پژوهش در پی آن است تا به سوالاتی از این دست پاسخ دهد:

- زمینه های تاریخی، سیاسی و اجتماعی زندگی و آثار دو شاعر چه شباهت های با هم دارند؟
- وردزورث و نیما چگونه به عصیان در برابر سنت های غالب ادبی و اجتماعی زمان خویش پرداختند؟
- رویکرد این دو شاعر به موضوعات مختلف شعری چگونه بود، و آنها به چه شیوه ای این رویکردها را بیان می کردند؟
- شباهت های نظریه های ادبی و اجتماعی دو شاعر کدامند؟
- آیا تلاشهای آنان برای اصلاح و نوسازی جامعه از راه شعر تاثیر قابل توجهی داشتند؟ و آیا ادبیات به طور کلی می تواند دارای چنین کارکردی باشد؟

پ . روش تحقیق شامل تعریف مفاهیم، روش تحقیق، جامعه مورد تحقیق، نمونه گیری و روش های نمونه گیری، ابزار اندازه گیری، نحوه اجرای آن، شیوه گردآوری و تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها: داده های مورد استفاده ی این پژوهش در وهله ی اول اشعار و سایر نوشته های دو شاعر بودند که به گونه ای مقابله ای مورد بررسی قرار گرفتند. همچنین از نقدهای نوشته شده بر آثار وردزورث و نیما توسط منتقدانی که نامشان در بالا ذکر شد، به علاوه ی کتابها و مقالات سایر منتقدین استفاده شد. روش پژوهش به شیوه ی اسنادی (کتابخانه ای) بود. به دلیل ماهیت کتابخانه ای پژوهش، جامعه ی مورد تحقیق، نمونه گیری، روش های نمونه گیری و ابزارهای نمونه گیری برای آن تعریف نشده اند.

ت . یافته های تحقیق: شباهت ها و (تفاوت های مشابه) در زندگی و آثار وردزورث و نیما به اندازه ای هستند که تقریباً باور نکردنی می نمایند. شرایط تاریخی مشابه باعث شکل گیری این دو چهره ی تاثیر گذار در ادبیات دوره ی خویش و پس از آن گشته اند که دارای آثار و آرائی بسیار نزدیک هستند و تلاش می کنند تا از راه ادبیات به ایجاد دیدی نو و در نتیجه ی آن به بهبود وضع اجتماع بپردازند.

ث . نتیجه گیری و پیشنهادات: تاثیر دو شاعر در زمینه ی شعر بسیار بالا بوده، به گونه ای وردزورث و نیما از بنیان گذاران و نظریه پردازان جنبش هایی به شمار می روند که سمت و سوی ادبیات را در انگلستان و ایران دگرگون کردند، اما در زمینه اصلاح جامعه و آگاه سازی مردم، این دو شاعر توفیقی چندان نداشته اند. با توجه به نقش عمده ی طبیعت در آثار دو شاعر، می توان آنها را از دیدگاه نقد زیست محیطی به گونه ای تطبیقی مورد بررسی قرار داد.

صحت اطلاعات مندرج در این فرم بر اساس محتوای پایان نامه و ضوابط مندرج در فرم را گواهی می نمایم.

نام استاد راهنما:

سمت علمی:

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February 2012

Tehran, Iran

Acknowledgements

My special thanks go to Dr. Kamran Ahmadgoli and Dr. Behzad Ghaderi for their kind help and support without which this thesis would not be presentable.

Abstract

The times, lives, poetries, literary and social theories of William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Nima Youshij (Ali Esfandiari) (1896-1960) have many similarities. Both of them have been considered rebels against the dominant conventions of poetry and literary theories of their countries. This study tries to delineate the important events and processes of their lives which were two of the most chaotic periods in the history of England and Iran and the major philosophical and biographical contexts of their lives and works in terms of the affinities they had. In this research also the similarities of the new theories of the two poets on different concepts like poetry, the poet, language and society are examined in a comparative way. During their lifetime, the two poets have been politically conscious and concerned about the lower classes of their society and demanded for justice and rights of the people in their poems. This study tries to show these concerns as well as the other similarities between the poems of the two poets by a reading of their poems on the same subjects and arrive at a conclusion about the degree to which the poets achieved their goals in educating and reforming the society by use of poetry.

