

A Comparative Study of the Poetry of Forough Farrokhzad and Nadia Anjuman

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Abstract

The present study adopts the French School of Comparative Literature methodology to introduce Anjuman and to explore the historical and thematic relationships between her poetry and that of Farrokhzad. Using content analysis and comparative approaches, the research examines feminist themes in their works and their portrayals of female identity.

The findings suggest that Anjuman was well-acquainted with Farrokhzad's poetry and philosophical outlook, which profoundly influenced her creative expression. Her work reflects themes central to feminist literature, including the assertion of women's love and identity, resistance to patriarchy, critiques of social inequalities, and the articulation of women's desires and aspirations. These shared concerns highlight Anjuman's intellectual and poetic engagement with Farrokhzad's legacy. However, significant differences emerge in their approaches: Farrokhzad openly addressed women's issues, challenging societal norms with bold language. By contrast, Anjuman's poetic expression, constrained by Afghanistan's restrictive social context, remains comparatively reserved and avoids directly challenging established norms. Nonetheless, her work symbolizes the voice of Afghan women striving for representation in a challenging socio-cultural landscape.

Keywords: *Nadia Anjuman, Forough Farrokhzad, contemporary Afghan Persian poetry, French school of comparative literature.*

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Comparative literature, a field of literary criticism originating in France, examines the relationships between the literatures of different nations, exploring their historical connections and reciprocal influences. This approach, foundational to the French school of comparative literature, emphasizes the study of how a national literary work manifests and reflects within the literature of another culture (Zarrin Koob, 1361: 125). As noted by the French school, "the transfer of a literary subject from one literature to another is neither accidental nor arbitrary; it results from a historical relationship grounded in cause and effect" (Jamal al-Din, 1389: 15).

One prominent subject of such comparative inquiry is Nadia Anjuman, an Afghan poet whose life was tragically cut short by patriarchal violence. Known as the "Afghan Lady of Ghazal" (Saqr, 2018: 752), Anjuman was a student of Persian literature and engaged in numerous academic trips to Iran alongside Herat University professors. Her exposure to literary discussions with Iranian poets and thinkers, as well as her engagement with the works of Persian literary masters like Hafez, Saadi, Sepehri, Moshiri, and Forough Farrokhzad, shaped her poetic voice (Introduction to Divan Gul Doodi, 11). Among these figures, she found particular resonance with Forough Farrokhzad's themes and struggles, aligning with Anjuman's inner experiences and feminist ideals. This affinity significantly influenced Anjuman's intellectual and poetic development, guiding her articulation of women's issues.

Sawsan Abdul Moneim Saqr characterizes Anjuman's poetry as protest-driven, drawing comparisons with the works of Forough Farrokhzad (Saqr, 2018: 782). Consequently, the present study investigates the thematic connections between Anjuman and Farrokhzad, addressing the question: In what specific feminist themes does Anjuman's poetry reflect the influence of Farrokhzad? The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding women's literature in Iran and Afghanistan, demonstrating the transnational impact of Forough Farrokhzad's poetic legacy.

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have compared Forough Farrokhzad's poetry with the works of other poets, particularly those writing in Arabic. These studies primarily highlight the feminine discourse in Forough's poetry,

focusing on themes such as the expression of female emotions, fear and loneliness, utopian visions, and the articulation of sorrow and grief.

Regarding comparisons between Forough and non-Iranian Persian-speaking poets, two notable studies exist. Akbari Bayraq and Asdian (2014), in their article titled *"A Comparative Study of the Use of Myth and Archetype in the Poetry of Forough Farrokhzad and Golrokh Sar Safi-Ava (a Tajik Poet)"*, explored the use of mythological elements and archetypes in the works of these two poets. Additionally, Bundshahriari and Seyed Rezaei (2014), in their study titled *"Comparison of the Poetry of Forough Farrokhzad, Farzaneh Khojandi, and Khaledeh Forough from the Perspective of Johnson's Theory,"* analyzed the diversity of vocabulary in the works of these three poets.

One of the few studies focusing on Nadia Anjuman's poetry is *"The Afghan Poet Nadia Anjuman"* by Sawsan Abdul Moneim Saqr (2018). This study introduces Anjuman's work and posits that she used poetry as a weapon to advocate for Afghan women. However, existing scholarship reveals a research gap: no studies specifically address Nadia Anjuman's influence on Forough Farrokhzad or provide a comparative analysis of their poetry. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the thematic and stylistic intersections between their poetic legacies.

3. Methodology

This study employs content analysis to examine the feminist and women-centered themes in the poetry of Nadia Anjuman and Forough Farrokhzad. The primary focus is on the thematic and conceptual dimensions of their work, while the analysis of poetic language and form has been excluded to maintain the conciseness of the discussion.

4. Results

The influence of Forough Farrokhzad, a leading figure in contemporary Iranian poetry, extends beyond Iran's borders, exemplifying the critical role of comparative literature in situating national literatures within a broader global context. This research, grounded in the French school of comparative literature, examines the historical and thematic connections between the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad and Nadia Anjuman, renowned as the "Lady of Ghazals" in Afghanistan. By analyzing Anjuman's biography and education, as well as identifying echoes of Forough's voice in her poetry, the study concludes that Anjuman was significantly influenced by Forough in addressing feminist issues, particularly in advocating for women's rights and

expressing feminist ideologies. This influence is explored across eight thematic categories.

Forough Farrokhzad, known for articulating the most eloquent feminine voice in contemporary Persian literature, introduced themes of feminism and female identity with remarkable boldness, challenging patriarchal norms through her work. Nadia Anjuman, as a scholar of Persian literature, was well-versed in these poetic movements and influenced by them during her academic visits to Iran, where she engaged with Iranian literary circles. Inspired by Forough, Anjuman addressed the pain, struggles, and confinement of Afghan women while striving to articulate their experiences. Like Forough, she focused on granting identity to women's love and emotions, denouncing inequalities and discrimination, and highlighting themes of loneliness and captivity. Both poets frequently depicted women as caged birds yearning for freedom, using imagery such as "walls," "cages," and "birds" to symbolize feminist struggles.

Despite thematic parallels, notable differences distinguish their poetic voices. Forough's work is characterized by its forthrightness and norm-defying expressions of love and femininity. In contrast, Anjuman's approach reflects the constraints of a more traditional Afghan society, necessitating a measured and cautious exploration of similar themes. Nonetheless, her courage in addressing issues of love, patriarchy, and women's emancipation remains deeply commendable. Both poets' efforts underscore their shared mission of granting identity to women and challenging societal structures, though their respective sociocultural contexts shaped their poetic strategies and modes of expression.

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