

Poetry International Rotterdam



Robab Moheb

(Iran, 1953)



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“To be or not to be, there is no difference. But being without a ‘vision’ is what I could not accept.” – Robab Moheb

Robab Moheb is one of the most respected living Iranian poets. In her impressive poetical journey through seven collections, she represents poetry as an essential element of life. Robab Moheb was born in southeast Iran near the border with Iraq. After finishing secondary school, she studied sociology at the University of Teheran. In 1992, she left Iran, seeking exile in Sweden, where she lives today. In 2004 she received a Bachelor’s degree in Pedagogical Sciences from the University of Växjö and a Masters degree from the University of Stockholm.

In 2008 she published her first translations of Swedish poetry into Farsi in collaboration with the renowned Swedish poets Kristina

Lugn, Ida Börjel and Katarina Grippenbergl.

Robab Moheb's poetry begins with very elemental and existential thought processes and evolves into a strong manifestation of selfhood. Her early minimalistic work *ânâme kuchàke xodâ* (*god's small beings*) announces the commencement of her journey through 'herself': contradicting in a courageous act the dualistic perspective of the world as "good" or "bad" – as expressed in the words of the Koran – through her own view on living matter, and in particular the relationship between "woman" and "man".

Subsequently, in her controversial masterpiece *the monologues of R*, Robab Moheb cast herself as the protagonist of her own works, evoking a list of terms beginning with the letter R. *R* is a symphony with its own rules of harmony and which pulses with the life and death of the composer herself:

take the ciphers but not the zero
take the sound but not the silence. . .
I silence by the zero and view by the sound . . .

The collection ends with a return to R's birth. Hence, *R* does not end with the last page of the book; rather Robab Moheb's journey continues, with the broader perspective articulated in her latest poetry book *from the uterus of my mother to the subject of allegories*, a collection that is profoundly influenced by modern Swedish poetry.

With the preface to this book, entitled 'a letter to my mother', Moheb charts her inner journey, diving into daily experiences, into imaginary mirrors which reflect her cynical view of her surrounding world.

In the mirror, I look great. Otherwise there is no weariness.
. . .
when you look great in mirrors, which talk nonsense,
your feet feel avaricious on the austere earth.

In her poetic journey, Moheb constructs a lyrical language of irony, cynicism and satire in order to articulate her philosophical understanding of 'existence', both synchronising and harmonising the external and the internal: she accepts being wounded, but she also wounds; she asks, but she does not seek answers. To be or not to be: there is no difference. The most important thing for Moheb is 'vision', which she gains in placing herself "between the smiling sun

and the cajoling river / . . . facing walls, that are mirrored like light.”

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