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I. Introduction

A. General Overview

There is *little* doubt that William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was a Romantic poet, but about the other figure that this research will be concerned about being Romantic is a matter of much debate; However, Shafi'i Kadkani considers Nima as the vanguard of a kind of variation of the European Romanticism (54), Hamidian believes that there are some aspects of romanticism in Nima's poetry (24), and Ja'fari finds romantic tendencies in his poetry (199). Nima Youshij, (penname for Ali Esfandiari 1896-1960) the father of Iranian *She'r-e No* ("New Poetry") or *Nimayi* poetry, is still obscurely unidentifiable with any school except his own. This, in part, is due to the fact that Romanticism does not in essence yield to any 'clear and distinct' definition, the whole movement being a reaction against the 'clarity' and 'distinctness' of Enlightenment. Lovejoy believes that "the word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing; It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign" (6). More important is the fact that pioneer poets as versatile and experimental as Wordsworth and Nima cannot be easily stuffed into any category. However, the aim here is not defining Romanticism at all. Here is of most importance their almost identical lives and works but at the same time their completely, although implicit, different attitudes towards the subjects they treat.

Wordsworth's "An Evening Walk" is written in heroic couplets, just like Nima's "Ghesse'ye Rang'e Parideh" (The Story of Pale Color), and both of them can be considered the poets' first serious attempts in writing poetry. Later they wrote mostly in Blank Verse, were both men of 'plain living and high thinking'; they were both devout admirers of nature, (although each in his own way and system of thought and symbolism), sensitive recluses to the degree who

are even sometimes on the verge of utter misanthropy. In his youth, Wordsworth was under the influence of the French revolution (1789–1799) and radical politics, Nima was impressed by the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) and its consequential movements, and, for a limited period of his life, Marxism (Poornamdarian 124; Abrahamian 224; Ja'fari 231).

Both of them try to depersonalize themselves, through a kind of metamorphosis, into natural elements. Harold Bloom writes on “Wordsworth’s hidden theme, the poetic spirit’s obsessive need for a literal immortality” (“Ringers” 7). Wordsworth makes frequent use of what are the most frequent settings in Nima’s poetry, namely “night and winter” (Bernbaum 89), as according to Nima himself Sea, Night, and Morning had been considered the distinct symbols of his poetry by critics (“On Poetry” 172). Wordsworth’s “compassion for the undeserved distress of the others” (Bernbaum 93), his “*Lyrical Ballads*, poems of the marginalized, the abandoned, the suffering” (Mahoney 60) are matched by Nima in his poems; as Poornamdarian tells us, his sensitivity in demanding justice, and his love for the right and the true cause him to be impressed intensively by oppression, injustice, poverty and the troubles of the people and social events which can affect the fate of the people (99).

Nima and Wordsworth were not the first ones who tried their hand in the movements they were parts of, nevertheless they were the ones who theorized about and wrote manifestos for the literary change happening in their historical moment, namely *modern* poetry, which altered the literature of their countries forever. As Herbert Read puts it: “the beginning of the modern period in English poetry” is the year 1798 (“The True Voice” 9). Critics on Nima unanimously agree that he is the animator of modern Persian poetry.

B. Statement of the problem

William Wordsworth and Nima Youshij were influenced by the social events happening around them, just as any artist would be, and their poems were impressed by, and reactions to them. In this research there will be an endeavor to find out how these poets reflected their social contexts into their works. Wordsworth was always a revolutionary as a poet though he changed his political sympathies later; as Aidan Day observes, the revolutionary Wordsworth's "passionate humanitarianism leads him to write about the injustices of a social system which oppresses the poor and turns them into outcasts" (10). Nima remained a rebel poet until the end of his life, he writes: "My book is the tribune for the uproar of the wretched ones whom the happy ones have forgotten out of their own happiness" ("On Poetry" 18); but he, like Wordsworth, was undecided about the aptness of a social revolution in his later years.

The totally identical social backgrounds, poems and theories of the two poets are dazzling. They grew up and lived in the age of 'Storm and Stress', worldwide and in their countries. Their ages can be the ages of change, transition and the ages of new beginnings. In these ages, they revolted against the predominant criteria of their society and literature in every possible way. "Wordsworth's vocation, like that of most of poets, made itself known through revolt" (Read, "Wordsworth" 67). Wordsworth's later writings "depict nonconformist positions and beliefs in relation to political institutions and establishments in order to embrace nonconformity within newly broadened and invigorated structures of social cooperation" (White 4). If we have in mind Wordsworth's ideas about ordinary people's language, this aspect of the evolution of the poetry of the constitutional revolution, simplification of the language of poetry, can be regarded as a part of the revolt of the age against the neoclassicism of the Return Era (Maktab'e Bazgasht) (Ja'fari 65). In Nima's poetry, change and new relationship between the

