

## The Impending Chilly Season: A Comparative Study of Forugh Farukhzad and Sylvia Plath

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is a discussion to delve into two prominent literary figures, Forugh Farukhzad and Sylvia Plath, to probe their lives, poems and attitudes to find out differences and common features, if there are any. Apparently, they come from two different socio-cultural poles; however, they both, coincidentally, start treading on the same path without a burning lantern, invincible and perseverant. At the end of the path, there is a dilemma where they get departed; not because of inevitable cultural reasons but for their approaches to life; one is too strong and stubborn to be defeated; one becomes too feeble and delicate to defeat, although both of them, despite all protests and disagreements, are courageous enough to express their existence, emotions and to persevere to break some conventions. This study makes an attempt to track dawn rationales behind their distinctive approaches, despite all the similar perspectives on life and the whole world.

**KEYWORDS:** Forugh Farukhzad, Sylvia Plath, gallocentric, phallogocentric.

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### INTRODUCTION

Since Forugh and Plath rose to prominence in two very opposite positions by which were influenced and inspired, an in-depth analysis of their poems and outlooks demands a background biographical knowledge. Thus, this paper, first, tries to present a vivid picture of their lives, and then, probes the repercussions of their childhood and adolescence on their viewpoints and poems. Giving a biographical outlook, it analyzes some of their exalted poems to approach their attitudes towards different matters and to discover the differences and the similarities between them. This paper is not going to have either gallocentric or phallogocentric stances; it simply seeks to trace the feminine elements as humane factors rather than the feministic ones.

#### Biography

Forugh (1934-1967) and Sylvia (1932-1963) were contemporary artists in two totally different societies. Their initial similarity can be considered their sophisticated fathers who affected their lives in two distinctive, yet outstanding forms; one by death and the other by life. Sylvia's father died when she was just eight; on his death, Sylvia lost her faith in God and changed into an ambivalent person for the rest of her life. Her passion for her father seems to be inevitable:

You do not do, you do not do

Any more, black shoe

In which I have lived like a foot

For thirty years, poor and white,

Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.

You died before I had time---(Plath, Daddy)

In her world of poetic words, she commits suicide to join her father's world of existence:

I was ten when they buried you.

At twenty I tried to die

And get back, back, back to you.

I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,

And they stuck me together with glue.(Plath, Daddy)

She illustrated nine first years when her father was alive by these profound words:

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“My father died, we moved inland. Whereon those nine first years of my life sealed themselves off like a ship in a bottle—beautiful, inaccessible, obsolete, a fine, white flying myth.” (qtd. in Bloom, 2001, P.19)

And her poem, *The Colossus*, is named as the *Worship of her Father*:

“... O father, all by yourself

You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.”

(Plath, *the Colossus*)

To figure out Forugh’s father’s effect on her life, it should not be ignored that he, as a sophisticated man, was the first person, who acquainted his daughter with literature. Nevertheless, in her teens, Forugh was deprived of her father’s caress as Sylvia was, not because of death, but because her dad despite all his knowledge was still a conventional man whose “mind was full of his ancestors’ beliefs and looked at woman as imperfect creatures and a means of revelry for man not like an equivalent creature to man.” (Rezaee, 2003, p.118)

Thus, he disagreed with Forugh’s lifestyle at the beginning and about his objection, he told one of Forugh’s friends while shedding tears and drowned in sobs: “When Forugh was only a little girl, I taught her to read and introduced her books to learn and grow better. All I say is that she does not change into a notorious figure.” (qtd. in Rezaee, 2003, p.146)

But she was determined enough to ignore the hostile receptions and to continue her long tricky path.

Only through the strength of perseverance shall I be able to do my own part in freeing the hands and feet of art from the chains of rotten conditions and in brining into existence the right of every one and especially women to be able freely to draw aside the curtain of their hidden instincts and tender, fleeting emotions and to be able to describe what is in their hearts without fear and concern for the criticism of others. (qtd. in Hillman, 1987, P.28)

At their childhood, they were hyperactive and mischievous:

Seeing whatever, my eyes drunk it

As a fresh milk

As though a joyous rabbit was living

In my eyes,

Every morning, as the old sun, woke up

Adventured in unknown fields

At night, hid in the dark woods.

(Farokhzad, 2004, pp.223-224)

However the older they grew, the more introvert and cool they got, as if they were drawn in a surreal world where they did not let anybody in, where they were analyzing the whole world and all the little movements in it; in fact they were devastated by the real world and its people:

Little by little, they were going to get ready to tread on their perilous tough path:

We lost everything we must have lost

We started treading without lantern

And moon

Moon

The kind feminine

Was always there

In the childhood memories of a clay and straw rooftop

And above the young plantation

Dreading the swamp of crickets.

