Different Worlds:

A Comparison of Love Poems

By Dorothy Livesay (Canada, 1909-96) and

By Forugh Farrokhzad (Iran, 1935-67)

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Dans le cadre des exigences de la Maîtrise en littérature canadienne comparée

Sherbrooke

Été 2010
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Composition du jury

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I gratefully acknowledge Dr. Roxanne Rimstead for her advice, supervision, and crucial contribution, which made her a backbone of this research and so to this thesis. Her involvement and her originality have triggered and nourished my intellectual maturity, which I will benefit from, for a long time to come. Without her support and patience this effort would have been worth nothing. I am grateful in every possible way and appreciate her way of analyzing Persian poetry.

Many thanks go in particular to Dr. Patricia Godbout and Dr. Domenic Beneventi, the members of my jury, for using their precious time to read this thesis and give their valuable advice and critical comments about it.

I am also very grateful to my Professors and friends who inspired my final effort despite the enormous works I was facing.

Special thanks go to my family. My parents deserve special mention for their unending support and prayers. My Father, Dr. Mohammad Hassan Roostae, in the first place is the person who taught me the fundamentals of learning, showing me the joy of intellectual pursuit ever since I was a child. My Mother, Zohreh Nadjafi, is the one who sincerely raised me with her caring and gentle love. Ali Reza and Zahra Roostae, thanks for being supportive and caring siblings.
Résumé


La comparaison de la vie personnelle des écrivaines révèle que, alors que les parents de Dorothy Livesay, tous deux journalistes, l’aidèrent à améliorer son écriture et à diffuser sa poésie, ceux de Forugh Farrokhzad découragèrent leur fille d’écrire et de publier des poèmes. Dorothy Livesay était une femme très scolarisée qui vécut et étudia dans différents pays; Forugh Farrokhzad, elle, n’eut pas accès aux études supérieures. Ni l’une ni l’autre ne connut un mariage heureux, et elles finirent toutes deux par mettre un terme à leur union, aspirant à plus de liberté. Dans leurs poèmes d’amour, Farrokhzad et Livesay remettent en question les conventions patriarcales de leur société respective et essaient d’exprimer leur besoin de liberté et d’individualité en tant que femmes.
L’une des différences marquantes entre les sociétés iranienne et canadienne est l’empreinte profonde des idéologies islamiques traditionnelles sur la société iranienne. Les poèmes d’amour de Forugh Farrokhzad s’opposent à ces idéologies et, en conséquence, l’œuvre de celle-ci a été négligée pendant des années. À l’époque où Dorothy Livesay a publié The Unquiet Bed (1967), la perception qu’on avait du rôle de l’homme et de la femme pouvait se ressembler à certains égards, en Iran et au Canada, par exemple quant à l’importance du mariage et au confinement des femmes à la sphère domestique, quoiqu’à des degrés passablement différents. Étant donné que Dorothy Livesay vivait dans une société en profonde mutation, en raison de la montée du féminisme durant les années soixante, la dimension féminisme qu’on retrouve dans ses poèmes d’amour fut mieux reçue.

Puisque cette recherche a été menée en anglais, j’ai eu recours à des versions traduites des poèmes de Forugh Farrokhzad. La traduction d’un poème ne rend jamais parfaitement le sens de l’original. La personne qui traduit de la poésie devrait être poète au départ. Il lui faudrait lire et comprendre le poème original et faire un nouveau poème en langue d’arrivée. Cette recherche aborde certaines images très intéressantes que contiennent les poèmes de Forugh Farrokhzad. Le farsi étant ma langue maternelle, je tente d’expliquer l’intention véritable que véhiculent ces images et de voir si les versions traduites sont en mesure de rendre celles-ci. Je prends aussi en considération les défis que pose la traduction de la poésie du farsi à l’anglais et l’effet, sur la lecture de poésie iranienne, du processus de médiation qu’est la traduction.

Une façon importante d’appréhender les œuvres de Forugh Farrokhzad et de Dorothy Livesay est d’analyser leurs poèmes sous l’angle des idéologies féministes. Il y a une grande différence entre ces dernières en Iran et au Canada. La pensée féministe en Iran repose sur les idéologies islamiques. La question est, dès lors, de savoir si le féminisme islamique peut défendre les droits des femmes contre les hommes. Forugh Farrokhzad faisait partie des féministes anti-
islamiques et s’opposait à la loi islamique dans ses poèmes. Les idéologies féministes canadiennes, en revanche, se divisent en différentes écoles, libérale, marxiste, radicale ou française, et ont la plupart du temps des fondements séculiers. Ce mémoire se penche sur la réception critique réservée à la poésie des deux auteures en fonction des différentes idéologies féministes présentes au Canada et en Iran. Dorothy Livesay se rendit en Zambie, assez tard dans sa vie, et un des poèmes qu’elle écrivit par la suite, intitulé « The Taming », se veut un commentaire empreint d’ironie sur la soumission des femmes à un amant dominant.

La comparaison des poèmes de ces deux auteures issues de mondes différents met en lumière la façon dont leurs poèmes d’amour, leur voix féministe et les thèmes de liberté, d’indépendance et de déceptions amoureuses que l’écriture leur permet d’aborder sont ancrés dans le contexte culturel dans lequel elles vécurent.

Mots-clés: poésie d’amour, Dorothy Livesay, Forugh Farrokhzad, féminisme, femmes, genre, Canada, Iran, traduction
ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to compare works by the Canadian poet Dorothy Livesay (1909-1996) and by the Iranian poet Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967). Although Farrokhzad and Livesay were from different generations, their love poems emerged around the same time. Farrokhzad published her poems between 1955 and 1965, and Livesay’s collection of love poems *The Unquiet Bed* was published in 1967. There are interesting similarities between the use of voice and theme in their love poems. The speakers in the poems try to keep their individuality and are looking for freedom in love, but often see love as disappointing. My discussion highlights Livesay’s “The Touching,” “The Taming,” and “Consideration” as well as Farrokhzad’s “The Sin,” “Love Song,” and “My Beloved.” I also refer to many of their other love poems, discuss their biographies and map out their respective cultural contexts, all of which reflect different worlds.

A comparison of Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s personal lives shows that Livesay’s father and her mother, who were both journalists, helped her to improve and publish her writings while Farrokhzad’s parents discouraged their daughter from composing and publishing poems. Livesay was a highly educated woman who lived and studied in different countries, but Farrokhzad did not have access to advanced academic studies. Neither had happy marriages and both left their marriages in search of more freedom. Through their love poems, Farrokhzad and Livesay questioned the patriarchal conventions of their respective societies and tried to express their need for freedom and individuality as women.

One of the most important differences between Iranian and Canadian societies was that Iranian society was deeply affected by conventional Islamic ideologies. Farrokhzad’s love poems resisted these Islamic ideologies and, as a result, her works were ignored for years. Again, at the
time Livesay published *The Unquiet Bed* (1967), there were some similarities between gender constructions in Iran and Canada, for example, the importance of marriage and the confinement of women to the private sphere, but to a very different degree. Since Livesay lived in a society that was being greatly affected by the feminist revolution in the 1960’s, the feminism in her love poems was better received.

As this research is done in English, translated versions of Farrokhzad’s poems are used. A translated poem never conveys the exact meaning of the original poem. The translator of a poem should be a poet herself or himself. What he or she should do is to read and understand the original poem and reproduce a new poem in the target language. This research discusses some interesting images in Farrokhzad’s love poems. As a native speaker of Farsi, I explain the real intention of these images to see if translated versions could convey a similar meaning. I also consider the challenges when translating poetry from Farsi to English and the effects of reading Iranian poetry that has been mediated by translation.

An important approach to Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s works is to analyze their poems in terms of feminist ideologies. There is a great difference between Iranian and Canadian feminist ideologies. Feminist thought in Iran is based on Islamic ideologies. The question is if Islamic feminism can defend women’s rights against men or not. Farrokhzad was one of the anti-Islamic feminists who opposed Islamic rule in her poems. Canadian feminist ideologies, however, are divided into liberal, Marxist, radical, and French schools, and are most often based on secular ideologies. This thesis examines the critical reception of poetry by both poets in the context of different schools of feminist thought in Canada and Iran. Livesay traveled to Zambia later in life and one of the love poems she wrote after that called “The Taming” comments ironically on women’s submission to a dominant male lover.
The comparison of poems by two authors from different worlds shows how their love poems, their feminist voice, and their themes of freedom, independence, and disappointment in love are rooted in the cultural context of their lives.

Keywords: love poetry, Dorothy Livesay, Forugh Farrokhzad, feminism, women, gender, Canada, Iran, translation
Introduction:

Two Different Worlds
The focus of this study is to compare works by Dorothy Livesay and by Forugh Farrokhzad as examples of Canadian and Iranian love poems. These two poets cannot be representative of all the modern love poets in Canada and Iran. I chose to compare poems by Farrokhzad and Livesay because of interesting similarities that I found between their ideologies, the subject of their love poems and even their personal lives. Both were advocates of feminist ideology but did not call themselves “feminist”; both write explicitly about sex in their love poems, and both were famous poets in their own country. In their personal lives, however, Farrokhzad and Livesay were affected differently by the patriarchal customs of their respective societies in Canada and Iran.

The most important difference between Farrokhzad and Livesay are the periods and cultures in which they lived. Livesay was born in Winnipeg on October 12, 1909 and died on December 29, 1996 at the age of 87. She published her first collection of poems titled *Green Pitcher* in 1928 and the last collection of her poems, titled *Archive for Our Times: Previously Uncollected and Unpublished Poems of Dorothy Livesay*, was edited and published by Dean J. Irvine in 1998. The subjects treated in her poems are mainly feminist, political, and social rather than merely romantic. Although she published some love poems in *Signpost* (1932), her main collection of love poems, *The Unquiet Bed*, was published in 1967 when she was 58 years old.

Forugh Farrokhzad was born in Tehran on January 5, 1935, a generation later than Livesay, and died on February 14, 1967. While Farrokhzad lived only 32 years, Livesay lived 87 years and wrote across several periods. Farrokhzad published her first collection of poems titled *The Captive* (اسیر in 1955 and her last anthology, *Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* (ایمان بیاوریم به آغاز فصل سرد), posthumously in 1974. The subject of her poems was usually love. Therefore, we can see that there are striking differences between Dorothy Livesay’s and
Forugh Farrokhzad’s life span and the subjects of their works. Still, there are interesting similarities between their love poems that invite us to compare their poems.

Although Farrokhzad and Livesay were of different generations, their love poems emerged around the same time. Farrokhzad published her poems between 1955 and 1965, and Livesay’s collection of love poems The Unquiet Bed was published in 1967. The reason I chose to compare two poets from different generations and different backgrounds were the similarities between their love poems. For example, I found interesting similarities between the uses of voice and theme in their love poems. The speakers in the poems see love as disappointing; they try to keep their individuality and are looking for freedom in love.

One can explore the love poems by Farrokhzad and Livesay from different points of view. The effects of feminist ideology as well as other forms of cultural politics are apparent in their poems. We can also consider the voice of the female lover versus that of the male lover based on notions of freedom, distance, individuality, and the unity of the couple in love. One of the most interesting elements in their love poems is the relative position of the female lover and the male lover: for example, whether or not the male lover is dominant toward the female lover or vice versa. This relative position is defined in part, or even largely, by cultural ideologies and social norms. Interestingly, neither Farrokhzad nor Livesay accepted the submissive female role as young women and both tried to keep their individuality in love.

The corpus for this study highlights Livesay’s “The Touching,” “The Taming,” and “Consideration” as well as Farrokhzad’s “The Sin,” “Love Song,” and “My Beloved.” I also refer to many of their other love poems, discuss their biographies and map out their respective cultural contexts, all of which reflect different worlds.

I will trace and compare the themes of freedom, domination, distance, and
disappointment in love in Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s poems. A number of critics have questioned these notions in Livesay’s love poems. For example, in Writing Lovers: Reading Canadian Love Poetry by Women, Méira Cook devotes an entire chapter to love poems by Livesay. This book, in which Cook criticizes love poems by different Canadian poets (such as Kristjana Gunnars, Elizabeth Smart, Dionne Brand, and Louise Bernice Halfe), includes a chapter entitled “Love Letters from an Unmade Bed: Dorothy Livesay’s Poetics of Disquiet.” Cook analyzes “disquiet” in Livesay’s love poems based on notions of domination, freedom, and sexuality.

Similarly, Persian critics have questioned the notions of freedom, domination, sexuality, and disappointment in Farrokhzad’s love poems. But these critics analyze her poems, not only in terms of Iranian literature, but also in terms of Iranian culture and the conception of gender and love in Iran. In Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices Of Iranian Women Writers, Farzaneh Milani talks about sexuality and individuality in Farrokhzad’s love poems as well as Farrokhzad’s ideology of love and its effect on her poems. Milani’s study helps the reader to understand the cultural context of Farrokhzad’s love poems. Drawing on methodologies developed by Cook and Milani, I will compare the love poems of two poets from different worlds.

Farrokhzad was a native speaker of the Persian language and she wrote all of her works in Persian. This language is one of the Indo-European languages (Katzner 10). In Persian, Shahrzad Mahootian and Lewis Gebhardt began the history of the Persian language with Old Persian, which was spoken and written in the era of the famous Achaemenid kings, Darius and Xerxes of the 6th to the 5th century B.C. Moreover, Middle Persian, which was the official language of the Sassanid dynasty from the 3rd to the 7th century A.D, and Modern Persian
appeared in the 9th century (1-2). Not only in its written form, but also in its vocabulary, Modern Persian was affected mainly by the Arabic language. Modern Persian includes thirty-two letters that are written from right to left. Since the language of this study is English, translated versions of Farrokhzad’s poems are cited. It is necessary to mention that the actual form of a poem in the source language cannot be completely transferred as such in the target language. However, most translation studies scholars argue that the intention of a poem can be rendered precisely.

Literary translation involves different choices: a translator can give more value to the meaning rather than the music of the work, or privilege rhythm over rules of grammar, or the spirit over the words of a text. Ros Schwartz, the chair of the European Council of Literary Translators Associations, writes: “Even when the translator thinks s/he is acting as a transparent pane of glass, providing a mere conduit for the author’s voice, they (sic) are filtering the text through their own particular linguistic and cultural preferences and associations, whether they acknowledge it or not” (2). Throughout the study, in footnotes, I will indicate which Persian quotes are my own translations into English.

In comparison to prose translation, the translation of poems is more challenging due to the importance of keeping the structure, form and sound of the poems. When you analyze a poem, you should search for three characteristics: its actual contents or subject matter, its rhythmic structure, and its verbal effects, such as musical qualities and subtleties of style. Thus, most scholars agree that it is impossible to translate a poem and keep all of the features of the original text. As G.H. Lewes in his volume The Life of Goethe says:

A translation may be good as a translation, but it cannot be an adequate reproduction of the original. It may be a good poem; it may be a good imitation of another poem; it may be better than the
original; but it cannot be an adequate reproduction [...]. And the cause lies deep in the nature of poetry... The meaning of a poem and the meaning of the individual words may be produced; but in a poem meaning and form are as indissoluble as soul and body; and the form cannot be reproduced. (qtd. in Selver 10-11)

I agree with Lewes's argument about the translation of poetry; still, we can look at poetic translation from two different angles. One is the poetic structure, such as the rhyme, sound, and length of the lines of the poems. In this study, I have used those versions of Farrokhzad's poems that are translated by the most skilled and experienced translators to have the least difference between rendered and original poems. The second dimension is the intention of the poet and what Farrokhzad tries to manifest in her poems. For example, Farrokhzad's love poems are valuable because she struggles with cultural definitions in a patriarchal society. I have verified that the translated versions of her poems are good enough to render the deep cultural meaning of her verses. Since I was brought up in Iran, but I am now living in Canada, I am able to explain some of the cultural context of her poetry as well as to compare translations and to read critics who have published only in Persian.