elements of poetry do not happen only for the sake of form, but renovation of form is accompanied with renovation of Man. The human force in Nima's poetry results in a revolt in language, Nima's modernism never ends up in abstraction, because Nima's solitude is the most crowded corner of the world. Nima pays attention to "How to Say" of poetry because he has always its "What to Say" in mind (Babachahi 84-5). However we can say that for both of them 'Revolution means expressing new subject in new forms and in an indissoluble combination' (Baraheni 20). They "moved away from active political engagement toward the aesthetic realm of the imagination" (Zimmerman 73). They try to change the poetry of their times in order to refashion the society for better. In sum, they believed that social revolutions are not the way for the betterment of the condition of the people. They rather wanted to change the society from within by use of poetry as a medium.

In this study an effort will be made to examine the historical contexts, theories and the poems of the two poets in a descriptive way and arrive at a conclusion about the extent to which they were successful in obtaining their goals. However this study will also be focused on the similarities and similar differences of the poetries of the two poets.

The questions of most importance in this study can be:

- In what ways were the historical, socio-economical and philosophical contexts of the poetries of Wordsworth and Nima similar?
- How did Wordsworth and Nima revolt against the predominant literary and social conventions of their countries?

- What were the attitudes of Nima and Wordsworth towards the main subjects they treated in their poetry (Nature, Love, Death, Loss, Sorrow, Sympathy for the oppressed and the poor, Poetry), how were these attitudes expressed?
- In what ways are the literary and social theories of the two poets similar?
- Did their endeavors in refashioning the society by means of poetry have any considerable influence? Can literature have such a function at all?

C. Significance of the problem

Mowlanaa (the so-called Rumi) tells us that having the same heart is better than speaking the same language; and Goethe believed that poetry is the common property of all mankind. This study, being to some extent, a comparative one, tries to pave its way toward such an understanding of the works of the two poets concerned, regardless of any distinctions forced upon poets from different eras and nationalities.

Wordsworth has been regarded by many as the greatest English poet after Shakespeare and Milton. But he is indeed unknown to Iranian poetry readers and one cannot but admit that foreign critics have always been too busy to pay any attention to one of the greatest figures in contemporary Iranian poetry, and the Iranian ones too ashamed of the fact that they possess a tradition of *only* more than three thousand years of poetry. Nima as the pioneer and legislator of modern Iranian poetry has been ignored almost by all of the critics working in the field of comparative literature or at best has been mentioned briefly, as if he had not found a new path for artistic creations in a land whose poets have been the unshakable pillars of world literature. By comparing and contrasting his poetry and theories to William Wordsworth, “the archpoet”

(Wimsatt 31) of English Romantics, this paper will try to pay the humblest homage to the two figures.

D. Delimitation

Although William Wordsworth has become a byword for Romanticism and Nima a synonym for the “New poetry”, this study can in no way be considered a research on any of these movements. The reason is the fact that the greatest critics have written thousands of books and articles on these subjects and it would only be a doomed effort to try to add anything to the canon. Romantic tenets will be made use of in this study as much as they are related to the subjects studied here, and it is the same for the commentaries on “New poetry”.

History, philosophy and socio-economical conditions will be referred to as far as they are closely related to the lives and literary works of Wordsworth and Nima or when they have had a great impact on the literary movement of which the two poets were parts; the emphasis being more on the poems and literary theories of the two poets rather than on the contexts. All in all, this is not a “New Historicist” study in the restricted sense of the term.

The works of Wordsworth and Nima’s predecessors, contemporaries and successors, including the influence they may have had on the next generations of the poets of their language, are not of first importance in this study unless in close relationship with the subjects discussed here.

Nima had an agreeable degree of competence in French, so surely he has been familiar with the French schools of poetry, especially the Symbolist and Imagist movements, which in turn have been under the influence of Romanticism as, among others, Kermode writes on “the

historical continuity of certain aesthetic assumptions from the Romantics to Symbolists” (200). In his prose works, Nima frequently refers to the necessity of symbolism in grand poetry.

However, this study, being more a reading of Wordsworth and Nima’s poetry and theory rather than a study of “influences”, and the Symbolist and Imagist schools being totally other issues, there will not be any direct commentary on them.