How much one must pay? ...

(pp.345-346)

Nevertheless, it seems they were aware of all the difficulties and dangers waiting for them; they knew whenever they made a choice, they had to sacrifice something. And they were ready to sacrifice whatever needed for their great aim.

As Forugh exclaimed:

I devote my life to my art, or even I can say that I sacrifice it for my art. I want life for my art’s sake. Though I am aware of all disagreements with my lifestyle in the contemporary atmosphere and society, I believe that barriers must be broken down, one should have started treading this path, and I, finding this courage and clemency within me, have blazed a trail for others to follow. I know lots of things have been said about me. I will not be defeated and tolerate everything meekly, as I have done so till now. (Quoted in Rezaee, 2003, pp. 132-133)

In August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1953, in her 20<sup>th</sup>, Sylvia committed her first unsuccessful suicide by eating sleeping pills in the cellar

where she was found unconscious after three days. This suicide, apparently, may not be justified because she had attended Smith College three years before and her excitement cannot be refuted in a letter to her mother, although her depression could be figured out in this letter: "I could just cry with happiness....The world is splitting open at my feet like a ripe, juicy watermelon." (Quoted in Bloom, 2001, P.11)

And she was known as a very active, successful student. She, however, had to spend six months in psychiatric care. After an effective recovery, she could return to college.

Forugh, also, spent a few months in psychiatric hospital after being in a long, deep conflict with her husband. Forugh married Parviz Shapoor in her sixteenth, but: "The question is whether what inclined Forugh to Parviz Shapoor was either love or the need to have a male supporter?" (Rezaee, 2003, p.119)

Pooran Farokhzad, her sister, claimed: "Forugh, who was always in dream of having the real caress of a good father, definitely and undoubtedly, showed inclination to Parviz and shared her life with him not in search for a husband, but a father." (Quoted in Rezaee, 2003, p.120)

It can be also said that her marriage may have been the only way to her to achieve the freedom, see the world through her own eyes better and, learn more and get experienced; ignoring that she had married poetry long before. Her dependency and interest in poetry did not let her be an ideal wife for her husband. She could not stay at home, as the other typical women; just spend time by cooking and babysitting. She aimed at breaking conventions, changing the mummified thoughts and beliefs and improving her society and country, but she did not have any opportunity at that home, therefore, in 1955, knowing that they would not be able to live together, the couple divorced, while they had a son named Kamyar whom Forugh loved a lot, but she was deprived of even visiting him. However, by this deprivation, she did not yield. She had found poetry as a complementary pair:

The relationship between two people cannot be complete or completing, especially in this period of time. However, for me, poem is regarded as a friend whom I can talk to easily. A completing pair... to compensate for deficiencies in their lives, some people falls back on the others, but they would not be successful. If it was compensating, would not this relationship be the greatest poem over the world? (p.141)

Forugh never went to university; however, Sylvia continued her education. In 1956 Plath married Ted Hughes, a poet and story-teller. In a 1961 BBC interview, she described how the couple was acquainted:

I happened to be at Cambridge. I was sent there by the [US] government on a government grant. And I'd read some of Ted's poems in this magazine and I was very impressed and I wanted to meet him. I went to this little celebration and that's actually where we met... Then we saw a great deal of each other. Ted came back to Cambridge and suddenly we found ourselves getting married a few months later... We kept writing poems to each other. Then it just grew out of that, I guess, a feeling that we both were writing so much and having such a fine time doing it, we decided that this should keep on. (Guardian Audio. BBC interview with Plath and Hughes, 1961)

They gave birth to two children, one daughter, Freida Rebecca, and a son, Nicholas.

The time for another suicide was ripe. She had an accident which was one of her attempts of suicide, as she said. But this suicide was not as unjustifiable as the initial one; a few days before the couple had compromised to divorce, since she discovered her husband's affairs with another woman. However it sounds only a hint enlightening the ash within her, which she had blown out tirelessly all married years long and her lovely husband's infidelity set her on fire yet again. Once again that alienated sobbing little girl was reborn; the pariah who was eternally melancholic as if she had been punished by her God; the avenger, who uncontrollably was longing for revenge:

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

(Plath, *Lazy Lazarus*)

Three months later, in September 1962, she got divorced.

Now, they, Sylvia and Forugh, appear to have the same position as divorced women; however basic differences would be revealed by delving into their lives, poems and actions thoroughly and precisely.

Forugh took advantage of the situation and traveled to Europe. While in Europe she claimed:

At the time I could not imagine how great an effect this trip could have on my psyche and mentality and to what degree it could bring back my lost health and peace of mind. At this moment while I'm sitting there and writing these lines, I confess that I have never before in my life felt so calm and hopeful and strong.