There is no human society without some form of culture. Burton Raffel describes culture as “a basic aspect of human existence, a set of ways of living specific to a group of human beings and usually passed by them from generation to generation” (3). Therefore, if we want to have a deeper understanding of Livesay's and Farrokhzad's love poems, we should read them in their cultural contexts. We cannot accurately explain notions of sexuality, freedom, and disappointment only with the help of philosophical definitions of love. Instead, we need to know Canadian and Iranian cultural ideologies and social boundaries that affect the experience of love.
For this reason, in this research, I will study the personal lives of Livesay and Farrokhzad, their publications, and their religious, political and feminist ideologies. But I will also consider larger cultural contexts: for example, the construction of gender in Canada and Iran, Canadian feminist theories versus Iranian ones, the issue of sexuality in love, and the definition of love based on Iranian and Canadian cultural assumptions. I will study the role of the female poet in these different worlds. It is important to mention that this thesis will be submitted in Canada and the majority of its readers will be Canadians. Since Canadian readers are not as familiar with Iranian society, culture and literature as they are with those of Canada, I need to explain more about Iranian culture, society and literature.

Forugh Farrokhzad always asserted a special connection between her life and her poems, to such an extent that Michael Hillmann calls them “autobiographical poems” (“An Autobiographical Voice” 44). Early on as a poet, she writes: “Poetry is a serious business for me. It is a responsibility I feel vis-à-vis my own being. It is a sort of answer I feel compelled to give to my life” (qtd. in Hillmann, “An Autobiographical Voice” 42). If we accept Farrokhzad’s interpretation of her own poetry, her poems would be honest about and reflective of her thoughts and feelings. Hence, Farrokhzad’s life had a direct effect on her poetry.

Similar to Farrokhzad, some of Livesay’s poems are autobiographical, and she composed poems according to what she experienced in different periods of her life. For example, the familiarity with communist ideology led Livesay to be involved in political activities and, as a result, she published political poems in which she reflected on her political beliefs. The great political poet of the 1930s became a famous love poet of the 1960s. In 1967, when she was 58 years old, Livesay published her anthology of love poems The Unquiet Bed which was the result of her close relationship with a younger black man in Zambia. In her essay “Song and Dance,”
Livesay maintained:

The next year I fell deeply in love and poems “sprang from my loins” as it were. All the yearning to sing and dance revived again; but this time I did so with more confidence. This time I spoke out of immediate experience. I disguised nothing. The result was the book *The Unquiet Bed.* (47)

Aside from the effects that their life experiences had on their poems, there are some notable similarities and differences between their personal lives, apparent, for example, in their married lives, academic studies, familiarity with foreign cultures, and the support of their parents.

A comparison of Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s love poems opens intriguing discussions about gender constructions, religious and cultural ideologies in both Canadian and Iranian societies. Islamic ideologies have deeply affected Persian culture, but Farrokhzad was not a woman who restricted herself within the barriers of Islamic laws. In “Unveiling the Other: Forugh Farrokhzad,” Milani describes how Farrokhzad gave voice to her feelings and desires as a woman, without subordinating herself to stereotypes of the society, and without hiding her passion and emotions (127).

I can affirm that, both in her life and her poems, Farrokhzad disregarded some of the most supposedly important Islamic laws. Based on these laws, women should be veiled, but Farrokhzad unveiled women in her poems, and even named some parts of the female body such as the breast. Even though it is forbidden in Islam to have a sexual relationship with someone other than one’s husband or wife, Farrokhzad’s poems are sexually explicit about forbidden love. In other words, love and its physical and emotional pleasures remained the main themes in Farrokhzad’s poems. In most of her love poems, especially in her first three collections of
poems, while she was trying to keep her own identity as a woman, she manifested the enjoyment of her relationship with a man, but she never referred to her beloved as her husband.

Furthermore, in some of her poems, like "The Sin," she implicitly refers to her sexual affairs outside of marriage (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 25). Accordingly, her poems receive mixed responses from Islamic critics. According to Milani, Muslim fundamentalists cannot tolerate women's emancipation and imagine that Farrokhzad's poems "alienate people from 'true' Islam" ("Unveiling the Other" 128).

In her poems, Farrokhzad challenges constructions of gender in Iran. She questions the situation of women in Iranian male-centered society and tries to find a way to free them from men's domination. Milani declares that Farrokhzad's poetry manifests the problems of modern Iranian women with all their conflicts and contradictions. She is the first female poet in Persian literature who seeks "self-expression" and encourages women to find social options in the culture and not to accept all conventional norms ("Unveiling the Other" 137). It is not only women who are presented in an unconventional form in Farrokhzad's poems, but also men who break with conventional roles. According to Milani, in Farrokhzad's poems, men "are no longer determined or confined by roles traditionally assigned to their gender" ("Unveiling the Other" 138). If we agree with Milani's argument about Farrokhzad's poems, we need to understand gender construction in Iranian society at the time Farrokhzad was living.

I will explore gender construction in Iran based on Islamic ideologies. Ziba Mir-Hosseini is one of the most famous researchers to write on Middle Eastern issues, specializing in gender, family relations, Islamic law and development. She obtained her BA in Sociology from Tehran University (1974) and her Ph.D in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge (1980). The reason that I am interested in her publications is that she spent a large part of her life
in Iran. Since she spent her youth in Iran, she experienced gender problems personally. She also
conducted interviews with Iranian clergymen and asked them about Islamic constructions of
gender and women’s rights. In “The Construction of Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for
Reform,” Mir-Hosseini divides Islamic schools of thought into “traditionalist”, “neo-
traditionalist,” and “reformer” (3). According to Mir-Hosseini’s history of ideas, at the time
Farrokhzad was living, Iranian society was influenced by the “traditionalist” ideology of Islam. I
will see to what extent her poems and her personal life were compatible with this ideology, and
how she tried to struggle with Iranian Islamic gender constructions.

One of the differences between Canadian and Iranian societies is that secularism is the
main ideology in Canadian society and, as a result, the religious construction of gender and
religious restrictions are less important. Livesay was not a religious person herself. Again, at the
time Livesay published The Unquiet Bed (1967), there were some similarities between gender
constructions in Iran and Canada, for example, the importance of marriage and the confinement
of women within the walls of their husband’s house, but to a very different degree. It is
necessary to note that the 1960s in Canada were a time of rebellion against fixed gender roles
and the importance of marriage and women’s confinement to unpaid labour in the home were
both in sharp decline. In her poems in The Unquiet Bed, which were written during her teaching
sojourn in Zambia from 1960 to 1963, Livesay was looking for individuality and her freedom as
a woman. According to Peter Stevens, there was a sense of opposition and contradiction in her
poems in The Unquiet Bed (Stevens, “The Love Poetry” 35). In some of her poems in this
collection, she refers to the patriarchal conventions of Zambian society. In “The Taming,” for
example, she questions domestic services which have become a part of life for most women in
Zambian patriarchal society.
An important approach to Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s works is to analyze their poems in terms of feminist ideologies. Neither Forugh Farrokhzad nor Dorothy Livesay called herself a feminist. But in their poems it is clear that they are defending women’s rights against men. The question remains: With which sub-type of feminist ideology can we analyze their poems? Are there common ideologies between Canadian and Iranian feminist schools of thoughts?

There are different sub-types of Western feminist ideologies, such as radical, Marxist and socialist, liberal and French. However, Iranian feminist ideologies are quite different from Western feminist schools of thought and are divided into Islamic and anti-Islamic feminism. On the one hand, defenders of Islamic feminism, like Afsaneh Najmabadi, are those who declare that there are common beliefs between Islamic and Western feminism which defend women’s rights. On the other hand, there are anti-Islamic feminists (Haideh Moghissi for example) who claim that Islamic feminism is not strong enough to defend women’s rights. In general, feminism in Iran is divided into two groups: the first group is Islamic feminism whose advocates believe that religious laws can be applied to protect women’s rights in patriarchal societies. Supporters of anti-Islamic feminism, on the other hand, oppose religious ideologies and argue that Islam restricts women and cannot defend their rights in a patriarchal society. Western feminism, on the other hand, is most often based on nonreligious ideologies, such as political, psychological, economical, social, or biological principles.

One of the most important issues in Dorothy Livesay’s and Forugh Farrokhzad’s love poems is explicit sexuality. I will look at this subject from two different angles. Clearly, sexual pleasure is valuable in a romantic relationship. It may seem on the surface that Farrokhzad and Livesay gave too much value to the sexual attraction of love; however, I believe that they wanted to implicitly criticize the male-centered society and the value that was traditionally given to the
male and female body. It is important to note that writing about the female speaker's sexual
desire for the man as love object and her description of her own passion are inscriptions of
female desire that were previously taboo in both Western and Iranian literatures. Men's desire
for the female body has been a central theme in patriarchal literature, but women writers had to
emerge gradually under patriarchy to express their desires. Consequently, in addition to sexuality
in love, I will look at the reception of sexuality and the body in Farrokhzad's and Livesay's love
poems.
Chapter I:

Forugh Farrokhzad and Dorothy Livesay: Their Lives and Their Love Poems
In *Literary Women*, Ellen Moers claims:

Women writers have women’s bodies, which affect their senses and their imagery. They are raised as girls and thus have a special perception of the cultural imprinting of childhood. They are assigned roles in the family and in courtship, they are given or denied access to education and employment, they are regulated by laws of property and political representation which [...] differentiate women from men. (xiv)

Forugh Farrokhzad and Dorothy Livesay are among the women writers described above. However, they were living in different countries with diverse cultural ideologies and social systems. A comparison of their biographies will answer questions about the families in which they were raised. Did they have the same academic background? Did they share the same experience of marriage? What were the female roles in their families? And to what extent and how were their lives affected by patriarchal laws and practices? Answering these questions is important because Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s love poems are reflections of their life experience to some degree.

Forugh Farrokhzad did not write her memoirs as Dorothy Livesay did. A collection of her letters to her husband *The First Pulses of Love in My Heart* was published in Persian by Emran Salahi and Kamyar Shahpour in 2004, and Michael C. Hillmann, a professor of Persian Studies, is one of the notable critics of Farrokhzad’s poems. He has published essays as well as a volume entitled *Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Poetry: A Lonely Woman* on Farrokhzad’s biography and her poems.

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1 All parts of this book that are quoted in this study have been translated into English by me.
Forugh Farrokhzad was born on January 5, 1935 in Tehran into a large family. She was the third of seven children. In answer to a question about her personal life, Farrokhzad said: “For me it is meaningless to talk about my biography. All people have a date of birth and are from different villages and cities. Everyone studied at a school and experienced some usual events. For example, most of us fall in love when we are young” (qtd. in Bagherpour 3). Most of the published information on Farrokhzad’s childhood comes from memoirs written by her sister Puran, who was a translator and radio program writer in the 1960s, and her brother Fereydoun (Hillmann, A Lonely Woman 5).

Farrokhzad’s father was a stern patriarch who had been a colonel in the army (Darznik 22). Her authoritarian father demanded regimentation and discipline in the household. Unlike Farrokhzad’s father, her mother was an affectionate woman who was under the pressure and persecution of her husband. Puran argues that in their house, rule and rule-breaking constantly happened and this resulted in major disputes which ended in sighs and silence (Hillmann, A Lonely Woman 6). This atmosphere of authoritarianism in their house indirectly helped develop a mentality of independence in Farrokhzad since she rebelled against it.

When she was thirteen years old, her interest in literature increased and her talent in poetry emerged. She composed some traditional lyric poems that were never published. Bagherpour claims that Farrokhzad hated composition courses because she always wrote excellent poems and her teacher believed they were not her own words, but just copied from a book (Bagherpour 2). At fifteen, after she finished the ninth grade, she dropped out of high school and entered Kamalolmolk Technical School of Art where she studied painting and dressmaking. One of her painting teachers was Behjat Sadr who was

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\(^2\) This is my own translation.
Iran’s most famous female painter of the time (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 11).

When Farrokhzad was sixteen years old, she fell in love with Parviz Shahpour who was fifteen years older than her. She decided to marry Shahpour over the objections to their age difference by both families. Her brother, Fereydoun, recalls that after their parents opposed Farrokhzad and Shahpour’s marriage, she locked herself in her room, cried, and insisted that their parents allow their marriage, which they eventually did (qtd. in Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 11). Farrokhzad believed that this ridiculous love and marriage annihilated her life and future (Bagherpour 2).

In an interview with *Bamshad* popular magazine in 1968, Puran Farrokhzad argued that “if Forugh fell in love with Shahpour, it was because she was looking for kindness and affection more than anything else, and in our home our father did not give us anything except coldness and harshness” (qtd. in Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 11). In the first months of their marriage, they felt lucky and enjoyed their life. They gave birth to their son Kamyar in 1952, nine months after their marriage. During that period of time, Shahpour gave as much freedom as possible to his wife to develop her poetic and literary talents.

According to Darznik, problems between Shahpour and Farrokhzad arose when she started to publish her poems in literary and popular magazines. Almost all critics who criticised Farrokhzad’s poems commented that her love poems were sexually explicit. The popular magazine, *Khandaniha*, even printed a picture of a naked woman in the middle of the page on which her poems were published (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 12). The sexual aspect of Farrokhzad’s poems evoked negative reactions in her society. People even accused her of having lovers (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 13). In one of her
poems entitled "Disillusioned", Farrokhzad referred to this reception problem:

I shun these people...

...who when they hear my poems

smile to my face like fragrant flowers,

but who when in private

call me a mad person

of ill-repute.³ (9, 13-16)

Her love poems and what people said about them affected Farrokhzad’s relationship with her husband. Farrokhzad did not feel free anymore. Her husband did not allow her to go to conferences and talk to men. According to Salahi and Shahpour, although Farrokhzad was one of the well-known literary figures of her period, her husband referred to her poems as nonsense and meaningless words, and asked her to stop writing (15-16). They divorced in 1954 after three years of marriage and in accordance with the law and custom of that time, their son remained under the supervision of his father and Farrokhzad was denied parental visits. This caused her depression and she was hospitalized for a month in a psychiatric clinic (Darznik 22).

In 1956, at the age of 21, Farrokhzad took a nine-month trip to Europe. She visited Germany and studied film production in England. Her first movie, called A Fire (1961), won gold and bronze prizes at the Venice Film Festival. She also produced a documentary movie entitled The House Is Black (1962) about an Iranian leper colony (Darznik 22).

In February 1967, on her way back from her mother’s home, Farrokhzad was killed in a car accident at the age of 32. She swerved her car to avoid a school bus, but

³ The poem is translated by Hillmann in Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Poetry: A Lonely Woman, p. 13.
collided. In *Bride of Acacias: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, Amin Banani remembers that in “the afternoon of her burial in a small cemetery in the foothills of the Alborz mountains, a heavy snow was falling, an eerie enactment of a recurrent theme in her poems” (3).

A short review of her biography reveals that Farrokhzad lived in a patriarchal society. In her parent’s house, her father was an authoritarian man. Farrokhzad, in one of her letters before their marriage, wrote to Parviz Shahpour: “I will not stay here; I cannot quarrel every day and tolerate the beatings. I cannot stay quiet against their accusations.”4 (Salahi and Shahpour 136). Likewise, after their marriage, Shahpour did not want his wife to publish her poems and Farrokhzad had to choose between her husband or publishing poems. Once again she left her home to escape authoritarianism.

But Farrokhzad did not stay quiet. She never limited herself within the boundaries of cultural taboos and did not accept her submissive role in her life with her husband. She was the first woman in the literary history of Iran who used poetry as a vehicle to express her feelings and reveal needs as a woman. In almost all of her love poems she introduced men as dominant over women, against whom women should always try to struggle for freedom.