E. Methodology

Geoffrey H. Hartman starts his introduction to *The Unmediated Vision* this way: “WHAT IS HIS APPROACH? Whenever a critic of literature is discussed, this question tends to preface all the rest. More than any other it rings in the student’s ear the first weeks at graduate school. I could not understand it then, and still cannot” (ix). However, the way the two poets will be commented on can be like this:

The main method for the study is a descriptive one, remaining alert to the discussions of the other chapters. The first chapter of this study (Contexts) will be on the main social and philosophical contexts of their works, focusing on the historical moments and events in which the poets were situated and which would have affected them consciously or unconsciously. The sources used for this chapter will be chiefly biographical studies about the two figures. In this chapter the principal biographical events in their lives will be highlighted. It will also examine the socio-economical conditions of the poets and their era as far as related to the literature of the time. As Aidan Day relates how Wordsworth’s being conservative later in his life “has led some commentators since the beginning of the 1980’s... to re-read Wordsworth’s poetry for its sometimes hidden political connotations” (142).

The second chapter (Theories) will be dealing with the theories of the two poets, literary and social. The focus will be on the writings of the two poets but works of the other commentators will be made use of if appropriate.

In the third chapter (Poetries) the poems of the two poets will be respectively studied and commented on, in terms of the principal themes, similarities, differences, and their reactionary characteristics against the prevalent literary and social conventions and institutions of their times. The criticism on Wordsworth's poems like those by Geoffrey Hartman, Herbert Read, Harold Bloom, F.W Bateson, Margaret Drabble, John Purkis and others, and Akhavan-e Saales, Shafi'i Kadkani, Hamidian, Poornamdarian, Babachahi, Baraheni, Shams'e Langaroodi, Ja'fari and Srvatian on Nima's will be made use of.

F. Literature Review

As far as the sources in Iran Are concerned there has been no serious attempt in comparing William Wordsworth's works to those of Nima. The only practical way of doing this study thus seems using the studies of the works of the two poets which have been done separately as a starting point and finding the similarities and *similar differences* discussed in each of them and arriving at a comparative commentary applicable to both of them.

In *Romanticism in Iran: from the constitutional Revolution to Nima Youshij*, Mas'ood Ja'fari traces the course of Romanticism in Iran since before Nima, the social romanticism in Iran during the constitution (34) and comments on the Romantic aspects of Nima's poetry. He believes that the most important characteristic of Nima's romanticism is its relatively healthy naturalism (200). According to Ja'fari, around the year 1921 Nima tries to distance himself from the romanticism of his earlier years. In this period Nima comes closer to the teachings of

materialist philosophy. Then, after 1940s he gets away from these teachings again. (201). He also writes that the young Nima's love for the natural life of his childhood and adolescence among the mountains and his knowledge of French, have been two important factors at the time he composed "Ghesse'ye Rang'e Parideh" (The Story of Pale Color) (202). He also believes that Nima's relationship with nature goes beyond fervor and becomes a kind of unity and empathy, this contemplations are mixed with reminiscences of the period of childhood and other memories (208). In this book he relates how Nima, like Wordsworth believes that for composing poetry, in addition to great sensitivity, thinking and meditation is also necessary and the poet should not give himself completely to emotions (245). European romantic poets regarded composing long lyrical poems significant; in Iran one can observe the invention of long narrative poems in this period, Nima's "Afsaaneh" (Myth) being an example (255). He also observes that Nima's literary theory and the changes which occurred in Europe in the poems and views of Wordsworth and poets like him resulted in the rebirth of lyric poetry (256). Nima, similar to the European romantics, sets poetry free of the clichés and worn out conventions and, against the decadence and lifelessness, bestows a new life on it (256-7). He also comments that Nima, similar to Romantics like Wordsworth gives priority to the penetrating 'Look' into the Nature and the poet's plain expression while describing it (261).

Poornamdarian in his *My House is Cloudy: Nima's Poetry from Tradition to Modernity* comments that the free, Nimayi poem is the triumph of the poet's freedom from taking the predestined paths. This innovative manner in poetry enables the poet to create the world in the way he has personally perceived it (95-6). He also writes that Nima's language in his modern poems as regarded "odd" and "rough" by the common reader (149). Wordsworth, both in his lifetime and later, has been subject to such criticism either for his plain language or for his lack

of use of enough literary and figurative decorations. Bernbaum, in his *Guide Through Romantic Movement*, defending Wordsworth writes that “It is the blind courage of his realism that permits him to write such a prosaic line as this: ‘And at the hoop alighted, famous inn’” (101). Bernbaum believes that Wordsworth’s influence upon the nineteenth-century literature is “incalculably widespread: he revealed and exemplified new ways of observing nature and human life, making both much more fascinating; and scores of authors followed his lead” (102).