(Quoted in Hillman, 1987, p.31)

The time after the divorce was glorious for Sylvia, too; since her most famous and beautiful poems belong to this period like poems in *Ariel* which were so impressive. The poem named *Ariel*, for instance, was a hurricane waking up American women who were in sound asleep:

And I

Am the arrow,

The dew that flies

Suicidal, at one with the drive

Into the red

Eye, the cauldron of morning.

(Plath, *Ariel*)

And she could finish her most celebrated novel, *the Bell Jar*, in 1963. It should be noticed that she was known as a good writer, as well and she had lots of stories in her works; she, nevertheless, has always been considered a great poet rather than writer.

In 1959, Forugh traveled to England to study movie direction. She was interested in producing documentaries and she had worked in "Golestan Film" company since her twenty third. About this interest, she says:

For me, cinema is a way of expression. If I have said poem for age, it would not be justified that poem should be considered the only way of expression. I am interested in cinema. If I can, I would do any other artistic activity; if poetry were not, I would play in the theatre, if I did not play in the theatre, I would produce movie. Continuing art is based on continuing my words, if I had any word to say. (Quoted in Rezaee, 2003, p.245)

Her most thriving and effective documentary is "*The House is Dark*" which is about the leper's, and achieved the prize of the best documentary in Film Festival of Western Germany in 1963. About this prize she claimed: "I was indifferent to this prize. I enjoyed as much as I must have enjoyed from my job. It is possible to give me a doll, but what does a doll mean? The prize is a doll as well." (p.250)

The tenth Oberhausen' Festival named its greatest prize for documentaries Forugh Farokhzad in the fourteenth period and chose one of the sentences of this documentary as the festival's motto:

"The world is not free from the flux of ugliness,

The ugliness would be much more if man turned a blind eye to it,

But man is the creature of alternatives."

(Farokhzad, 1962)

After this film, she adopted the son of a leper parents named Hosein.

Forugh and Sylvia now are experienced and successful enough. They are admired and seem to find their real selves. Forugh, about her adulthood, explains:

I am happy, my hair grew white and there are lots of meaningful lines in my brow. I am happy and content for not being wishy-washy person any more. I am about to become thirty two years old; although, it means to pass and finish thirty two years of life share, I found myself. (Quoted in Rezaee, 2003, p.264)

Sylvia, who had been suffering from the most terrible depression of all, was at last ground down. She committed her last suicide and on the opposite of all the previous ones, it worked. On February 11<sup>th</sup> in 1963, at 4:30 am, in her thirtieth, she turns on the gas and puts her head in the oven. Who can understand how she felt in that moment when she prepared the condition and the kitchen? Is it possible to realize her and the rationale behind her suicide?

Maybe she did not have any dream to be fulfilled; according to Forugh: "I know or I think that if one does not have any dream, they would die and this is really terrible, very terrible, and very terrible." (p.264)

It may be difficult to talk about her suicide and the reason or reasons behind that; however, there is a truth that she was different; she saw the awkwardness and could not keep silent. She was suffering from solitude among people and not being heard; although she could not stop loving:

I am inhabited by a cry.

Nightly it flaps out

Looking, with its hooks, for something to love.

(Plath, *Elm*.)

She seems not to be able to tolerate any longer so she preferred to abandon the world and its people who are like "hunters after an old meat". (Plath, *Aftermath*)

As a matter of fact death was another art of hers:

"Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well."

(Plath, *Lady Lazarus*)

Or based on some critic's contention, she looks toward death as a rebirth:

"Plath in these later poems, talks not of death as an end but as a chance to be reborn." (Bloom, 2001, p.31)

In the afternoon of Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup> in 1967, Forugh Farukhzad was driving very fast; seeing the children bus, she suddenly veered across the road to avoid hitting the bus. She became unconscious for her head hit the curb and she fell an eternal asleep.

Sometimes I think it is true that death is one of the natural rules, but the human being feels inferior only to this rule. This is a problem which there is nothing to do with it; even to struggle to get rid of it is impossible; it must exist; it is good. Sometimes I think leaving this world is a piece of cake for me because I am attached to nothing. (Quoted in Rezaee, 2003, p.263)

Their attitudes towards death manifested through their words evidence that not only were they not afraid of it or were not going to run away from it but also they were courageous enough to face it.