Forugh Farrokhzad published four volumes of verse entitled *The Captive* (سیر), *The Wall* (دیوار), *Rebellion* (عصیان), *Another Birth* (آیمان بیاوریم به آغاز فصل سرد), and *Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* (ایمان بیاوریم به آغاز فصل سرد). Collections of Farrokhzad’s poetry in English were published by translators like Karim Emami, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Jascha Kessler, Amin Banani, David Martin and Costa Mesa. Michael Hillmann also translated some of her poems. (Since my thesis is written in English, I will use only

4 This is my own translation.
the translated versions of the titles). Her volumes were the first published poems in Iran in which the poetic speaker was recognizably female and as Darznik argued: “a voice that had never before been heard in Persian poetry” (22). One can feel that the poems are written by a woman. For example, in one of Farrokhzad’s famous poems entitled “Another Birth,” the speaker says:

Still, the boys who loved me

With the same disheveled hair, slender necks and thin legs,

Think of the innocent smile of a girl

Who will be born away one night

By the wind.⁵ (51-55)

A reader recognizes the speaker’s feminine voice when she says: “Still, the boys who loved me /

[...] /

Think of the innocent smile of a girl.” Although, other women like the traditionalist poet Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) published their poems before Farrokhzad’s publications, their voices were “veiled” (Hillmann, “Woman’s Autobiography” 35). In Etesami’s poems, for example, the female voice remained behind a poetic persona unidentifiable as female.

Farrokhzad’s first collection of forty-four poems was published in the summer of 1955. The speaker of the poems reveals emotions like anticipation, regret, joy, remorse, loneliness, abandon, repentance, doubt, and reverie. Farzaneh Milani believes that The Captive, indicates the general mood of Farrokhzad’s attraction to the themes of “women’s independence and intellectual growth” but the poems in this volume are: 

fraught with conflicts: between sexuality and the safety of

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⁵ The poem is translated by Alexandrian in The Sound of the New Lyre: Translation of Selected Poems from Contemporary Iranian Poetry, p. 305.
puritanical morality, between freedom and its accompanying anxieties and uncertainties. There is resentment of men’s absolute right to give free rein to their sexual whims, and the poet’s demand that pleasure be woman’s right as well.

(“Forugh Farrokhzad” 372-73)

The poems in *The Captive* represent different notions of love, such as sensuality, vitality and disappointment, as well as their effects on young women. What is more important in these poems is the lack of Islamic environment or Iranian settings. Still, as Hillman argues, the reader can assume the speaker’s sense of captivity within both Islamic and Iranian traditional mores (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 16).

Farrokhzad published her second volume of poems called *The Wall* in mid-1956. This volume contained twenty-five short lyrics, mostly like poems in *The Captive*. The main subjects of the poems were wishful thinking about love and lovers’ complaints. The main difference between *The Captive* and *The Wall* is that the first collection was the reflection of Farrokhzad’s own emotions as an individual woman, but the poems in *The Wall* seemed to be very Iranian in their mood and referred to Iranian women in general. Hillmann writes: “In *The Captive* Farrokhzad depicts her plight as an individual, whereas in *The Wall* she treats her state and sense of captivity” (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 29).

In July 1956, Farrokhzad left Iran for a nine-month trip to Europe. Seventeen poems composed in Rome, Munich and Tehran appeared in Farrokhzad’s third collection of poems entitled *Rebellion* in 1958. In these poems, Farrokhzad addressed the larger themes of human identity and completion of herself. This collection is very important because with this, she freed herself from the fascinating influence of the romantic and
neo-classicist poets and started to compose modern Persian poems.

Farrokhzad’s first three collections of poems introduced her as a female poet who tries to have her own voice. At the time that she published these collections she was at a young age (she was only 23 years old when she published the third collection Rebellion) and was not sure about her identity. As Milani affirms:

Throughout Farrokhzad’s poetry we witness the development of a female persona whose complexity defies the stereotype: a woman privileged with emotional, psychological, and intellectual awareness, a woman contradicting prevailing notions of the “feminine,” and asserting, with however much awe and confusion, her sense of her self as different from that conventionally defined as belonging to the woman. (Bride of Acacias 143)

Although, in her first three collections of poems, Farrokhzad stands against social boundaries and conventional patriarchal rules that influenced her personal life, she does not describe these rules. For example, the narrator of “The Ring” (from The Captive collection) says:

Distraught, she sighted: Vaye! Vaye!

This band-
so lustrous and aglow-

is the clamp of bondage, of slavery.₆ (17-20)

In this poem, the young bride likens her wedding ring to “the clamp of slavery.” Readers

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from different cultural contexts may wonder why the female poet made such a
collection. As a result, due to their lack of knowledge about the cultural background
and personal experiences of the poet, they cannot enjoy the poem in the same way as
readers in more patriarchal societies do. I agree with Oehler-Stricklin that in some of the
poems from her first three collections Farrokhzad directly struggles against social aspects
of Iran; “she often depicts relatively superficial characteristics, such as hypocrisy and
ostentatious virtue” (12).

In the spring of 1964, Farrokhzad published her fourth collection of verses called
Another Birth. This collection included thirty-five poems which had been composed over
a period of six years. Farrokhzad’s personal, social, and artistic rebirth was the focus of
this collection. Those critics who questioned her seriousness were surprised by the artistic
skills and the thematic complexity of Another Birth. Although the poems had erotic and
romantic themes, her poetic vision changed to a more explicit political and epic tone
(Darznik 22). I believe that another birth was the best title that Farrokhzad could choose
for this collection because she showed signs of poetic maturity, and it was like a re-birth
for her. A year and a half before her death, she regretted publishing her first three
collections and said that it was only with the poems in Another Birth that she began to
believe in poetry (http://www.farhangsara.com/farrokhzad.htm).

Posthumously in 1974, the last collection of verses by Farrokhzad called Let Us
Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season was published. All five poems in this
collection were complex and dichotomous. One can see that the poet shifted from private
struggles within the masculine Persian world to the consideration of broader issues like
human isolation, universal order and a more truly feminist perspective. Still, she
continued to go beyond social boundaries and condemned conventional ideologies as she explored the nature of love and intimacy between men and women.

In her last two collections Farrokhzad tries to understand and describe social boundaries and patriarchal rules. As Mahmud Kianush states about *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*, “instead of standing against society, she tried to understand it; instead of being the voice of her individual world, she became conscious of the great common spirit of mankind” (32). Aside from love poems, Farrokhzad’s poems in these two collections are concerned with political and social themes. One of these poems is “O Bejeweled Realm…,” in which the poet refers to the social and political problems of Iran in her time:

> In excitement I got to the window,
> breathe in 678 lungs-full of air smelling
> of shit, garbage, and piss,
> and under 678 IOUs and job applications
> I sign my name: Forugh Farrokhzad.  

In this segment of the poem, the female writer keeps her own feminine voice by saying “I sign my name: *Forugh Farrokhzad.*” This also implies the notion of economic confinement for a woman. Although this poem questions social problems such as poverty and unemployment in Farrokhzad’s time, the speaker of the poem specifies that this is “*Forugh Farrokhzad*” (the female poet) who lives in poverty, and it is very difficult for her, as a woman, to find a job. I also imagine the “air” that the female speaker “smells” is a metaphor for the society in which she lives. Consequently, the excremental images of “shit, garbage, and piss” are metaphors for the social and cultural rules that limit women

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7 The poem is translated by Sholeh Wolpé in *Sin: Translated Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, p. 73-77.
and persecute them.

Although Farrokhzad never published a prose collection, her early love letters to her beloved husband, and her later letters to her son are collected in *The First Pulses of Love in My Heart* published posthumously by Emran Salahi and Kamyar Shahpour (her son) in 2003. These letters are divided into three different sections: first, her letters to Parviz before their marriage when she was fifteen years old; second, her letters during her life with Parviz; and third, her letters to him and her son after she divorced. These letters contain Farrokhzad’s feelings about her private life, love and poetry. Although Farrokhzad did not like others to read her letters, they reveal much about the context of her poetry (Salahi and Shahpour 12).

Although Farrokhzad is the most famous woman in modern Persian literature and a vast number of Western and Iranian critics reviewed her works, her poems were not well received by the Iranian people, especially in her time. Conventional Islamic and Iranian culture and the government’s censorship are two important factors that affect the reception of her poems. For example, after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Farrokhzad’s poems were officially banned by the new government. As Darznik declares: “Her publisher was ordered to stop printing her books, and when he refused, he was jailed and his factory burned to the ground” (Darznik 23).

As a result of the sexual theme in her poems, rumours about Farrokhzad’s personal life increased and people accused her of prostitution. Some of her poems were a reflection of her real life. For example, the man depicted in a quatrain sequence composition called “The Sin” (quoted in its entirety and translated in Appendix I) was the editor of *Rowshanfekr* magazine that published the poem. On her trips from Ahvaz to
Tehran she became acquainted with him and they became lovers for a month or two. Farrokhzad later admitted: “In my whole life, I have feelings of regret and shame for one reason only, and that derives from this childish and foolish adventure” (qtd. in Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 25). Therefore, people of her period never had a positive view of her poems and her personal life. Farrokhzad even complained about the public scandal in several poems in her first collection, *The Captive*:

I swear I’m taking from your city
my own frenzied and crazed heart.
I am taking it away…
to wash it of the color of sin,
to wash it of the spot of love,
of all these improper and corrupt desires.  
(“Farewell” 1-8)

In the last ten years in Iran, Farrokhzad’s books have been allowed to be published once again. But her sexually explicit poems are omitted or modified. For example, Mosharaf Azad Tehrani published her selected poems in one collection entitled *Princess of Poetry: Life and Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad* in 2005 but he did not include Farrokhzad’s “The Sin.” I imagine this poem was not published because Farrokhzad referred to her sexual relationship as a pleasurable sin. One can look to Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved” as a second example of censorship. In the original poem Farrokhzad said: “I hide him always away / in the wake of warmth of my breasts.” But, in her book *Imaginative Pictures in Forugh Farrokhzad’s Poem*, Maryam Ameli Rezayi

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8 The poem is translated by Hillmann in *Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Poetry: A Lonely Woman*, p. 14.
9 My own translation of the title.
10 My own translation of the title.
changed “my breasts” to “my chest” (134). In this research, I tried to use the original poems that were published and translated outside of Iran.

In comparison to Forugh Farrokhzad, Dorothy Livesay lived in a more liberal society with different cultural customs. Her love poems in *The Unquiet Bed* are sexually explicit and show the erotic aspects of romance, but Livesay was not the first Canadian female poet who revealed her identity as a woman. A comparison of Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s biographies reveals the extent to which they were affected by patriarchal societies. It exposes how male-centered societies led them to struggle for freedom as women in their love poems, but to different degrees. It is worth mentioning that most of Livesay’s biographical information in this study comes from her two memoirs *Right Hand Left Hand* (1977) and *Journey with My Selves: A Memoir, 1909-1963* (1991) as well as Peter Stevens’ book-length biography *Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life* (1992).

Dorothy Livesay was born in Winnipeg, on October 12, 1909. Both her mother, Florence Hamilton Randal Livesay, and father, John Frederick Blight Livesay, were journalists. They had met while they were both working at the *Winnipeg Telegram*. They married and lived in Winnipeg until her father returned from the First World War and then went to Toronto to work as manager for the Canadian Press (Livesay, *Right Hand* 19). The poet’s relationship with her parents was of great importance in her development as a writer. Stevens reports that her mother encouraged Livesay to develop her poetry and storytelling skills while her father was her mentor for prose and fiction writing (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 18).

In 1921, she went to a small private school for girls called Glen Mawr. In her
memoir *Right Hand Left Hand* Livesay remembered:

By the time I entered the Fifth Form (Upper and Lower) I was aware of “not belonging” to the sociality Sixth Form circle of girls who came from Toronto’s best families.... And there were two teachers who played quite a part in encouraging my individuality. (20)

What is interesting for me is that even at that age (twelve years old), she was serious about her individuality and social class, both of which constituted the main themes of her poems in later years.

In 1927, Livesay entered the University of Toronto and studied modern languages at Trinity College. She decided to be a writer, but she had not met any writers at the university, and the only writing group was comprised exclusively of men (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 30). At the end of her second year at college in 1929, her father, the manager of the Canadian Press, introduced Livesay to the *Winnipeg Tribune* newspaper (Livesay, *Right Hand* 29). Working there developed Livesay’s approach to writing. She started to write articles for the *Winnipeg Tribune* but she found that she was not interested and could never succeed in journalism (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 31). Instead, she decided to focus on writing poetry and prose.

During the year 1929-30, Livesay was in France and studied French and Italian at the University of Aix-Marseille (Livesay, *Right Hand* 30). She had the opportunity to live in a place in France which had been home to Paul Cézanne and a number of other famous French artists. Livesay became familiar with aspects of regional culture and society, and that inspired her to write a novel based on her experiences tied to that year.
This novel was never published and only a chapter of it appeared in *Northern Review* as the story “The Last Climb” (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 32).

In her fourth year at University of Toronto, Livesay fell in with a group of students who were centered around a professor of Economics named Otto Van der Sprenkel, who introduced Livesay to the ideas of communism (Livesay, *Right Hand* 31). The subject of their discussions often turned to poetry. She was encouraged to read poems by T.S. Eliot and was fascinated by reading *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday*, given to her by Van der Sprenkel.

Livesay was deeply affected by familiarity with Eliot’s poetry and by the communist ideology. As a result, the subject of her thesis was the influence of French symbolism on the work of contemporary poets, including Eliot. She also became active in the Young Communist League and joined the Progressive Art Club. Her involvement in political issues, resulting from the meetings of the Progressive Art Club, encouraged her to write proletarian literature (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 37). According to James Doyle’s *Progressive Heritage: The Evolution of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada*, Livesay respected left-wing ideas all through her life, and regretted none of her activities as a communist (109), even though she would eventually move away from writing political poetry and increasingly compose feminist, environmental, anti-war, and love poems.

In 1936, Livesay served on the editorial board of *New Frontier*. She became Western editor and reporter for the magazine when she moved to Vancouver in 1936. She joined the League Against War and Fascism whose president was A.M. Stephen. She asked him if he knew anyone to help her gather subscriptions for *New Frontier* and
Livesay was introduced to Duncan Macnair, her future husband (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 48).

Livesay and Macnair fell in love and became inseparable. Livesay often travelled to Bridge River to see him. They were married in August 1937. Although he seemed like an adventurer to Livesay, to her father he appeared shiftless. While Macnair was trying to convince his wife to turn from political activities and concentrate on poetry, Livesay pushed him toward Marxism. Finally, he became a member of the CCF, and became the secretary of the Civil Liberties Union in Vancouver (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 50).

Although in the first days of their marriage each was supportive of the other, there was evidence that they had strong disagreements. For example, Livesay in her memoir *Journey with My Selves: A Memoir, 1909-1963* revealed: “We did love each other. But Duncan was thirteen years older and as time passed he took on the role of adamant father who demanded his comforts. To this I reacted rebelliously, as I had done with my own father” (174). They also experienced some sexual difficulties in marriage, as, in an interview, Livesay’s friend, Jim [Watts] Lawson, declared that in the early 1940’s Livesay’s “sex life was rather truncated” (qtd. In Livesay *Right Hand* 47).

In the late 1950s Livesay decided to free herself from an unsatisfactory marriage. In 1958, she felt she could apply for a Canada Council fellowship. Consequently, she went to England alone and started to study English teaching at the Institute of Education, University of London. She enjoyed living in London and did not want to return to Canada to an unhappy marriage. She did not make any decision about her marriage. In February 1959 she received a telegram telling her that her husband had died from a massive stroke (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 58).
In 1960, Livesay decided to find a position in a developing country such as India, Ghana, or Ceylon. She found positions in teacher-training colleges in Kitwe and Chalimbana, Zambia. Living in Zambia helped her to resolve her mental frustrations. She concentrated more on poetry and composed the love poems published in her anthology *The Unquiet Bed* in 1967. There were two reasons why she turned from political poetry to love poems. First, she was not interested in the politics of Zambia. Second, it was the result of renewed sexual and romantic energy due to her “submission” to an African man (Cook 111). Therefore, travel to Zambia turned Livesay from politics to poetry (especially love poems) again.