In *The Story of Metamorphosis: The Procedure of Changes of Nima Youshij’s Poetry*, after stating some biographical facts about Nima’s life, like his permanent interest in solitude (24), Hamidian divides Nima’s poetry from the time of the composition of *Afsaaneh* (The Myth) into categories like “Nimayi Romanticism” (31) and “Nimayi Realism” (81) which is in accord with comments like Bernbaum’s on Wordsworth’s realism. This book also provides the reader with precious commentaries on ‘Organic Unity’ in Nima’s poetry which for Wordsworth and Coleridge was, needless to say, as necessary to the poem as soul is to body.

Akhavan-e Saales, in his book *Favors and Faults of Nima Youshij*, after stating that Nima has spent his life fighting for the creed he had chosen in poetry (42), comments on the different aspects of Nima’s innovations and the uses he has made of the tradition. In form of a Platonic dialogue he answers the faults that critics have found with Nima’s form, grammar, expression, etc. Wordsworth, according to Zimmerman “presents a stoic figure, steady in his faith in his poetic creeds” (77).

Nima shows the distance between colloquial intonation and literary expression at several phases and with several poems in each phase (Babachahi 11). These are the opening sentences of Ali Babachahi’s *Separate Articles: A Critical Study of Contemporary Persian Poetry*. In his

view, Nima tries to internalize the social impressions and experiences in his poetry, and on his way to do this, he manages to deconstruct the current language and challenge the fashionable and conventional form and manner of expression; he is protesting against the system (21). About Wordsworth we read that in his challenge to the “cult of reason” he set up “the cult of the naive, the spontaneous. In revolt against the rationalism and artificiality of the eighteenth century, he proposed nature as the proper subject of poetry, and simple language as the proper medium (Cerf 628).

Baraheni believes that in “Afsaneh” (Myth) Nima was absolutely a romantic, but the later Nima tends toward symbolism” (661). In his book *Gold in Copper: On Poetry and Poets* he also comments that in “Afsaneh” Nima was very delicate, whereas his later poetry in many occasions is the very roughness and the passageway for the clash of metaphors and allegories and similes enwrapped in coarseness of point of view (664).

Interpreting Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” in *The Unmediated Vision*, Geoffrey H. Hartman observes that “The subject matter of the poem is not sublime in the Miltonic sense, at least not at first glance. There are no pagan or poetical gods, no divine machinery; it is a personal experience, date and place noted, which leads to various mediations” (3). It is interesting to have in mind that one of the great changes in contemporary Iranian poetry which almost for the first time occurred in Nima’s poems, as Shafi’i Kadkani relates throughout his *Periods of Persian Poetry From The constitutional revolution to the Fall of Monarchy*, is determining time and place for a piece of poetry.

The chapter on Wordsworth in Herbert Read’s *The True Voice of Feeling: studies in English Romantic Poetry*, begins in this way: “From the time of his share in the composition of

the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth was a self-styled experimentalist in verse” (38). Reads goes on quoting from Wordsworth’s “Preface” that the poet himself regarded the majority of the poems in the volume as “experiments”. Anyone familiar with Nima’s poetry would surely associate his name with the word “experiment”. Nima’s body of poetry can be considered as a lifelong experiment in all elements (language, emotions, forms, rhyme, meter, and every other area capable of being experimented). In his book *Wordsworth: A Poetic Life*, Mahoney also argues that Wordsworth was “so innovative in subject matter and technique, in poetic theory and practice, that he has in this century been regularly regarded as one of the first modern poets (xiv). In Read’s *Wordsworth* we are informed that he was of “pure northern stock” (36) and that his marriage with Mary Hutchinson cannot be considered a passionate one (114-116). These can be easily applied to Nima as well.

In F. W. Bateson’s book *Wordsworth: A Re-Interpretation* we read that “Wordsworth was later to revolt against Gray, but for what may be called the School of Gray... he retained to the end an uncritical affection which may be attributed to Taylor’s influence” (63). Taylor is the Rev. William Taylor, who was the headmaster of Hawkshead Grammar School from 1782 to 1786 and can be considered as the first man who encouraged Wordsworth to write poetry. It is worthwhile to note that Nima had a teacher called Nezam Vafaa who played exactly the same role for him. Bateson also discusses “blank verse...the metre in which most of his greatest poetry was to be written” (125) and Wordsworth’s “discovery of the potentialities of symbolic detail” (126). He also comments that Wordsworth’s poems “generalise themselves, as they are read, into the reactions of the human individual fighting for its spiritual survival in a society that seems to have no place for it. And this makes him, with Blake, the first specifically modern English poet” (200).