Most people talk over how they died while remembering them; about Sylvia's suicide and feel sorry for her or reproach her or even they want to show Forugh's natural and accidental death as a style of suicide and to justify themselves they refer to one of her last poems, *Let Us Believe in the Beginning of Chilly Season*, in which she even illustrated her exact burring time in winter:

"Perhaps truth was those young hands,  
They are now buried under the unending blow of snow. ..."  
(Farukhzad, 2004, p. 342)

Or on the basis of this part of the poem:

"I told my mom: "it is over now."  
*I told her:* "It always happens when you don't expect,  
We should send a condolence letter to the paper"..."  
(pp.341-342)

But William C. Hillman crosses out this idea:

Concomitant with the shock came the unfounded rumors to the effect that Farrokhzad had deliberately crashed her car. Some people pointed to passages in "*Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*" that seemed to them a prediction of the time of day, weather, and season of the year in which she would die. The poem may exhibit ante quem details: the poet did die shortly after 4 p.m. On the 14th; her mother did have to send an obituary announcement to the newspapers: and snow was falling during the graveside ceremonies on the 15th. But the whole poem has to do not with actual death or a forecast of suicide, but with the death of youth, optimism, and faith, which leaves the woman speaker pessimistic and face-to-face with a lonely life of potential meaninglessness.  
(1987, p.132)

However the last part of this poem is rarely considered:

Perhaps truth was those young hands,  
They are now buried under the unending blow of snow.  
But when spring makes love-  
To the blue reflection of the Sky-  
And the green stream of fresh grass-  
Flows in its veins-  
They will flourish, my Beloved,  
My sole Beloved.  
Let us believe in the beginning of the cold season!  
(Farukhzad, 2004, p.342)

This is evidence which proves this poem has something much more significant than suicidal matters, and that Forugh is looking forward to a rebirth as a phoenix.

This superficial look towards them causes their purposes to be rarely considered; it may be why Al Alvarez (2004), Sylvia's friend, exclaimed

"I have done my best to show that what she wrote matters a great deal more than how she died."

### ***Poems and Beliefs***

Sylvia's and Forugh's poetry can be considered confessional for they are mingled with their lives, thoughts and emotions. Most incidents and circumstances in their lives were inspiring for them; father's death, divorce, prevented to see the son, husband's job, being admitted in the psychiatric hospital, pregnancy, abortion of a baby, unsuitable atmosphere of society, especially for women, religious rituals and the religion men's life style, rumors being said behind them, etc., and reading their poetry assists the audience to discover their mental growth, their critical or peaceful periods, their turning pages and their various perspectives towards the life through the passage of time.

About domesticity in Sylvia's poem, Al Alvarez exclaimed:

Plath's case is complicated by the fact that, in her mature work, she deliberately used the details of her everyday life as raw material for her art. A casual visitor or unexpected telephone call, a cut, a bruise, a kitchen bowl, a candlestick—everything became usable, charged with meaning, transformed.

Her poems are full of references and images that seem impenetrable at this distance but which could mostly be explained in footnotes by a scholar with full access to the details of her life.

(2007, p.214)

Sepideh Rezaee, about Forugh's poems also claims:

"Forugh changes her slightest experiences into poem and generalizes them... her various experiences, whether childhood ones or adulthood and her social atmosphere, as well, are inspiring for them and have the raw material and subject matters for her. That is why Forugh's poem is closed to life." (2003, p.258)

Not only in their poems, but also in Sylvia's novella, *The Bell Jar*, her *Letter Home* and *Journals*, and in Forugh's documentary and her script which she could never produce, one can discover, effortlessly, their real selves, as though the audience know them all along, as critic Sandra

M. Gilbert claims:

"Though I never met Sylvia Plath, I can honestly say that I have known her most of my life."

(Gilbert, 1979, p. 245)

They, sickened and worn out with all frozen minds and hands, various colorful veils on indifferent repulsive faces shifts by shifting the situation, seems to long for their real "self" so as to cry out their existence.

Maybe that is why they throw the veils off their faces and dare to face the reality:

I am not a smile.

These children are after something, with hooks and cries

And my heart too small to bandage their terrible faults"

(Plath, BERK- PLAGUE)

That person branded with shame who used to laugh

At foolish taunts was I.

I said I would be the cry of my own existence;

But O, alas that I was a "woman".

(Farokhzad, 2004, p.185)

To be able to lay their "real self" bare, they need to start from the world outside to the world inside, so they should recognize their location and people around; however they could see nothing but a shady pitch-dark world where a bunch of wild walking remains were living:

"Happy remains,

Drawn remains,

Wise, silent remains,

You look like handsome, tasteful ghosts,

You appear in the stations of regular times,

You emerge in the suspicious spot of passing stars,

And the boring show of futile, stale fruits."

(p.341)

Besides; it is more tangible, when they try to illustrate people while being in touch with them:

Compelled by calamity's magnet

They loiter and stare as if the house

Burnt-out were theirs, or as if they thought

Some scandal might any minute ooze

From a smoke-choked closet into light;

No deaths, no prodigious injuries

Glut these hunters after an old meat,

Blood-spoor of the austere tragedies.