According to Stevens, although she believed herself to be a foreign figure in Canadian Literature, after her return from Africa, she received her first honorary degree in 1973, a Ph.D. in literature from the University of Waterloo (*Dorothy Livesay* 69). She took a position as writer in residence at the University of Manitoba that allowed her to return to her birthplace and confront a part of her childhood memories. She published some of these memories as short stories in her collection *Beginnings: A Winnipeg Childhood* (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 69).

Livesay continued to travel to different cities and countries and took positions as writer in residence or professor at various universities like University of New Brunswick, University of Victoria and University of Toronto. In 1977, she travelled to Bulgaria and encountered the work of proletarian poet Vapcharev Vasarov. She also visited Russia in 1982. Her works were more recognized and recovered when the University of Waterloo held “The Evolution of Canadian Poetry: A Conference on Dorothy Livesay” in 1983 (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 69-70). From 1963 to 1991, Livesay published new
anthologies and short stories, writing well into her eighties. Livesay was born on a stormy
day in Winnipeg and her death in British Columbia occurred during an infrequent
snowstorm on Galiano Island in 1996 (Hewett 4).

Three important factors affected Livesay's poetry over different periods of time.
First, her parents encouraged her to increase her writing skills and show her talent for
composing verse. Second, her familiarity with Marxist and communist ideologies
encouraged her to write political poems for about thirty years. And the third important
circumstance in her poetic life was her trip to Zambia where she fell in love with an
African man. Livesay's love poems in The Unquiet Bed are reflections of her love
relationship with that man. An overview of Livesay's literary works, the themes of her
poems and the reception of her writing will explain the importance of her love poems.

Livesay's first poems were published in the Vancouver Province newspaper.
When she was 13 years old, her mother had found her poems in her drawer and submitted
them to the newspaper. Later, in an interview, Livesay claimed that she was furious with
her mother for “snooping into her dresser drawers where she kept her private papers”
(Banting, “The Correspondence” 43). Livesay's first collection of poetry, Green Pitcher,
was a 16-page volume that was published in March 1928. For a university student, she
was well received and reviewed by such critics as Charles Bruce and Raymond Knister in
the Times Literary Supplement. The poems were both free and traditional verse forms
with a lyrical love of nature (Thompson 2).

Livesay published her second volume of poetry, Signpost, in 1932. Signpost is
one of her early collections of love poems. The poems in this collection seem more
cconcerned with the personal relationship between husband and wife than with sex.
Although they are personal poems, they make some universal statements about love, as Robert Weaver says:

> About love; about the paradoxical, even tragic desire to lose oneself wholly in passion and love, at the same time retain something essential to oneself. The person, invaded, often resisted successfully, or fled. But already, in this microcosmic human relationship, Miss Livesay was being strongly drawn towards identification with something outside of the self. (qtd. in Stevens, “The Love Poetry” 35)

Livesay’s love poetry from the mid to late thirties was affected by different poetic influences: the modernist poetry of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and the Sitwells that she studied at the Sorbonne, and the social and political verse that she encountered as a member of the Progressive Art Club (Irvine, Archive 253). Therefore, Livesay moved from love poems to more political and social poems until the publication of *The Unquiet Bed* (1967). Her first collection of social and political poems, entitled *Day and Night*, was published in 1944. The poems in this collection were composed mainly in the 1930s. It was well received and won a Governor General’s Award (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 10).

Livesay published *Poems for People* in 1947 and a long documentary poem entitled *Call My People Home* in 1950. In “Re-reading Livesay’s ‘Call My People Home,’” Dick Harrison explains that this documentary poem referred to a historical event which was the expulsion of “Japanese and Canadians of Japanese origin or descent from the Pacific coast of Canada after Pearl Harbor” (151). The narrators of this documentary poem, which was written to be read on radio, are like witnesses, fictional participants,
who were allowed to speak for themselves with a minimum of interpretation (Harrison 151). She also published *New Poems* in 1955 and *Selected Poems* in 1958.

After returning from Zambia, Dorothy Livesay published different writings that were important for two reasons. First, the subject of her poems had changed from political poems, again, to love poems. Second, she had started to write short stories. Livesay published another collection of political poems entitled *Collected Poems: The Two Seasons* in 1972, that contained unpublished poems from the 1930s. She never published a vast number of her poems because, as Dean Irvine claims, she desired quality over quantity (*Archive* 256).

The most critical of Livesay's collections were two anthologies entitled *The Unquiet Bed* in 1967 and *Plainsongs* in 1969. The critics were not only interested because of the change from political to romantic poems, but they were also surprised because the love poems seemed to be written by a young woman and not by Livesay at her age (she was 58 years old when she published *The Unquiet Bed*).

Livesay's *The Unquiet Bed* includes sixty-two poems divided into four sections. Section one of this collection includes twenty-four poems that refer to Livesay's past, her ideas about poetry, and places where she lived. She dedicates "The Incendiary" to Duncan Macnair and another poem to her friend Jim Watts. A number of Livesay's poems in this section are devoted to other poets. For example, "For Abe Klein: Poet" is about Canadian poet, journalist, novelist, and short story writer A.M. Klein, and the speaker of "Making the Poem" reflects Jack Spicer's ideologies about writing poetry. Livesay's "Without Benefit of Tape" shows her interest in proletarian poetry in the 1930s (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 66): "The real poems are being written in outports / on
backwoods farms” (1-2). “Roots” is concerned with Vancouver and “For Gwendolyn” likens the poet to Livesay’s child: “You could have been my child / leaden-lidded” (1-2).

Section four of The Unquiet Bed, which is entitled “Zambia”, presents short documentary poems about Zambia. In “Initiation”, Livesay gives an overview of Lusaka city and its people: “black men sauntering the streets / clothed in white” (11-12). The speaker in “Village” describes village life and tribal society in Zambia: “nameless / the woman huddled beside a pale flame / and the child, bringing stools to sit upon” (4-6). According to Fiona Sparrow, “Village” is a descriptive poem that suggests values of a primitive society which will be lost when “that society adapts itself to the modern world” (23). Livesay’s “Funeral” and “Wedding” reflect her experience of attending those ceremonies in Zambia (Wood 75). In her essay “Song and Dance,” Livesay explains “The Leader” is about new Zambia’s president Kenneth Kaunda at that time: “After hearing him address his people from an anthill on the Copperbelt I was moved to write […] ‘The Leader’” (46).

The Unquiet Bed is more celebrated for poems in which Livesay struggles for woman’s individuality, freedom, and her right to live in her own way (Stevens “The Love Poetry” 33). These poems, which are collected in section two, are Livesay’s personal poems that focus on different aspects of her womanhood. For example, in “Woman Waylaid” the speaker says: “Having to have / heat / for the cool evening” (1-3). But, instead of collecting wood, she decides to pick flowers. So, she “return[s] empty- / handed” (18-19). Peter Stevens asserts that in this poem Livesay “sets up a contrast between the opposing sensitive and practical sides of her nature. In this poem the sensitive side wins out. She prefers to pick flowers, not to collect wood for the cool
evening.... She makes her choice as an individual woman and she is free to make the choice" ("The Love Poetry" 33). The tree in "Pear Tree" is a symbol for a mother that hears "children chugging on the chains / of sound / practicing language" (15-17).

Chapter three of *The Unquiet Bed* is given over exclusively to thirteen love poems in which Livesay questions notions of sexuality, freedom and disappointment in love and contradictions between male and female lovers. The female speaker of "The Unquiet Bed" struggles with patriarchal rules of society and does not accept the submissive role in love:

The woman I am
knew love and hate
hating the chains
that parents make. (5-8)

"The Touching," "The Notations of Love," and "Four Songs" are sexually explicit love poems in which the male lover is described as a dominant but the female narrator tries to keep her feminine identity and struggles with women's subordination in love. The dominant male lover in "The Taming" orders his female beloved to do whatever he wants and nothing more: "Do what I say, woman: / just that / and nothing more" (9-11). This poem explains that from a man's point of view being a woman means obeying orders and preparing food. This is the only poem in the third section of *The Unquiet Bed* in which the male lover is identified as a black man, even though Livesay's lover at the time was a black African.

"The Dream" and "The Book of Charms" are similar to the romantic poems of Livesay's earlier volumes in the 1930s (Varma 27). In "The Dream" the female lover
explains the strange power of love: “and strangeness blazed my blood” (20). “The Book
of Charms” manifests the innocence of love: “Wear this, you said / and gave me a rose /
to press against my breast” (1-3). Livesay’s “The Vigil” shows disappointment in love: “I
lay all night / and you not with me” (1-2).

Livesay’s collection of short-stories *A Winnipeg Childhood* appeared in 1973
(reprinted as *Beginnings: A Winnipeg Childhood* in 1975). She published two books of
poetry: *Ice Age* in 1975 and a collection of her unpublished poems from the 1930s
entitled *The Raw Edges: Voices from Our Time* in 1981. She also published a collection

While from 1940 to the mid-1950s, Livesay’s output of poetry grew slower and
smaller, her works were becoming well received. For example, the two books she
published in the 1940s, *Day and Night* and *Poems for People*, each won the Governor
General’s Award, which is known as Canada’s top literary prize. Livesay was also
awarded the Lorne Pierce Medal for literature in 1947.

A comparison between Dorothy Livesay’s and Forugh Farrokhzad’s biography
reveals that although they share the same rebelliousness toward patriarchy and male
domination in their love poems, they were living in completely different families,
cultures, and societies. I indicated that Livesay’s parents encouraged her to show her
writing talent. Her mother was a poet and translator and both her mother and father were
journalists. Farrokhzad’s mother was a housewife who did domestic and reproductive
labour, and Farrokhzad’s father was a military officer. Farrokhzad’s parents opposed
Farrokhzad’s writing poetry. Duncan Macnair supported his wife’s writing while Parviz
Shahpour urged Farrokhzad to stop writing poems.
Livesay was a modern poet who had the opportunity to study at different universities in Canada and abroad and socialized with famous literary figures such as Raymond Knister, Earle Birney, Louis Cazamian and Anne Marriott. She also worked in different countries and became familiar with diverse cultures. All these opportunities helped her to improve her modern poetic skills. She published short stories, anthologies as well as two memoirs. Most of her work was well received and she won a number of literary prizes. In contrast, Farrokhzad did not have the chance to study at a university or to socialize with prominent writers. She did not live in different cultures, but visited some European countries for a short period of time. She published only five anthologies and never wrote short stories or memoirs. Although today she is known as the most famous Persian female poet, both in Iran and abroad, at the time she published them, her poems were not well received.

Despite these dissimilarities, Farrokhzad and Livesay shared some common experiences as well. Neither of them was satisfied with her married life and both decided to get divorced after a couple of years. They both lived in patriarchal societies. I believe that both Farrokhzad and Livesay found their love poems an important place in which they could reveal their female identities. They both struggled for freedom and did not accept a submissive role under male domination.
Chapter II:

Different Contexts: Constructions of Gender in Canada and Iran
In order to have a better understanding of the construction of gender and gendered practices in Iran, under which Farrokhzad lived, we should review some Islamic laws and ideologies. The reasons it is important to consider a review of Islamic cultural conventions in this study is that most of Farrokhzad’s love poems contrast those Islamic ideologies which have deeply affected Iranian culture. Some readers and critics seriously believe that Farrokhzad’s love poems can corrupt Iranian society. As a result, it is important to read her poems in the context of Islamic culture to see how they are against, or at least ambivalent about, the religious beliefs and cultural norms of Iran.

One of the most important laws of Islam that Farrokhzad did not respect, either in her personal life or in her love poems, was veiling. The Holy Quran commands:

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except that which is apparent and to draw their veils all over their bodies, necks, and bosoms and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers, or their sons, or their husband’s sons, or their brothers or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons, or their women... . (Holy Quran 24.31)

In her personal life, Farrokhzad repeatedly disobeyed these divine laws. For example, a druggist remembers that she was walking in Ahvaz Street with her son and what was remarkable for the man was that she was wearing tight-fitting clothes with a short skirt (Hillmann, A Lonely Woman 12). In her edition The One Who’s Like No One: About the
Poet Forough Farrokhzad, Puran Farrokhzad published a collection of photos of Farrokhzad, in most of which she was unveiled. She was the first woman in Iranian literature who unveiled women in her poems: “And like last rest of vast past beliefs / I hide him always away / in the wake of warmth of my breasts” (“My Beloved” 53-55). She even described different parts of the female lover’s body. That is why Farzaneh Milani referred to Farrokhzad’s love poems as an act of “unveiling” (“Unveiling the Other” 148).

Some of Farrokhzad’s love poems that she published in her first three anthologies were composed for and dedicated to her beloved Parviz Shahpour before their marriage. Therefore, her beloved was not her husband in her love poems because at the time she composed the poems, she was not married. Moreover, Farrokhzad never referred to her beloved as her husband in her love poems, which shows her opposition to Islamic laws.

As Oehler-Stricklin writes:

By 1954, she was traveling to Tehran to arrange for [the] publication of her poems. She had an affair with a magazine editor during this period, and the depictions of this relationship from a feminine perspective in the poems of Asir [The Captive], her first collection, met with scandalized criticism. (4)

Based on Islamic divine laws, having a sexual relationship with anyone other than one’s wife or husband is unlawful: “And those who guard their chastity (i.e. private parts, from illegal sexual acts) except from their wives or (the slaves) that their right hands possess, for then, they are free from blame” (Holy Quran 23.5-6). In most of her love poems,
Farrokhzad addresses the male character as "beloved", which can be someone's husband or boyfriend. Nevertheless, in "The Sin" she explicitly confesses her mistake.

In most of Farrokhzad's love poems in her first three collections, we can obviously imagine that the poet is in struggle with two contradictory feelings. On the one hand, she is eager to use the language of poetry to give voice to her sexual desires. On the other hand, she feels guilty for what she is doing. In other words, Farrokhzad wants to oppose religious rules, cultural practices and social definitions that limited her but, in accordance with those limitations, she dreads her sin. In *Poetry of Our Time*[^1], Mohammad Hoghoughi refers to 14 key words in Farrokhzad's poems in her first three collections that are shown in the table below[^2] (12):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Repeated words</th>
<th>The Captive</th>
<th>The Wall</th>
<th>Rebellion</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>night &amp; darkness</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>heart</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>love</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>kiss</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>god</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>death &amp; grave</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>hope</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^1]: My own translation of the title.
[^2]: These words are translated by me. It is worth mentioning that they may be translated differently by other translators of Farrokhzad's poems.
As we can see in this table, the word “sin” is repeated 43 times, which indicates that Farrokhzad often expresses a sense of guilt in her first period of writing poetry.

Interestingly, repetition of this word is gradually decreased from her first collection to the third. I agree with Houra Yavari that Farrokhzad moves from the binary of sin / sexual desire to the other notions of love (278). “Prison” and “cage” are invoked 39 times and are usually metaphors for patriarchal, social and religious rules. Farrokhzad’s “The Sin” is one of her best poems, showing her conflicted sense of pleasure and sin.

“The Sin” is the title of one of Farrokhzad’s love poems and the best title that she could choose for this poem. The reason is that in this poem, she confesses to two sins. First, she fulfilled her sexual desires with a man other than her husband. This is known as adultery, which the Holy Quran explicitly forbids: “And come not near unto adultery. Lo! It is an abomination and an evil way” (17.32). The second sin is that while she was married and she had a son, she fell in love with another man (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 24-25). The speaker of the poem is a woman who enjoys her sexual relationship with her
beloved: “I sinned, a sin all filled with pleasure / wrapped in an embrace, warm and fiery” (“The Sin” 1-2). The poet uses the first-person singular pronoun “I” for the speaker. Thus, we can imagine that Farrokhzad is directly speaking to his/her readers even though she is speaking through a persona.

The female speaker in “The Sin” is torn between two feelings: pleasure and guilt. I believe that the speaker supposes what she did is not a mistake, but it is known as a sin from a religious point of view. Therefore, she stresses that she sinned and, at the same time, she enjoyed that. Some years later Farrokhzad referred to that sin as the biggest error of her life (Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman* 25). At the end of “The Sin” we see that she may regret her action when the female speaker says: “I know not what I did, God / in that dim and quiet place of seclusion” (23-24).

The image of the male lover in “The Sin” is an aggressive and dominant man: “I sinned in a pair of arms / that were vibrant, virile, violent” (3-4). He is, at the same time, a man whose presence gives life to his female lover: “I want you, mate of my soul / I want you, life-giving embrace” (14-15). But he is also described as a man who excessively loves his female lover and depends on her: “I want you, lover gone mad” (16). As Milani says, the image of the male lover in most of Farrokhzad’s poems in her first three collections is both fascinating and dreading (“A Feminist Perspective” 172).

In some of her poems, Farrokhzad calls out God to hear her voice: “hear my needful clamor / from the prison confines of darkness, / from the turbid cesspool of the world”\(^3\) (“Face to Face with God” 1-3). The speaker of the poem is a sinful woman who prays to God for forgiveness and asks for the courage to stay away from “sin and selfishness”:

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\(^3\) This poem is translated by Hillmann in *Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Poetry: A Lonely Woman*, p. 87.
From my bright eyes snatch
the eagerness to run to another;
… and teach my eyes
to shy away from the shining eyes of the others…
O lord, o lord…
show your face and pluck from my heart
the zest for sin and selfishness.
Do not tolerate an insignificant slave’s
rebelliousness and refuge-seeking in others…
hear my needful clamor,
o able, unique God. (“Face to Face with God” 21-40)

In contrast with other poems, such as “The Sin” and “My Beloved” in which the female lover questions the leading role of men in the patriarchal society and opposes religious beliefs, in this poem, the narrator talks directly to God. I agree with critics like Yavari who state that people and poets of her time knew Farrokhzad was a woman who was imprisoned within the walls of sin and corruption; therefore, she asks God for salvation (282).

It is important to mention that Reza Shah (the King of Iran during his reign from 1925 to 1941) imposed reforms on the condition of women in Iran and proclaimed compulsory unveiling (Paidar 54). But Muslim fundamentalists were against unveiling, and by Farrokhzad’s time in the fifties and sixties, her love poems were not well received by Iranian society because unveiling was still against public opinion. As Milani states in 1992:
To the Muslim fundamentalists, the rupture of tradition has consistently been more visible and least tolerable in the area of women's emancipation. Their stand has all along been unfailingly clear and uncompromising. They have reacted toward women's emancipation and desegregation, especially toward women's physical unveiling, with anger and hostility. ("Unveiling the Other" 128)

In her introduction to *Sin: Selected Poems of Forough Farrokhzad*, Sholeh Wolpé gives an example of these fundamentalist religious people: “When I told a family member I was translating Forugh Farrokhzad, she said, ‘why are you wasting your time on that whore?’ That was a sad, heart-breaking moment for me, […] because it was an indication of how some older, religious Iranians still carry that wild, ‘immoral’ image of Forugh Farrokhzad in their head” (xi).

If we accept, as Kaveh Safa-Isfahani argues, that Iranian society was “male-centered” (21), Farrokhzad lived in a culture within which men had absolute authority according to law and religion. The male lover has the same position in her poems: “With his bared bold body / rose over his legs / fearless like death” (“My Beloved” 2-4). In her life, she struggled with most cultural norms in order to keep her individuality, show her passion and fulfill her needs as a woman. As Iranian society is deeply affected by Islamic beliefs and laws, we need to study gender issues in the context of those cultural norms.

In her definition of gender construction, Ziba Mir-Hosseini argues that gender rights are not fixed, given or absolute. These rights are based on legal and cultural descriptions that are always negotiated and subject to change (Mir-Hosseini 2). Gender
rights are defined based on power relations in the family and society and they are also
defined by those who want to retain or change the situation through their ideologies, the
way they think, decide and write (2). Based on this definition, we should look at the
construction of gender in the context of Islamic Iranian society.

R. Stephen Humphreys, in *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, defines
Islamic ideology as follows:

Islamic ideology is a critique of a given sociopolitical system
which both describes that system and calls upon its members
to sustain, alter, or overthrow it. Ideology is thus both a
description and a call to action. The Quran itself proclaims an
ideology, a program of social and political action aimed at the
creation of godly society, and Muhammad’s career was in
large part devoted to carrying out this divinely authorized
program of action. (138-39)

Therefore, in most Muslim societies, divine laws are the criteria to measure the
correctness of all social, economic, and political practices. That is the reason why
Farrokhzad’s love poems were not well received in her time. In her personal life she was
faced with different accusations because, as mentioned earlier, neither in her love poems
nor in her life did she respect the religious parameters of Islamic gender rules.

According to Milani and Cook, gender issues are the basic subject of
Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s love poems. On the one hand, Milani claims that
“Farrokhzad does not eventually surrender to fear or shame […]. Her act of unveiling
man is far more of a violation of feminine norms than the hackneyed image of gratified
desire” (“Unveiling the Other” 144-8). On the other hand, Cook argues that the theme of Livesay’s love poems is centered on gender binaries, “whether these be reinforced in women’s conflicted desire for autonomy and/or union in love, or dissipated by the violent intensities of physical love” (110). Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s poems we should look at gender construction in terms of social and family constructions in the fifties and sixties in Canada and Iran. As mentioned previously, Farrokhzad was born in 1935 and died in 1967, whereas Livesay was born in 1909 and died in 1996, but they both published their love poems mostly in the fifties and sixties.

Basharat Tayyab states that the contemporary gender perceptions in Islamic culture can be classified as “traditional”, “eclectic”, and “modern” (238). The traditionalist intellectuals represent the “feudal-tribal,” rather than Islamic, way of thinking. They believe that women should be under the control of men. These scholars present women as the evil of society (238). The “eclectic” school of thought claims that Islam gives rights to women and dedicates “a place of honor” for them in society (239). Modernists stress the understanding of human situations and use the teachings of the Holy Quran to improve women’s conditions in the world (240). Like Basharat Tayyab, Iranian scholar, Ziba Mir-Hosseini divides Islamic schools of thought into “traditionalist”, “neo-traditionalist,” and “reformer” (3).

It is important to know which school of thought was the major ideology in each specific period of time in order to gain a better understanding of gender issues in different times. When Farrokhzad emerged, Iranian society was deeply affected by traditional ideologies of Islam. Gradually, the traditional view of Islam was giving way to “eclectic”
thoughts. Nevertheless, after the revolution in 1978, traditionalists took the political power, and for more than twenty years, traditional ideologies have shaped Iranian society. As a result, it was forbidden to publish Farrokhzad’s poems from the late seventies to the late nineties and a publishing house that published her poems would be closed (Darznik 23).

In “The Construction of Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for Reform,” Ziba Mir-Hosseini analyzes women’s situation in marriage in accordance with traditional, neo-traditional and modern Islamic thought. She claims that according to traditionalists, women are described as sexual beings not social beings, and their rights are limited within the confines of the family. This is more evident in the definition of the marriage contract in which women are treated as “semi-slaves” (4). Based on traditional religious beliefs, marriage is defined as a contract of exchange in which the woman offers and the man accepts and he should pay a dowry, which can be money or other valuable objects, before or after consummation (5). After signing the marriage contract, the woman comes under the control or authority of her husband. There are two important rights and obligations in this contract: first, “tamkin”, and second, “nafaqa”. “Tamkin” is defined as submission, which is the man’s right to have sexual access to his wife, while “nafaqa” can be translated as maintenance and that is the man’s duty to provide her with shelter, food and clothing (7). Repeatedly, in her love poems, Farrokhzad refers to this domination and submission between men and women, but in a general sense.

In her poem “My Beloved,” Farrokhzad refers to men’s freedom when the speaker says: “My beloved is wildly free” (22). She also manifests that this freedom is a conventional rule: “My beloved / is a male from ancient eras” (28-29). In this poem,
Farrokhzad presents the image of a powerful and free male lover versus a powerless woman. As Hillmann claims: “Farrokhzad sees Iranian life as pitting powerless women against strong men, and she pleads directly with the women to fight” (A Lonely Woman 83). Interestingly, in her poem, “The Taming,” Livesay represents the same idea of powerful men versus submissive women in love.

In “The Ring,” Farrokhzad directly questions domination and submission within the relationship between a wife and her husband. The third-person speaker narrates a wedding party in which the young bride is curious about the meaning of the wedding band:

        Laughing, the girl asked, What is
        the meaning of this gold ring
        the meaning of this band
        that grabs my finger so tightly, (1-4)

The image of a tight ring that “grabs” her “finger” is a metaphor for her husband’s house that limits the wife within its walls. In answer to the bride’s question her husband says: “It’s the ring of good fortune, the ring of life” (8). After a couple of years the woman looks at her wedding ring and replies to her earlier question: “days wasted ... wasted” (15), and continues: “This band- / so lustrous and aglow- / is the clamp of bondage, of slavery” (18-20). Therefore, a wedding band, which for the dominant man is a sign of luck and “life”, for the subordinated woman signifies “slavery”.

Mir-Hosseini argues that the philosophical thesis of traditionalists is that women have greater sexual feelings than men. It is men’s sexual honour and jealousy and women’s modesty that can control this sexual desire (10). In other words, women’s

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4 This poem is translated by Sholeh Wolpé in Sin: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad, p. 8.
sexuality should be controlled by men in order to keep social order and prevent fornication. As Moroccan feminist writer and sociologist Fatima Mernissi explains, according to Imam Ghazali: “Women are a dangerous distraction that must be used for the specific purpose of providing the Muslim nation with offspring and quenching the tensions of the sexual instinct. But in no way should women be an object of emotional investment or the focus of attention” (45). But Farrokhzad, in a radio interview, questions men’s sexual honour. According to her: “modesty and sexual honour are old beliefs and belong to the past generation. But for our generation these definitions are changed”⁵ (http://www.forughfarrokhzad.org/).

Farrokhzad’s “The Sin” depicts a modern woman. The female lover, who is the speaker of the poem, says: “I want you, mate of my soul / I want you, life-giving embrace” (14-15). The female speaker confesses her strong sexual desires. The male lover is compared to “mate of” her “soul” and his “embrace”, which implies the male body, is “life-giving.” In “The Sin,” “I want you” is repeated three times by the female speaker and clearly implies that the female lover is the one who is eager to be with the male lover. According to the theme of the poem, which is the notion of sexuality in love, being with the male lover means to have sex with him.

As part of their reform, the Pahlavi regime of Shahs (1925-1979) tried to limit the power of men in the family and society, and to give more freedom to women. Although it was opposed to traditional Muslim thought, both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah stressed women’s education, unveiling and de-segregation. They tried to give equal rights to men and women in the family, and as a result, they introduced Family Protection Laws in 1967 and 1975 (Paidar 56). However, Farrokhzad and her husband divorced in 1954

⁵ This is my own translation.
(before the new law was introduced), and the patriarchal law of Iran did not allow Farrokhzad to keep her son. Hence, Farrokhzad's ex-husband had the custody of their child.

A review of religion and gender construction in Iran shows how Iranian society is deeply affected by Islamic laws and ideologies, and how a traditional application of these laws limited women. Therefore, one can argue that religious opinions make the most important difference between the societies in which Farrokhzad and Livesay lived.

Canadian society was not affected by religious philosophy as deeply as Iranian society was. There is no reference to show that Livesay was a religious person or one should read her poems in the context of a religious society. The reason is that secularism is the most accepted ideology in Western and Canadian societies (Keddie 2). The *Dictionary of Sociology* describes secularization as:

> the process by which religious thinking, practices and organizations lose their social significance. *Weber* argued that the development of scientific knowledge and rational thought would replace beliefs based on *magic*, superstition, and the *supernatural*. (Lawson and Garrod 219-20)

Based on this definition, religion loses its significant effect in a secular society and as a result, people are not limited within the boundaries of religious laws and beliefs.

Livesay was also a modernist poet, and one of the ideologies of modernism is to reconcile religion with the new science. *The Columbia Encyclopedia* explains:

> Modernism tried to reconcile historical Christianity with the findings of modern science and philosophy. Modernism arose
mainly from the application of modern critical methods to the
study of the Bible and the history of dogma and resulted in
less emphasis on historic dogma and creeds and in greater
stress on the humanistic aspects of religion. ("Modernism."

_The Columbia Encyclopedia_

Consequently, Livesay’s poetry was not limited by religious boundaries. As mentioned
earlier, Iranian society was influenced by religious ideologies much more that Canadian
society was. Thus, religion was the main difference between the social context of
Dorothy Livesay’s and Forugh Farrokhzad’s worlds. Still, in the construction of gender,
there are some shared experiences between these two women from Canadian and Iranian
societies.

Dorothy Livesay lived in a patriarchal society in which women were marginalized
on the border of a society that accepted men as a more important group. Although
Livesay was known as a part of the literary generation of modernism in Canada, her
poems were not included in the only collection of modern verse that was published
during the depression era in 1936 (Kelly, “Politics, Gender” 56). In “Politics, Gender, and
_New Provinces: Dorothy Livesay and F.R. Scott,” Peggy Kelly investigated why
Livesay’s modern poems were not included in _New Provinces_, even though Livesay
wrote and published modernist poetry, prose, and drama before _New Provinces_ emerged.
Carole Gerson points out that

women’s writing was expected to conform to a

Romantic/sentimental/domestic model. Those who followed

suit and did not practise modernism were then easily
dismissed and have disappeared from sight, while those who engaged modernist methods were seldom taken as seriously as their male counterparts and have been consistently under-represented in the canon. (55)

As a result, Livesay’s modern poems were excluded by a group of male poets who published the first edition of *New Provinces* in 1936 (Kelly, “Politics, Gender” 65). In her dissertation “A Materialist Feminist Analysis of Dorothy Livesay, Madge Macbeth, and the Canadian Literary Field, 1920-1950,” Kelly also says:

 Female anthologists are few and marginal within the subfield of anthology publication, and the symbolic violence performed by the exclusion of male writers is much less than that performed by the exclusion of female writers, who have fewer options for publication. Livesay's exclusions were performed in reaction to a systemic exclusion of female writers from the areas of most power within the literary field.

(174)

This gender discrimination did not take place only in her literary career, but Livesay experienced the same situation with her husband.

It is interesting to note that Western societies, like Canada, had some of the same ideologies about marriage as Iranian Islamic society before the 1960s. By the end of the 1960s, the emergence of the second wave of the women’s movement had changed the everyday life of Canadian women. In *Gender and Sex in Society* (1975), Duberman argues that ideologically, Western societies have historically restricted sexual activities to
marriage, especially for women (47). However, by the end of the 1960s in Canada, it became more acceptable for a woman to have sexual affairs outside of marriage (Prentice et al. 320). According to Duberman, even when married, only one form of sexual activity was accepted, in which men were superior to women (47). The reason was that the male dominant rules of the society affected sexual relationships (47). Repeatedly in her love poems, Livesay emphasized dominant and submissive sexual relationships between male and female lovers. For example in “The Touching,” the speaker of the poem is a woman who depends, mentally and physically, on her male lover. She looks for completion when she says: “so the penis completing / me” (8-9).

There is still ambivalence in this poem. The poem affirms the traditional role of the active male lover and the emergent feminist role of the desiring female subject. As Peter Stevens asserts: “the sexual experience makes [a woman] face her essential self, her womanhood, with both its submissive qualities and its strength” (“The Love Poetry” 41). The figure of the male lover in “The Touching” is a dominant man who, at the same time, is dependent on his female lover in order to fulfill his sexual desires.