Mother Medea in a green smock

Moves humbly as any housewife through

Her ruined apartments, taking stock

Of charred shoes, the sodden upholstery:

Cheated of the pyre and the rack,  
The crowd sucks her last tear and turns away  
(Plath, Aftermath)

“I am coming from the land of frozen minds, words, sounds  
And this land is like a hole of snakes.  
This land is full of friends-  
Who hold your hands-  
And hang you in their heads...”  
(Farokhzad, 2004, pp. 335-336)

Introducing their residence and cohabitants is an effort to discover them, since discovering where and with whom one live can smooth the path for knowing oneself.

This attempt to probe their genuine *selves* may justify the signs which represent that two poets' characteristics are being gradually sifted patiently and what remains are two experienced women with wider and deeper looks toward the world; and from now on they concern about more noteworthy and weighty matters, those of considerable importance, as if they looked into the world through new glasses which are more exact and powerful than ever;

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
Whatever you see I swallow immediately  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful---  
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.  
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.  
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long  
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.  
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.  
Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,  
Searching my reaches for what she really is.  
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.  
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.  
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.  
I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.  
(Plath, Mirror)

“It is me,  
A lonely woman,  
At the doors of a cold season,  
And discovery of the soiled soul of Earth,  
The sad despair of Sky,  
And the inability-  
Of my frozen hands...”  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p. 331)

Although *Mirror* can be regarded as a proof that the poet has stepped on a new more challenging path, it can be observed that the poet is being more drawn into depression and pessimism. Based on this poem, she had been a very optimistic and happy person; however she blames people and darkness for turning into a depressed one; as a matter of fact, with the passage of time, when she digs her for her real self, she comes across a repulsive full-of tear woman who is not old because of age, but for all miseries and melancholies she has suffered from during her short life, as though all the hideousness of world were reflected in her face. Not only does she not scold her for unveiling herself, but also she admires her and calls her faithful; she substantiates this Qur'an's verse:

“*Ney! Man is witness against himself*”  
(The Holy Qur'an, Al-Qiyamah, (the Resurrection) verse 14)

On the other hand, she reprehends the others to try to veil her fake face. Now she is aware that no one can liberate her except herself. So she rides *Ariel* to cleanse this liberating self;

“And now I  
Foam to wheat, a glitter of seas.  
The child's cry  
Melts in the wall.  
And I  
Am the arrow,  
The dew that flies  
Suicidal, at one with the drive  
Into the red  
Eye, the cauldron of morning.”  
(Plath, Ariel)

Harold Bloom believes:

The poem ends just on the edge of destruction. Its last lines—“the cauldron of morning”—again point to the mix of destruction and rebirth. Morning traditionally is thought of positively, as a new beginning. Yet here it is a huge, boiling vat, presumably causing destruction as parts of its self are boiled away. At the same time it is an image of cleansing, since boiling traditionally is used as a disinfecting process also. (2001, p. 60)

Considering Bloom's justification logical, Sylvia's gloomy expression about the future can be crossed out:

“A future was lost yesterday  
As easily and irretrievably  
As a tennis ball at twilight.”  
(Plath, April 18)

She may have ridden her horse to the morning, to find that lost tennis ball, yet she, despite all her resistance, does not look like the winner.

Forugh, however, who believes human being, innately is aporetically exposed to various choices, and he mostly does his best to go for the most apt choice or choices. Forough sees herself at the beginning of the chilly season in her most difficult and ticklish situation, does not attend to surrender. Even in the most extremely gloomy instant, she was able to trace a rosy element, since:

“I know, those obscure clouds-  
Indicate the closeness of clear skies.  
Only the last blast of flames knows  
The bright secret of a candle's life.”  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p. 342)

Despite this diversity of perspectives, a concordance reveals among their words; both of them are rummaging through themselves for their rescuer, as though souring the world was too pathetic:

“Ask the mirror  
For name of your rescuer...”  
(p.349)

They apparently had grown up in solitude and were baffled until discovering their rescuer; the point, nonetheless, is whether they could extricate themselves from the quandary or give up. And this loneliness sometimes chafes them; Sylvia looks quivering in a remote island of despondency, where ravens of rage and sorrow, rotating over her, now are going to abandon:

She lives quietly  
With no attachments, like a foetus in a bottle,  
The obsolete house, the sea, flattened to a picture  
She has one too many dimensions to enter.  
Grief and anger, exorcised,  
Leave her alone now.  
The future is a grey seagull  
Tattling in its cat-voice of departure.  
(Plath, A Life)

And Forugh, by recalling her pleasant past, concedes that she is bound to be in solitude:

“Went those days...  
And the girl, who wore make-up with geranium leaves,  
Oh, now, is a lonely woman,



A lonely woman!"  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p.227)

Through their lonely lives, there are some time when they find themselves freaked out and exhausted, wounded with the words and looks, sickened with the moldy thoughts, too unable and powerless to go ahead; yet what matters a big deal is capability to alleviate their pains and ease themselves to rise again out of ash; Forugh expresses her despairing vibes in *Green Mirage*:

I could not,  
I could no more.  
My treads at the end,  
Confessed to the futility of the rout-  
And despair, at last, defeated the patience of my soul.  
The spring,  
That green mirage,  
While passing cross my sight,  
Whispered to me,  
"Look! You have never advanced,  
You have been drowning.  
(p.295)

While being stuck in despair, they both were planning for a rebirth,  
"I will plant my hands in the garden  
I will grow I know I know I know  
And swallows will lay eggs  
In the hollow of my ink-stained hands."  
(p.326)

"Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.  
Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air."  
(Plath, Lady Lazarus)

Their similar look towards rebirth is more surprising since both of them discover rebirth through annihilation and this is their turning page.

Forugh discovers a sad little fairy within her existence ocean:

I know a sad little fairy  
Who lives in an ocean  
And ever so softly plays her heart into a magic flute  
A sad little fairy  
Who dies with one kiss each night  
And is reborn with one kiss each dawn.  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p. 327)

She has such a great faith in the immortal truth of her existence that she does not know it over by dying. In fact, annihilation is a bridge through which she passes to be reborn:

Perhaps truth was those young hands,  
They are now buried under the unending blow of snow.  
But when spring makes love-  
To the blue reflection of the Sky-  
And the green stream of fresh grass-  
Flows in its veins-  
They will flourish, my Beloved,  
My sole Beloved!  
Let us believe in the beginning of the cold season!  
(p.342)

On the other side, Sylvia, riding her *Ariel* leaves no stone unturned within herself for her true self who was going to

rise from her ashes:

“...And I  
Am the arrow,  
The dew that flies  
Suicidal, at one with the drive  
Into the red  
Eye, the cauldron of morning.”  
(Plath, Ariel)

“...Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.  
Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair...”  
(Plath, Lady Lazarus)

Their rational for rebirth is the pivot on which their differences would be clarified; since one is longing to grow green, the other, however, to take revenge. Forugh desires to keep moving and can find no excuse to stop:

Why should I stop, why?  
The birds have gone in search  
Of the blue direction.  
The horizon is vertical, vertical  
And movement fountain-like;  
And at the limits of vision  
Shining planets spin.  
The earth in elevation reaches repetition,  
And air wells  
Changes into tunnels of connection;  
And day is a vastness,  
Which does not fit into narrow mind  
Of newspaper worms.  
Why should I stop?  
What can a swamp be?

...

What can a swamp be but the spawning ground  
Of corrupt insects?  
Swollen corpses scrawl the morgue's thoughts.

...

I am a descendant of the house of trees.  
Breathing stale air depresses me.  
A bird which died advised me to  
Commit flight to memory.

(Farokhzad, 2004, pp. 362-363)

Although Sylvia finds herself more useful while being horizontal:  
Tonight, in the infinitesimal light of the stars,  
The trees and the flowers have been strewing their cool odors.  
I walk among them, but none of them are noticing.  
Sometimes I think that when I am sleeping  
I must most perfectly resemble them--Thoughts gone dim.  
It is more natural to me, lying down.  
Then the sky and I are in open conversation,  
And I shall be useful when I lie down finally:  
Then the trees may touch me for once, and the flowers have time for me.  
(Plath, I Am Vertical)

It can stand why Sylvia makes different attempts to die and recalls some of them appearing virtually no regret:

Gentleman, ladies  
These are my hands  
My knees.

I may be skin and bone,  
Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.  
The first time it happened I was ten.  
It was an accident.  
The second time I meant  
To last it out and not come back at all.  
I rocked shut  
As a seashell.  
They had to call and call  
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.  
(Plath, *Lady Lazarus*)  
Although Forugh never thinks of escaping the life:

“OH, Life  
I’m still full of you  
I have thought neither to tear the thread  
Nor escape from you”  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p. 217)

Nevertheless, when she talks about her death, she does it somehow indifferently, yet, on the opposite of Sylvia, her words seem doleful:

My death will arrive one day,  
It may be a bright, spring dawn,  
Or a distant winter dusk,  
Or perhaps a silent night-  
Of a foggy, frozen fall.  
That day,  
Gloomy, bright or cloudy, yet,  
It will be an empty day-  
Like all the rest:  
A figment of the future,  
A picture of the past.  
That day,  
My eyes like dark holes,  
My face, like cold marbles;  
It’ll be taken away in a swift sleep,  
Leaving behind my colorful dreams.  
My hands will fall on the pallor of the page,  
My rhyming thoughts will flee from their cage,  
My mind losing to the vibration of this last verse;  
And then, there will be no sorrow, no pain-  
No rage. ...  
(pp. 214-215)

Sylvia’s indifference towards both life and death may be justified by her verse in *April 18*:

“A future was lost yesterday  
As easily and irretrievably  
As a tennis ball at twilight.”  
(Plath, *April 18*)

As a matter of fact, the future is the grey gloomy sky on the top of the highest farthest summit, which she never wishes for. She is constantly melancholic, and life or death sounds a matter of total indifference to her as she mocks them:

Always in the middle of a kiss  
Came the profane stimulus to cough;  
Always from the pulpit during service  
Leaned the devil prompting you to laugh.  
Behind mock-ceremony of your grief  
Lurked the burlesque instinct of the ham;  
You never altered your amused belief  
That life was a mere monumental sham.

From the comic accident of birth  
To the final grotesque joke of death  
Your malady of sacrilegious mirth  
Spread gay contagion with each clever breath.  
Now you must play the straight man for a term  
And tolerate the humor of the worm.

(Plath, Dirge for a Joker)

By contrast Forugh, defining the life, utters simple words which can present broader look towards life:

Life is perhaps

A long street through which a woman holding

A basket passes every day

Life is perhaps

A rope with which a man hangs himself from a branch

Life is perhaps a child returning home from school.

Life is perhaps lighting up a cigarette

In the narcotic repose between two love-makings

Or the absent gaze of a passerby

Who takes off his hat to another passerby

With a meaningless smile and a good morning.

(Farokhzad, 2004, pp.324-325)

She describes life to be able to demonstrate her lot with dissatisfaction and her lustrous future:

Ah

This is my lot

My lot is

A sky which is taken away at the drop of a curtain

My lot is going down a flight of disused stairs

A regain something amid putrefaction and nostalgia

My lot is a sad promenade in the garden of memories

And dying in the grief of a voice which tells me

I love

Your hands.

I will plant my hands in the garden

I will grow I know I know I know

And swallows will lay eggs

In the hollow of my ink-stained hands.

(p. 326)

And just here is she pondering that dreaming a diamond costs for someone to see the sea:

“No fisherman shall ever find a pearl in a small brook

Which empties into a pool.”

(p. 327)

So what matters here is how to look the world, how to discover one's position in it and how much one can endure although being ahead of one's time.

### ***Two Feminist Women?***

Forugh and Sylvia have been usually portrayed as virtually radical feminist poets referring to some of their poems. As mentioned before, men made an inevitably vast impression on their lives, their fathers, their husbands and about Forugh, her son. And they lived in a period when women were restricted by patriarchal world, so discussing over this limitation and the oppression towards women would be regarded as a normal and, of course intellectual response, not just a sentimental reaction. According to Forugh, her response is humanistic rather than feministic:

I wanted to be a "Woman," that is to say a "human being". I wanted to say that I too have the right to breathe and to cry out. But others wanted to stifle and silence my screams on my lips and my breathe in my lungs. (Quoted in Hillman, 1987, p.31)

Painting them as feminists, one should consider that they are females, and as Cixous declares:

“Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies...woman must put herself into the text”.(Cixous, 1976, p. 875)

A woman's expression is inevitably distinct from the man's since her nature, desires, emotions, and more significantly her perspective towards the world and life differ totally from the man's, as Irigaray states that female desire 'does not speak the same language as men's desire' (1985, p.100)

This is just what Forugh exclaimed while justifying why she uses female elements in her poetry:

Poetry is the language of the heart and I am a woman and my heart and its emotions are different from the emotions that exist in the heart of a man. Consequently, if I want to speak with the voice of a man, for sure I will not be speaking from my own heart. (Quoted in Hillman, 1987, p.28-29)

Moreover, watching in silence the repulsive scene where women were floundering in mire of oppression and their own ignorance seems to them too gnawing and unbearable; and more intriguingly, they paid fully attention to their surroundings and realized that something is not the way it should be; what Betty Friedan claims through lucid words as her own experience:

The only other kind of women I knew, growing up, were the old-maid high-school teachers; the librarian; the one woman doctor in our town, who cut her hair like a man; and a few of my college professors. None of these women lived in the warm centre of life as I had known it at home. Many had not married or had children. I dreaded being like them...I never knew a woman, when I was growing up, who used her mind, played her own part in the world, and also loved, and had children. (Friedan, 1963, pp. 66-7).