There is an important contrast between Islamic traditional ideologies about sexuality and what Duberman says about Western gender relations. She states that the so-called superiority of men is based on this idea that men have stronger sexual needs than women and in this case, as well as other areas of life, women should be “passive” and “receptive”, while men are “aggressive” (47). Although Islamic traditional thought supports the superiority of men over women, it is believed that women have more sexual needs that should be controlled by men. Some sources compare Islamic and Western ideologies about women sexual desires. The second volume of Encyclopedia of Women
and Gender: Sex Similarities and Differences and the Impact of Society on Gender, for example, says: “[Muslim] societies maintain that women’s sexuality is active and intense and that their powerful desires demand satiation” (1010). Fatima Mernissi dedicated a chapter of her book Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society to a comparison between Sigmund Freud’s and Imam Ghazali’s declarations about women’s sexuality. Mernissi asserts that according to Freud, women are “passive” while Imam Ghazali assumes that women are “active” (39).

Generally speaking, there are two perspectives of human sexuality. Secular critics like John W. Peras argue that sexuality is integrated with everyday life patterns. Peras uses the phrase “sexualization of society” and claims that everyday sexuality is normalized in culture (qtd. in Duberman 48). The forbidden aspect of sexuality is lost under sexualisation and sexuality becomes more understandable. Duberman refers to scientists like Freud and Krafft-Ebing to explain that “science considers sexuality in individual terms, seeking to discover and eliminate personal pathologies […]” (49). Religion seeks the solution in morality, and believes that sexuality can be regulated if people respect moral values (Duberman 49). What is clear is that both Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s love poems are in accordance with secular ideology because their love poems are sexually explicit.

Another issue that we should consider in the discussion of gender construction is the duty of women in the family and after their marriage. The conventional lifeline for women in Western societies before the seventies was somewhat similar to what we have in Iranian traditional society, yet it was changing fast under the emergence of feminism in the sixties. According to Western conventional culture before the sixties, women were
expected to marry during their early twenties and limit their interests within the private sphere of the house and in accordance with their husbands’ and children’s needs (Duberman 58). In other words, women’s responsibilities in their home were generally more valued over having a job outside the house, with the exception of periods during the wars and after the sixties. In Canada, it was by the end of the 1960s that women had more chances to work outside their homes (Prentice et al. 320).

Both Farrokhzad and Livesay experienced confinement to the private sphere after marriage. In 1936, Dorothy Livesay started working on the editorial board of *New Frontier*. But, after her marriage in 1937, she lost her job, because at that time, a married woman could not have a job if her husband did (Stevens, *Dorothy Livesay* 51). Farrokhzad’s situation after her marriage was worse than Livesay’s. She was very limited by Parviz. She was not allowed to go to conferences or talk to men. Whatever she wanted to do, she needed her husband’s permission.

Duberman states that when women are limited within the boundaries of their homes, they may become dependent on their husbands (or male lovers) and this usually results in social and economic dependencies (Duberman 61). A wife has to spend most of her time at her husband’s house and this reduces her social interactions. Therefore, when her husband comes home at night, the woman is eager to talk to him. On the contrary, her husband is working outside of the house and within the society. When he comes back home, he needs to be quiet (Duberman 61). Farrokhzad experienced this situation in her life with her husband. She chose poetry in order to fulfill her social needs. As Farrokhzad said: “My friend is poetry, my sweetheart is poetry / I am going to find her”

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^6 This is my own translation.
In a traditional society in which a woman cannot have a job after marriage, wives may depend on their husbands for all their financial needs. I agree with Duberman who states that this kind of economic dependence is the basis of patriarchal ideology. Men play a more dominant role in the family because the economic welfare of the family depends on them (61). In other words, men find their identities and self-hoods as "providers" for their wives (61-62). Duberman’s description of patriarchal norms in North America, about the role of men and women in the family and society in the 1970s, resembles traditional Islamic laws in this respect. In both early North American patriarchy and early to recent Iranian patriarchy under Islam, men control their families through economic power. As mentioned earlier, Islamic traditionalists believe that men are supposed to pay all the expenses of their wives (including shelter, clothes, food, etc.).

In “The Taming,” Livesay refers to the duties of a woman as cooking and making love. The speaker of the poem is a woman who tries to explain the criteria of being a woman from a male lover’s point of view. She starts the poem with the command of the male lover: “Be woman.” The poem shows that to “be woman” means to prepare food for the male lover and to be submissive. I believe that in this poem Livesay questions the duties of women at home and in relation to men through irony.

The opening command “be woman” is repeated four times in the poem and puts emphasis on the gender which is defined by anatomy. As a result, being a woman in a way that the patriarchal rules define is also a requirement of social interactions to be “correct” (Cook 123). According to Simone de Beauvoir, in a patriarchal society, a man is the “self”; “he is the subject” and his female lover is “the other” (xxii). Therefore, one is not only a woman, but she should act womanly. The female narrator of the poem
repeats "measure of the word" two times: the first time is when the male lover asks her to prepare him chicken, and the second time is when they want to make love. Consequently, to be a "woman" means obey orders and make love (Cook 123). The female narrator of the poems, then, questions whether to be a "woman" is "just that / and nothing more" (10-11). It is worth mentioning that "be woman" is a direct quote from the male lover and is in implicit quotation marks. Therefore, this is what the dominant male lover calls her, rather than what she calls herself. As Cook argues: "It is what is said about her, what she - the narrator - is called, rather than what she calls herself" (123).

The female narrator questions the male lover's domination in love:

until that night
when you denied me darkness,
even the right
to turn in my own light. (14-17)

In this part of the poem the female lover obviously complains that she cannot keep her freedom. This implies that the male lover decides about the condition of love-making. As Nadine McInnis declares, in this poem both sexual services and domestic services need woman's submission (69). Although, this poem gives an image of a woman who has a submissive role in sex, it paradoxically reveals women's power to decrease men's domination: "Do as I said, I heard you faintly / over me fainting: / be woman" (18-20). By the end of the poem, the figure of an authoritarian male lover changes to the "faint" voice of a man. It implies that, through sexual union, the male lover is not dominated over the female lover any more. As Peter Stevens argues: "this release through sexual union in fact gives the woman at least an equality of mastery in the experience" ("The
The figure of the male lover in “The Taming” is a black man, which invokes the binary of black man and white woman. Perhaps “light” is a metaphor for the white female lover. The figure of a black man also implies the context of patriarchal Zambian society. Antje M. Rauwerda, in “Upsetting an Already Unquiet Bed: Contextualizing Dorothy Livesay’s ‘Zambia,’” asserts: “‘The Taming’ s’ ‘black man’ (and, by inference, the black men in ‘Zambia,’ notably Kaunda) also has a domineering, almost savage, or even bestial power” (117).

In conclusion, if we compare what critics argue about gender construction in Western and Islamic societies, we find interesting similarities between them. Both traditional Islamic ideology and traditional Western social order give more power and freedom to men rather than women, especially in the context of marriage. Although for some the notion that traditional Islamic thought states that women are dependent on men and should be controlled by them is the result of a misunderstanding of divine laws, it is clear that Iranian culture was less egalitarian than Canadian society at the time Farrokhzad and Livesay were composing their love poems. In other words, Farrokhzad was living in a patriarchal society, and patriarchy was the main ideology of most societies of her time, but the degree to which she suffered under patriarchy was much more extreme than in Livesay’s case: for example, by being discouraged to write by her parents, by being forbidden to write and socialize with writers by her husband, by losing her child in divorce, and by having her work censored by the State. Nonetheless, Livesay’s struggle for women’s freedom is one of the main themes of many of her poems even though she lived under a more egalitarian form of patriarchy. I do not reject or wish
to minimize the deep effect of Islamic ideology on Persian culture, yet it is not the only reason for patriarchy.

A comparison between Canadian and Iranian societies at the time Farrokhzad and Livesay were writing their love poems shows that it was difficult for each poet to find a voice to express female desire. Since Iranian society was deeply affected by traditional Islamic ideologies, Farrokhzad had to struggle with these conventional ideologies in order to give voice to her desires. As we have seen, although women’s unveiling or having sexual affairs outside marriage were against Islamic laws and were not accepted by the Iranian society of Farrokhzad’s time, in many of her love poems, she unveiled the female lovers and talked explicitly about sexual affairs and sexual desire.

The context under which Livesay struggled to express her voice was very different from the Iranian social context of Farrokhzad’s time. As we have seen, Livesay lost her job after her marriage in 1937. Her works were ignored for years and her modern poems were not included in New Provinces because they were written by a woman. However, Canadian society was not affected by religious rules to the same extent as Iranian society was; consequently, Livesay did not have to stand up against religious ideologies. Livesay’s works were not censored and she was encouraged by her parents to publish her works. Moreover, the feminist movement had started in the 1960s in Canada, and gave more freedom to women. They had more opportunity to have a full-time job and sexual relationship outside marriage became more frequent. Therefore, in comparison to Iranian society of Farrokhzad’s time, Canadian society was much less affected by patriarchal rules at the time that Livesay started to publish her erotic poems in 1967.
Chapter III:

Poetic Structures in Translation
As this research is undertaken in English I will use translated versions of Forugh Farrokhzad’s poems because she wrote only in Persian. The translation of a poem is the interpretation by the translator of the original poems. In order to have a more precise comprehension of the process of mediation in Farrokhzad’s translated poems; it is worth reviewing some theories of poetic translation. It is important to consider that a translated version of a poem is not the same as its original in form. There are important questions regarding methods of translation, such as what are the characteristics of a good translator? In other words, would just knowing the words and grammatical rules of both languages be enough to translate poetry? Wilfred Thorley, an outstanding translator of French poetry, provides an answer to these questions. In the introduction to his volume *Fleurs-de-Lys: A Book of French Poetry Freely Translated into English Verse*, Thorley argues:

> In translation it is a small thing to know, etymologically, the literal equivalent of foreign words, the important thing being to understand their intention and to render their effect in your own way… This begin so with a simple prose statement, the matter is obviously ten times more intricate when we come to poetry, where substitutes of sound are to be reproduced and the sense preserved, while duly conforming to the tyrannous exigencies of rhyme and meter. (1-2)

The translation of poetry is more difficult and complicated than prose translation. Some scholars believe that because poetry is a kind of writing which uses all aspects and possibilities of language, it cannot be translated. Furthermore, even if a poem is translated by a skilled translator, it is not completely understandable in a language other than its original language. As Paul Valery says:
A poet is never profoundly, intimately, and completely understood and felt but by his own people: he is inseparable from the speech of his nation... The prose writer, the novelist, the philosopher, can be translated and often are, without too much damage. But to the poet belongs the privilege and inevitable disadvantage that his work cannot be translated either into prose or into a foreign language. (qtd. in Mathews 73-74)

Contrary to Valery, some other scholars, like Umberto Eco and Northrop Frye, believe that it is possible to translate a poem. In his introduction to Dialogue sur la traduction, Northrop Frye argues that poetry is "precisely" what can be translated (9).

There are two methods of poetic translation. One way is to change the verse form to prose. We can name Alexander Fraser Tytler and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as advocates of this method. Beside this method, some critics, like Umberto Eco, argue that poems should be translated into verse form even though it is impossible to change the form of a poem into the target form. In Experiences in Translation, Umberto Eco explains that a translator should not worry about the music and rhyme of the text, nor the difficulty of that task. Instead, the translator should try to reproduce a new poem that seems to be original (40). However, I agree with those scholars who suggest that a translator should render a poem in such a way that when a reader reads it in the target language, he or she feels music in the poem. If we have to change some words in order to keep the rhyme, we should do this in such a way that the target text conveys the real meaning of the original text. It is important to pay attention to the music of the text for the value of a poem. In other words, the translator should be faithful to both the meaning and the form.
No one can exactly decide which of these two methods of translation of poetry is better. It is not correct to say that changing the form from verse to prose is not translation or to argue that the translator must keep the form of the original text. Therefore, if we want to judge these two forms, we should say that it depends on the aim of the reader. If someone reads a poem for the sake of its music and rhyme, he or she should read a poetic translated version. A reader can enjoy reading a prose form of translation, if reading a poem for its meaning and if the rhyme and poetic beauty are not as important.

As I was comparing love poems, I tried to choose poetic translations of the poems instead of prose ones. It is important to mention that in Persian poetry (especially classic poems) rhyme, music and equal length of lines are the most important characteristics of poems. Consequently, most translators do their best to translate poems into verse instead of prose form. I believe that Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak (translator of “The Sin”) and Karim Emami (translator of “Love Song”) successfully translated some of Farrokhzad’s poems. It is harder to translate “Love Song” than “The Sin” because the poetic style of the former is similar to the style of poems by the famous Iranian classic poet Rumi while the latter poem is in free verse. The translated version of the third poem in my Appendix, “My Beloved,” was done by Maryam Dilmaghani. Michael Hillmann also translated a segment of Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved” (A Lonely Woman 41). However, Dilmaghani’s style of translation is different from Hillmann’s method.

Maryam Dilmaghani is a professor of economics at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada. Although she is not a literary translator by profession, she successfully translated Farrokhzad’s poems. There are two reasons why I chose her rendering of Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved.” First, she finished her LLB. at the University of Tehran and then continued her graduate studies in France and Canada. As a result, Dilmaghani is familiar with both Iranian and
Canadian cultural contexts. Second, I feel she is talented in poetry and translation. Aside from Farrokhzad’s love poems, Dilmaghani translated a selection of Leonard Cohen’s poems from English to Persian. As a native Persian speaker, when I read Dilmaghani’s translations of Cohen’s poems, I felt as if I were reading an original Persian poem instead of rendered versions in English. Since English is not her native language, however, her English translations of Farrokhzad’s poems are not as skilful as her Persian translations of Cohen’s poems; still, they are good rendered verses.

Dilmaghani’s translation of Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved” actually rewrites the poem in an English poetic style. In other words, one can see that she is trying to understand the deep meaning and sense of the poem. Moreover, she conveys those intentions in a way which sounds natural to native English readers. Reading her rendered version of “My Beloved,” we find music and rhythm in the poem. In order to better judge her translation, I will compare some pieces of her work with Hillman’s translation of “My Beloved.”

The main difference between Hillmann’s and Dilmaghani’s translations of “My Beloved” is that the former is a word-for-word translation, while the latter is more like a poem. If we read the poem for the sake of meaning, Hillmann’s translation is ideal. However, he could not keep the poetic structures of “My Beloved” in the target language:

My lover

is a simple person,

...whom I

in this ominous strange land

have hidden like the last trace

of a great religion

معشوق من

انسان ساده است

انسان ساده ای که من او را

در سرمزمین متمایل

چون اخرين نشانه ی یک مذهب شگفت

در لابلاي بوته ی پستانهایم

61
in the thicket of my breasts. (A Lonely Woman 41)

Readers of Farrokhzad’s original poem feel a great rhyme and music in the poem. Farrokhzad tried to repeat the same words or different words with the same spelling pattern (or rhyme). For example, in the above-mentioned segment of the poem, “(ensan -e- sade)” is repeated at the beginning of the second and third lines. In his translation, instead of repeating “a simple person,” Hillmann uses ellipsis. We can also refer to “(pestan)” and “(pemham)” as examples of words with the same rhyme, but they are translated to “hidden” and “breast”.

In her translation of Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved,” Dilmaghani used alliteration in the verse that sometimes corresponds to an equivalent feature in the original poem. “(Aa آن تن برنهه ی بی شرم,” for instance, is translated to “with his bare bold body” (2). “(berahne), and “(بی شرم), that should be read like “bisharm”, are alliterated words that start with “b”. Dilmaghani used “bare” for “(برنهه) and “bold” for “(بی شرم) that are alliterated words in English. However, Dilmaghani translated “(Last, rest, vast, and past” are alliterated words, but they do not corresponded to alliterated words in the Persian version.

The other issue about Hillmann’s translation is that he correctly translated the title of the poem “(mashough -e- man)” into “My Beloved.” Nevertheless, all through the poem Hillmann renders “(my beloved) to “My lover.” I believe that the correct and accurate translation of “(is my beloved, and not my lover. In the following chapter, we will see how the female narrator changes the male lover’s identity by referring to him as her “beloved”. In other words, Hillmann completely changes the deep meaning of the poem by rendering “(to “My lover.” As mentioned earlier, he also renders “(is a simple person, / ... whom I.” “(is repeated twice in these lines of the poem. However, Hillmann
translated the first one into “is a simple person” and for the second one did not use the same words, but chose “whom” as an equivalent. But Dilmaghani translated these two lines into “He is a natural man” and “He is a simple man” (“My Beloved” 48, 52 see Appendix I). I like Dilmaghani’s choice of the word “man” better than Heillmann’s “person”, because “man” is closer to Farrokhzad’s intention to introduce the male lover. I assume that by choosing the words “natural” and “simple” as adjectives for “man”, Dilmaghani tried to express the actual meaning of this poem, which pictures a man as being both natural and simple, besides being apparently wild. Hillmann, however, referred to the male lover as “a simple person” and eliminates the adjective “natural”.

The most important elements that affect a poetic translation are similarities and differences between two languages. Similarities between two languages help the translator to keep the rhyme and music of the poem as much as possible. For example, there are significant similarities between French and English (Selver 22). Over the centuries, the English language has been shaped by a number of other languages such as Latin and German. French also affected English and a vast number of English words and expressions are borrowed from French. French and English express similar syntactic functions. But it is much harder to translate poems from Persian to English or vice versa, because there are only a few similar words between these two languages. The Persian language is derived from Indo-Iranian languages. After the Islamic conquest of Persia (637-651), the Persian language borrowed some words from Arabic. English and Persian also have different alphabets. Both English and Persian languages have a wide range of words. Sometimes we need to use an expression or a sentence to translate one word from Persian to English. For example, let us take a look at a line from Dilmaghani’s translation: “I hide him always away” (“My Beloved” 54). The Persian line consists of two words پنهان نموده ام "My Beloved” 54). The Persian line consists of two words
that can be literally translated to “I hid.”\(^1\) However, Dilmaghani uses five words in English to translate them. “I” stands for “ام” and “hide always away.” She also has to use the personal pronoun “him” to manifest who is hidden away.

Differences between physical, social and cultural customs are other issues that a translator has to confront. The poet may refer to an object or phenomenon that is unknown or strange in the target language, which makes it difficult to translate with an adequate meaning for the poem. For example, Simorgh is a Persian name for a fabulous, benevolent, mythical flying creature. This creature is known to Persian speakers, but we do not have such a name in other languages. This word is usually translated as phoenix in English, but they are not exactly the same. Likewise for cultural and social customs such as “Christmas” or “Valentine’s Day,” English speakers and people in Western countries are familiar with these words, but it is difficult to render them in the Persian language because there are no substitutions for these words in Persian.

It is true to say that it is not possible to completely transfer the form of a poem from the source language to the target language. Even skilful translators cannot render a poem and keep all its poetic structures. What I want to show is that poetic translations are always proportional. It is a good idea if a translator of poetry is a poet himself or herself. The translator should discern the real meaning and structure of the original poem and try to write a new poem in his/her target language. If we compare translations of “Love Song” and “The Sin” with that of “My Beloved,” we will find that the first two are better than the latter one. “Love Song” is rendered in English by Karim Emami who studied English literature at University of Tehran and at the University of Minnesota. He translated Persian classic poems by Hafiz, Saadi, and Omar Khayyam to English.

\(^1\) This is my own translation.
“The Sin” was translated by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, a Professor of Persian language and literature and Iranian culture and civilization at the University of Washington for nineteen years. He has published nineteen books and over one hundred major literary articles. Therefore, both Karimi-Hakkak and Emami are not only English translators but also literary figures. They translated Farrokhzad’s poems and tried to compose a new poem in English with their translations.

Although I am using translated versions of Farrokhzad poems, it is possible to make a comparison between Farrokhzad’s and Dorothy Livesay’s poetic structures. There are interesting similarities as well as differences between their poetic styles. They are both known as modern poets while they also composed classic verses. Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s poems are different mainly in the length of the poems and the length of the lines.

Almost all critics, like Milani, Hillmann, and Davaran, divided Farrokhzad’s poetry into two periods of early and late. Her early poems were composed and published in the fifties. These poems do not reflect many of the important characteristics of modern Persian poetry such as flexible rhyming and rhythmic patterns within a poem. About her early period Farrokhzad herself said:

I used to write poetry, kind of instinctively, it would pour out of me. Two or three per day in the kitchen, behind the sewing machine, any way I would just write. I was quite rebellious. I would keep writing. Because I was reading collection after collection. I would become saturated with them, and I had a little talent anyway, I had to pour it back somehow…. (qtd. in Davaran 208-209)

Almost all the poems in her first three anthologies are written in rhyming couplets and in lines
with the same lengths (Davaran 209). Therefore, her early poems are more similar to Persian classic poems than to modern poems.

One of the most important characteristics of classical Persian poems is the inflexibility of rhythmic patterns. These poems are composed of a number of lines with stable meter. "Quantitative measuring" has been the necessity of classical Persian poetry for centuries (Milani, "A Feminist Perspective" 77). In Different Kinds of Persian Poetry: Discussions on Forms and Meanings of Classic Poetry, Mansour Rastegar Fasayi explains different forms of classical Persian poetry such as qasida, ghazal, ruba'i and masnavi. The qasida is a long poem in monorhythm with religious, didactic, or panegyric subjects. The ghazal is a short love or mystical poem that usually consists of four to sixteen couplets with the same rhyme. The ruba'i is a quatrain with an accurate meter. The masnavi, which is the form of Farrokhzad's "Love Song," consists of rhyming couplets that make a romantic, heroic, or narrative poem.

Among the three poems selected for study here, Farrokhzad's "The Sin" was composed in her first period of poetry. This poem consists of twelve couplets with equal length of lines and a consistent rhyme. Moreover, metaphorical references in this poem, like most of the other poems in her first three anthologies, use clichés that have been taken from old Persian romantic poems: "eyes brimming with mystery," "quiet place of seclusion," "sorrows of my heart," "life-giving embrace" (see Appendix I). All these expressions are used repeatedly in Persian classic poems. Davaran calls these expressions "poetic vocabulary" or "poetic imagery" (211). I would like to criticize the repetition of the same vocabularies and expressions throughout "The Sin" as overly conventional. For example, "wrapped in an embrace, warm and fiery" and "In that dim and quiet place of seclusion" are

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2 This is my own translation of the title.
repeated twice in the poem.

Aside from lack of experience, there are other facts that affected Farrokhzad’s poetry in the first three collections. On the one hand, modern Persian poetry was not well received at that time and people hardly called modern verses poems (Davaran 215-216). On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, Farrokhzad was the first female poet in Iran who gave voice to her feminine needs and identity. I believe that she had to respect classic styles of Persian poems and conventional poetic language to show herself as a poet to Iranian society. In one of her poems entitled “Rebellion” she manifested the reaction of people to her poems:

Man, you egotistical creature--

Don’t say my poetry is shameful;

Don’t you realize for all those in despair

This cage is tight, too tight.³ (25-28)

Gradually, she found out that if she wanted to reveal her experiences as a woman in her poems, she had to “break away from traditional themes” (Milani, “A Feminist Perspective” 84).

Although “Rebellion” is published in Farrokhzad’s first collection of poems, the poem seems more modern than classic in its choice of diction. In “Rebellion”, Farrokhzad did not respect classic rules of versification. Breaking the rules of Persian classic poetry is part of the rebellion in the title of this poem.

In order to have a better understanding of Farrokhzad’s later poems in her last two anthologies, Another Birth and Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season, I need to give a brief explanation of the history and poetic structures of modern Persian poetry. The modernist movement started at the end of the nineteenth century, when writers and their public

³ This poem is translated by Milani in “Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective,” p. 84.
were looking for a political and an ideological departure from the past. Nima Yushij (1895-1959) was the leader of modern poetry in Iran and is known as the father of modern Persian poetry. He studied in a French private school and became more familiar with French than Persian poetry. He had this opportunity to study poetry from a different angle, but he failed to review and understand the thematic and technical nature of Persian poetry. His familiarity with French poetry encouraged him to turn away from the classical form of Persian poetry to innovate a new form of poetry (Milani, “A Feminist Perspective” 82). The most important characteristics of Yushij’s poetry are flexibility of form and structure (Davaran 215). Yushij did not use a line (distich) as a unit of poem, but used lines with different lengths (Milani, “A Feminist Perspective” 82).

Farrokhzad’s creed about poetry changed in the later period of her life. Her poems were not momentary or mere results of her emotions. She explains the change in her poetic practices:

During youth, emotions have feeble roots, only they have more of a rapture. Later on, if they are not guided through thought or if they are not results of thinking[,] they dry up and end. I looked at the world around me, at the objects around, the people around me and the main outlines of this world. I discovered it, and when I wanted to express it, I saw that I needed words, new words that relate to that world. What is it to me that this word is not “poeticized”? It does have life. We will poeticize it. When the words entered, there came the need for change and retouching of the meters, as a result. If this need had not risen naturally[,] Nima [Yushij’s] effect could not have done much. He was my guide[,] but I was my own maker. (qtd. in Davaran 233)
She continues and argues that to compose a poem is as hard as a “scientific discovery” and this is quite different from her early poetry when she said she “used to write ... kind of instinctively” (qtd. in Davaran 234).

I believe that Forugh Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved” is one of her best modern poems, and that it shows all the characteristics of modern poetry. It consists of different technical instruments of poetry. Freedom and flexibility in form and structure of the poem are clear. There are no lines with equal length. For example, she starts the poem with “My beloved” in order to indicate whom she is going to describe. She goes to the next lines and introduces her beloved as an aggressive and dominant creature (see Appendix I). Apart from “My beloved,” there is no repetition of expressions.

In her poem “My Beloved,” Farrokhzad uses interesting similes and metaphors. Metaphorically, the female speaker of the poem compares her beloved’s eyes to “a Tartar who is constantly longing for [the] advent of a knight.” This metaphor implies a figure of an aggressive conventional man. Through similes, the speaker also likens her male beloved to a “veiled god,” the “last rest of vast past beliefs” and “death.” These are all interesting similes and metaphors because it is for the first time in the history of Persian poetry that a man is compared in this way. Modern images, such as “isolated isle,” “green veins of tree,” and “all bits of life” relate the world of Farrokhzad’s own feeling and thoughts to nature (see Appendix I). In the next chapter, we will see how the female speaker of the poem uses these similes and metaphors to reveal her own as well as her male lover’s identities.

One of the most beautiful poems that Farrokhzad composed in her second period of poetry is “Love Song.” Although the poems in her last two collections are not written in old
forms, “Love Song” is an exception. This poem is written in masnavi form, which is a form that has been used in Persian poetry from the tenth century (Davaran 252). The most famous poet of this form is the Sufi poet Rumi whose anthology is titled “Masnavi”. Farrokhzad explains:

[In “Love Song,”] I wanted to express an extent of love that no longer exists... a sort of reaching an elevated stage in love. And I had reached [it] and this state was not “contemporary”... That feeling, in the limits of the particularities of this age, was a forlorn feeling and still is. Sometimes one has to resort to times forlorn to express his forlorn feelings... for me, the rhythm of “masnavi” is something always different and always current... Perhaps the words of Rumi have rendered this rhythm, this quality, that is in harmony with my feeling and, as a result, my feeling was expressed in this form ... .

(qtd. in Davaran 252-253)

Consequently, Farrokhzad chooses her form in accordance with the subject of the poem. As she asserts above, Farrokhzad experienced a level of love that no longer exists in today’s world. She can find this great state of love in Rumi’s classic romantic poems. In other words, in “Love Song” Farrokhzad is referring to a feeling of love that has been expressed by the words of Rumi.

In “Love Song,” the poet uses an imaginative language in the form of similes, symbols and metaphors. Examples of similes are “eyes” that are like “pastures” and “you” (the male lover), which is similar to “water”. In her book Imaginative Pictures in Forugh Farrokhzad’s Poems, Maryam Ameli Rezayi divides symbols in this poem into two groups. One group consists of words like “nights”, “soil”, “sad heart,” “bottoms of grave,” “dry”, “silence and
darkness," “empty space," “silent night," and “restless babies,” that are symbols of disappointment and sadness (172). The other group of symbols are those that stand for happiness and love: “painted bright”, “rain”, “clean”, “suns”, “so much light,” “sounds of life,” “water”, “chandelier”, “flights”, “songs”, and “magic lullaby.” What makes these symbols much more beautiful is that Farrokhzad brings them in contrast with each other. For example: “My nights are painted bright with your dream, sweet love ( •<**-<JJ£JJ
y
LS^JJ
jt s* c$1) / a chandelier blazing amidst silence and darkness (1,50). In this example “night” and “silence and darkness” are placed against “bright” and “chandelier”. In addition to similes and symbols, Farrokhzad uses some words metaphorically. For example, in “like a star on two golden wings (u^jj JW
»J2« JJ?)” (32), “star” is compared to the male beloved (Rezayi 184).

Farrokhzad’s five collections of poems are like mirrors that reflect several beauties of Persian classic and modern poetry. She started to compose in the classic form and continued to write poems in the modern style. Her poem, “Love Song,” is a brilliant combination of both modern and conventional charms. Rezayi argues that different parts of her body and her feminine feelings are the elements most used in Farrokhzad’s imaginative language (73). I assume Farrokhzad used poetic language as a way to express her personal reality as a woman, and therefore, she brought different aspects of a woman’s experiences as appealing metaphors and images in her poems. There are interesting similarities and differences between Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s poems in terms of poetic forms and structures. Like Farrokhzad, Livesay wrote poems in both conventional and modern forms.

Canadian literature of the 1930s was affected by debates and dichotomies. The main dichotomy was the split between the modernists and the traditionalists. The struggles between literary modernists, like the poets in New Provinces, and literary traditionalists, such as some
members of the Canadian Authors Association (CAA), resulted in arguments about literary standards (Kelly “Politics, Gender” 54). On the one hand, advocates of literary modernism defended new forms and modern styles and asked Canadian writers to follow international literary standards. On the other hand, traditionalist literary scholars who privileged rhyme and metrical forms wanted to develop Canadian literary standards. Still, there were a great number of poets who were interested in both traditional as well as modern poetry. We can name E.J. Pratt and Wilson MacDonald as examples (Kelly, “Politics, Gender” 54-55). Livesay, also, was one of those poets who composed both traditional and modern verses.

Dorothy Livesay’s two early collections of poems, Green Pitcher (1928) and Signpost (1932), included half traditional and half free-verse poems. These works attracted critics like Charles Bruce and Raymond Knister because of her skill in both free and traditional verses. Although she was affected by those who were advocates of classic poems, she was trying to show her independence in her poetic works. As a result, her poems in Signpost were evenly divided between traditional and free-verse forms. Although Livesay was not the first Canadian poet to write in free-verse form, she was a young poet who was writing free verse at a time when this kind of poetry was still not well received in Canada (Thompson 22). Therefore, those critics who did not accept free verse as poetry criticized these two collections. For example, one of these critics called Livesay’s early poems a “mock-sonnet” and described them as “disrespectful to the art” (qtd. in Thompson 22).

Since Livesay relied heavily on natural metaphors or similes, almost all of the poems in Signpost are about nature. She started the collection with “Signpost”, in which she echoed a sense of indecision:

Spring is forever a question,
And no one really knows
Whether to dig in his garden,
Or follow the flight of the crows
Led by a veering sign-post-
The old wind’s nose! (1-6)

Thompson argues that this poem is like a key to better understand the poems that follow in *Signpost* (21). The wind and birds are repeated in this poem and other poems in the collection in order to suggest “a spirit of escape or freedom” (21). The speaker of the poem cannot decide “Whether to dig in his garden, / Or follow the flight of the crows.” I agree with Thompson’s assumption that this poem is a signpost to doubts, questions, and fears in other poems in *Signpost* (21). Livesay ends many stanzas with question marks, and questions her motives, goals, and responses. Note “City wife” as an example where the speaker of the poem doubts if the cawing of crows is a song or a warning: “Is it a song they shout- / Or a warning cry?” (125-126).