And that is why Forugh wishes, "I wish freedom for Iranian women and I wish equalized right for women and men. I am fully aware of my sisters' sufferings because of injustice in this patriarchal society and use half of my art to portrait their melancholies." (Quoted in Rezaee, 2003, p. 134)

So their attempts against patriarchy dominance in their period to awaken women and inform them that their capabilities should not be misunderstood as organizing an army to defeat male army in the greatest battle, ever. To digest their true purpose it should be considered that they both had both maternal and sociable duties; although they both got divorced, their divorce had various reasons mentioned before. Even though they knew the truth, they never put aside the realities; by describing marriage, for instance, Forugh tries to portrait its real picture in her society:

The girl smiled and said: what  
Is the secret of this gold ring, the secret of this ring that so tightly  
Embraces my fingers,  
The secret of this band  
That sparkles and shines so?  
The man was startled and said:  
It's the ring of good fortune, the ring of life...  
... The years passed, and one night  
A downhearted woman looked at that gold band  
And saw in its gleaming impression  
Days wasted in hopes of husband fidelity,  
Days wasted all.  
The woman grew agitated and cried out:  
O my, this ring that  
Still sparkles and shines  
Is the band of slavery and servitude.

(Farokhzad, 2004, pp.96-97)

And when Sylvia describes nine months of pregnancy in nine lines, who knows the writer and the speaker were the same at time?

Because she seemed entirely satisfied with her marriage and husband, till Tedd's infidelity. So *Metaphor* should be regarded as a protest not against pregnancy but against oppression and injustice, since the narrator does not talk to her baby with rage:

"...O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
Money's new-minted in this fat purse..."  
(Plath, *Metaphore*)

However describing her position outrages her:

"...I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
Boarded the train there's no getting off."  
(Plath, *Metaphor*)

According to this phrase of the poem "*a cow in calf*" reveals that the narrator is a woman who is too young to

give birth to a baby; actually she is baby herself, who was enforced to play maternal role. And this poem disapproves advance marriages rather than Sylvia's remonstrance against pregnancy.

Her passion for her husband and children, being a dynamic schoolgirl and playing her role full of beans in home and in society make her a well-known exemplary modern woman; Al Alvarez depicts her an intensely young woman who wanted to excel in everything and get As in studying, marriage as well as poetry, (2004) what is precisely the same for Forugh. They genuinely revere female's maternal and wifely potentials and esteem women who are able to develop these potentials, which is why Forugh ask these women for shelter:

"Give me refuge, O simple whole women  
Whose slender fingertips  
Trace  
The exhilarating movement of a fetus beneath the skin  
And in whose opened blouses  
The air always mingles with the smell of fresh milk."  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p.294)

They, however, knew that being female is regarded as a sin and a woman seems to be convicted on femininity, especially in the past; since their abilities and intelligence were not believed, therefore great women have been always trying to prove themselves, despite all irreconcilable attempts, which at times can justify their groan of despair like this one of Forugh's:

"That person branded with shame, who used to laugh  
At foolish taunts was I.  
I said I would be the cry of my own existence;  
But O, alas that I was a "woman"."(p.185)  
They incontrovertibly do not seem to be able to endeavor silence and inertness:  
More than this, yes  
More than this one can stay silent...  
One can be constant, like zero  
Whether adding, subtracting, or multiplying.  
One can think of your --even your—eyes  
In their cocoo of anger  
As lusterless holes in a time-worn shoe.  
One can dry up in one's basin, like water. (pp. 263-265)

The prominent point is that their efforts and verses should not be misconstrued, since the last and the least thing they desired was to be perceived alive, which means influential and precious:

"I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart.  
I am, I am, I am." (Plath, 1971, p. 128)  
Talk to me  
What else would the one offering the kindness of a live flesh want from  
You?  
But the understanding of the sensation of existence.  
Talk to me  
I am in the window's refuge  
I have a relationship with the Sun.  
(Farokhzad, 2004, p.350)

## Conclusion

According to this paper, Forugh and Sylvia, in the beginning, were born in the identical world, but their choices' particularity caused them to continue living in distinctive worlds in the end.

As a matter of fact, this paper sought to introduce these two prestigious literary figures in a noble comparative way by concentrating on their works, beliefs, moves, and lifestyles. It almost tried to depict them two supreme influential figures in their period, observing the most potent events and circumstances of their lives and considering their most critical poems, words and feats. This article made a serious attempt to reveal that Sylvia Plath and Forugh Farokhzad moved to prove themselves not as those radical illogical feminists who long for power, but as two humans who long for being heard and cared, since they were tired of a very long silence among women. They tried to awaken people, not necessarily females, to see the reality and the changes which were happening.

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