Almost all of Livesay’s poems in *The Unquiet Bed* are composed in free verse which constituted for Livesay a kind of poetic liberation. In “‘A thankful music’: Dorothy Livesay’s Experiments with Feeling and Poetic Form,” Lorraine M. York asserts that Livesay much preferred to compose free rather than traditional verses (16). In “Song and Dance,” Livesay writes: “But I was happiest breaking into free verse... This free expression was suited to my own rhythmic sense and was dictated, no doubt by my breath groups (for I always said the poem aloud; or if that was not possible I heard myself saying it in the mind’s ear)” (43). York argues that there are links between free verse and the mind’s associations and memories of the poet (16). We can refer to “The Taming” and “The Touching” as examples. Both of these poems are reflections of Livesay’s opinions about women’s submission to and domination by men. In “The
"Be Woman" is repeated four times to show, according to a male lover, what being a woman means. "Chicken" is also a symbol for woman in the poem. Cook claims that like the female speaker of "The Taming," the chicken has been domesticated and is presented to be used by the male lover (123).

One of the characteristics of free verse is that poets can start new lines from different places with respect to the margin, and can also put unequal spaces between words. When words are arranged in lines, one can hear the speaker's voice in the rhythm (Mayes 261). This technique is also used when the poet tries to put emphasis on a word or a phrase. For example, look at the following excerpt from "The Touching:"

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each time
I drown
in your identity
I am not I
but root
shell
fire (33-39)
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The poet used single words on separate lines because she stressed the changing of the female speaker's identity into that of her male lover's, and to "root", "shell", and "fire". "Fire" is also a metaphor for the female speaker's sexual desires. Moreover, except for "I drown" and "I am not I," which are started from the left margin of the page, the other words are spaced differently from the left margin. I suggest that by using this form, Livesay gave emphasis to each line separately. She also gave a rhythm to her poem.
A comparison of Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s poetic structures illustrates that both of them used a metaphorical language with the help of metaphorical words, similes, and symbols. In her early poems, Livesay used natural metaphors and similes, while Farrokhzad applied them as an imaginative language in her last two collections of poems that contain poems about nature. Livesay’s heterosexual love poems are full of images of fire, fever, pain, disease, wound, or tempest (Thompson 111). I feel that all of these images in her love poems show the eagerness of the female lover to keep her own identity and freedom. Losing them is compared to pain, disease, wound, etc. Similarly, Farrokhzad used images like darkness, death, fire, venom, pain and so on. The most important difference between Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s poetic structure is the length of their poems: most of Farrokhzad’s love poems are longer than Livesay’s. However, any comparison of poetic form must take into account that we are reading Farrokhzad’s poems through translation and the mediation of translation.
Chapter IV:

Desire and Power: The Reception of Feminist Ideology in Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s Love Poems
Carolyn Heilbrun argues that literature is the best tool to inform women of their rights. Women writers often struggle with conventional patriarchal norms and present their readers with a picture of an unconventional society where women are liberated from male domination (qtd. in Godard 6). In respect to Heilbrun’s argument about the resistant power of women’s writing, Dorothy Livesay and Forugh Farrokhzad can be considered as good examples of writers who reveal their female identity and use the language of poetry as a way to express women’s point of view and protest against patriarchal power. My purpose in this chapter is to look at the reception of the feminist voice and themes in Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s love poems.

Most historians divide women’s movements into two waves: from the nineteenth century to 1920, when the franchise was given to women in most of the Western world, and from 1920 to today (Duberman 11). In Canada, however, contemporary feminism appeared with the student and civil-rights movements of radical protests in the 1960s (Code 18). Adrienne Rich declares that before the 1960s women struggled to survive a patriarchal society, in which they were made to feel that women were

- a subgroup, that “man’s world” is the real world, that patriarchy is equivalent to culture and culture to patriarchy,…that generalization about “man”, “humankind”, “children”, “blacks”, “parents”, “the working class” hold true for women, mothers, daughters, sisters, wet-nurses, infant girls, and can include them with no more than a glancing reference here and there, usually to some specialized function like breast-feeding. (qtd. in Code 20-21)

These patriarchal assumptions led to a second wave of the women’s movement and the development of feminist theory in Canada.
Generally speaking, today’s feminism covers different, sometimes contradictory, ideologies, beliefs and values. Therefore, we cannot define feminism as a single discourse. Some of the main feminist schools can be described as liberal, socialist and Marxist, radical, and French. Liberal feminism claims women’s freedom and equality of opportunity in society. In *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women’s Movement*, Betty Friedan, who is known as one of the most famous liberal feminists, asserts that women are people who must be free in society with the same opportunities, responsibilities and privileges as other human beings (310). Marxist and social feminists look for more fundamental social and economic changes, so women can claim more equitable social and economic conditions (Code 36). Radical feminists may suggest that any female-male relationship causes the oppression of women. As Mary Daly claims: “For men [...] life has meant feeding on the bodies and minds of women, sapping energy at the expense of female death [...]. It is men who have sapped the life-force of women” (172-73). These feminists support female separatism as a solution. The main focus of French feminist writings derives from the reinterpretation of Freud by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (Code 43). French feminists are concerned with the subversive potential of language and its role in constructing femininity, sexuality and feminist voice.

We do not have the above-mentioned schools of thought in Iranian feminism. Generally speaking, there are two types of feminist scholars in Iran: first, those who assert that feminism should not be separate from Islamic ideology because religion is a defender of women’s rights. For example, Afsaneh Najmabadi and Shahla Sherkat are advocates of Islamic feminism. Second, there are others who argue that Islam gives more value and power to men and that is the reason for patriarchy. Haideh Moghissi and Hammed Shahidian are notable advocates of anti-Islamic feminism. In order to have a better understanding of Farrokhzad’s love poems it is
important to review the history of different feminist ideologies in Iran.

About four years after the constitutional revolution in Iran in 1906, the consciousness of women’s rights began to emerge. It resulted in the establishment of women’s societies, and the publication of books and magazines like Danesh\(^1\) (the first weekly magazine published on women’s culture and also with a female editor, which first appeared in 1910), Zaban Zanan\(^2\) (edited by Sediqeh Dowlatabadi, who strongly criticized the veil, in 1919), and Dokhtar\(\text{an} \text{ Iran}\)\(^3\) (published by early feminist and poet Zandokht Shirazi in 1931) (Sanasarian 32-37). This impetus lasted until 1933 when many of the women’s movement associations were dissolved by Reza Shah. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, many feminists and scholars started debates about patriarchy, women’s rights and gender rules in Islamic society. From 2001, four famous Iranian universities (Tehran University as an example) offered women’s studies programs at the Master of Arts level. These studies are about women and the family, the history of women, and women's rights in Islam. The most popular question asked by Iranian feminist scholars is whether Islamic feminism can defend women’s rights against men or not. This question is a reflection of both the influence of the traditional ruling government and the interests of women who wish to better analyze Islamic laws regarding women’s issues.

There are two opposite views in the debate about Islamic feminism. On one side, there are those scholars who believe that there are different possibilities within the boundaries of Islamic rule that can defend women against patriarchy. Afsaneh Najmabadi, professor of History and of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University and founding editor of

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\(^{1}\)Danesh

\(^{2}\)Zaban Zanan

\(^{3}\)Dokhtar\(\text{an} \text{ Iran} \text{ ایران} \)
the feminist journal *Nimeh-ye Digar* (نیمه دیگر), is among these scholars (Moghadam 22).

Najmabadi tries to make connections between Islamic and secular feminists. In one of her presentations at the University of London in 1994, Najmabadi focused on the Iranian women’s magazine *Zanan* (زنان). The founder of this magazine, Shahla Sherkat, states: “We believe that the key to the solution of women’s problems lies in four realms: religion, culture, law, and education. If the way is paved in these four principal domains, then we can be hopeful of women’s development and society’s advancement” (qtd. in Moghadam 23-24). Najmabadi argues that Islamic feminists like Sherkat have “opened up a new space for dialogue between Islamic women activists and reformers and secular feminism” (“Feminism” 77).

Some Iranian scholars, like Haideh Moghissi and Hammed Shahidian, are against Najmabadi’s arguments about Islamic feminism. Moghissi claims that although there are some similarities between Islamic and Western feminism, this would be true if Islam was only a matter of personal choice. Nonetheless, in a country like Iran, Islam has affected all political and legal systems: “Islam in political rule is incompatible with the cultural pluralism that is after all the prerequisite of the right to individual choice” (Moghissi 43). Another Iranian feminist, Hammed Shahidian, agrees with the connection between Islamic and Western feminism, but he questions issues like sexuality, veiling, and religious laws. He then argues that Islamic feminism is not strong enough to liberate women from dominant Islamic ideologies and the traditionalist construction of gender in Iran (Moghadam 30).

We can conclude that feminist theories in Iran are different from those in Western countries. In Iran most of the feminist discourses are around religious ideologies, and whether or not they can defend women’s rights. But in Western countries, there are different feminist theories, and some of them are even in conflict with each other. I want to claim that despite all
the differences between feminist ideologies, they all share the same idea about one important issue, the liberation of women from male domination. This is what Farrokhzad and Livesay try to reveal in their love poems. Both were advocates of feminist ideology, but did not call themselves feminists. Most of their love poems are women centered. The female subjects in the poems try to keep their freedom and individuality as women and free themselves from male oppression and domination. Therefore, their love poems can be analyzed through different feminist theories, for they are not advocates of a single one.

The most important characteristic of Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s love poems is that all of their poems are woman centered. They give voice to women’s needs and desires. According to Farzaneh Milani, Farrokhzad involved women in self-reflection and self-revelation (“Unveiling the Other” 127). In A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing, Elaine Showalter divides women’s writings into three different categories of “feminine”, “feminist”, and “female”. These categories represent the three different phases of subcultural experience:

First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second, there is a phase of protest against these standards and values, and advocacy of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally, there is a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency. (13)

In her dissertation “Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective,” Farzaneh Milani analyzes Farrokhzad’s love poems based on these three different categories.
Milani claims that Farrokhzad’s collection *The Captive* contains “feminine” poetry that gives an image of a woman who is imprisoned in her “femininity”. *The Captive* is the story of a disappointed woman who feels that she is limited in both experience and development. The title of the collection clearly implies the feelings of restriction and despair. Farrokhzad is not a conventional woman. She is a woman who looks for freedom based on her own standards and tries to have complete, or at least a certain degree of, control over her life. Yet, the female narrator of the poems in *The Captive* is a woman who can neither free herself from cultural limitations nor can she live within patriarchal social boundaries (“A Feminist Perspective” 103-104). The female narrator of the title poem “The Captive” reveals the binary of the woman’s need for freedom and patriarchal social boundaries:

I daydream all this, but I know
I do not have the strength to leave;
Even if my jailer lets me go
I do not have enough breath for flight.4 (13-16)

Farrokhzad published *The Captive* in her early twenties. It was difficult for her to define an identity for herself because she did not have any role models. According to Milani, Farrokhzad hesitates to reject the roles given to women because of a lack of self-confidence and an awareness of politics arising from “the power-oriented nature of relations between the sexes” (“A Feminist Perspective” 105). Furthermore, *The Captive* evaluates women from a patriarchal point of view. The figure of the female lover in her early poems is that of a woman who is defined through her relationship with a man and cannot control her emotions. Although this is more of a dependent figure who cannot keep her individual identity, she may be a reflection of

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4 This poem is translated by Sholeh Wolpé in *Sin: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, p. 9.
most women in Iranian society at that time. This early figure is different from the figure of
women in Farrokhzad’s later poems (“A Feminist Perspective” 108).

Milani describes Farrokhzad’s poetry in Rebellion and The Wall as “feminist” poetry. In
this period, the poet has a much stronger sense of individuality and independently looks for her
identity. She does not accept the roles imposed on women by patriarchal society (“A Feminist
Perspective” 111). These poems show Farrokhzad’s awareness of the definition of sexual politics
which means “consciousness of the political nature of relationships between the sexes” (“A
Feminist Perspective” 112). In Rebellion and The Wall, Farrokhzad realizes how women are
victimized in a patriarchal culture. She does not refer to women’s restrictions as a rule of nature,
but regards them as problematic social structures that should be changed. The titles of these two
collections manifest a “rebellion” against “the walls” of the society that restrict women. In these
two collections the poet shows her anger at being subordinate. According to Milani, the
“expression of anger and mutiny is part of the self-affirmation of any minority group that
becomes aware of its ‘otherness’ in society” (“A Feminist Perspective” 113). The poems in these
two collections depict men as tyrants who are responsible for women’s submission:

Rise up for your freedom, my sister,
why are you so silent?
Hereafter rise up to shed
the blood of men who oppress you.

My sister, take your rights
from those who keep you weak,
from those who through a thousand plays
keep you seated in a house.⁵ ("My Sister" 1-8)

The notion of social confinement is explicit in the poem. The female speaker questions the patriarchal rules of a society that does not want women to be socialized and empowers men to "keep" women "seated in a house." Although the female speaker questions men’s power over women and does not explicitly refer to the patriarchal social rules, I imagine that "thousand plays" is a metaphor for those rules.

Through her first three collections, Farrokhzad tried to gain a more complete self-knowledge. In her last two collections, she reveals her mature self-knowledge. According to Milani, she moves from "feminine" and "feminist" writing to a "female vision." The subject of her poems becomes more about the human condition rather than just women. As Milani asserts: "A move of concerns has taken place, from the personal to the collective, from the female to the human, and from [the] private to the public" ("A Feminist Perspective" 125). It is by the help of poetry that the female poet goes beyond the boundaries of time and space:

I know a sad little nymph
who lives in the sea
and plays the wooden flute of her heart
tenderly, tenderly
sad little nymph
dying at night of a kiss
and by a kiss reborn each day.⁶ ("Born Again" 61-68)

In this example, "little nymph" is a symbol of a female lover who is free in "the sea." Contrary to

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⁵ This poem is translated by Farzaneh Milani in "Forough Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective," p. 114.

⁶ This poem is translated by Amin Banani and Jascha Kessler in "Forough Farrokhzad," p. 191.
Farrokhzad’s early poems, the female lover in this poem is not caged or imprisoned anymore.

Milani’s review of Farrokhzad’s poems shows the poet’s great desire to keep her individuality and construct her own feminine identity. Farrokhzad rejects patriarchal standards of behavior to perform based on her individual ideas. In “My Beloved,” Farrokhzad rejects the conventional figure of the male lover, whom she frees from the prototype of male lovers in Persian classic poems. This is not an imaginative figure of a man with extraordinary abilities, but “a simple man.” (“Unveiling the Other” 140-141). Interestingly, a reversal of male identity happens in “My Beloved.” Although men were always identified as lovers in classic Persian love poems, in this poem he is known as the female speaker’s “beloved”. The change of male identity is significant because the lover is more of an agent or subject, a role usually given to men, and the beloved is more passive like that of a love object, a role generally given to women.

In her dissertation “‘And This is I’: The Power of the Individual in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd,” Dylan Olivia Oehler-Stricklin dedicates a chapter to Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved.” The first two sections of the poem where the female speaker is deriding conventions are where the beloved is described in his most traditional forms:

My beloved

with his bare bold body
rose over his legs,
fearless like death.

On his firm face
an array of brief lines
was tailored by his revolting limbs.
My beloved surely belongs to a faded clan. (1-10)

The female speaker of the poem is delighted by her male lover’s “bare bold body” and admires his power and aggression. Oehler-Stricklin compares the figure of the male lover to a hero of the famous Iranian epic Ferdowsi’s *Shahnāmeh* called “Rostam”. The male beloved’s legs remind an Iranian reader of Rostam who made the earth quiver when he walked (105). Like Rostam, the male beloved comes from an ancient time with strong feet that resemble death.

In the third section the female speaker and her male beloved are more complex:

My beloved is like the earth in his blunt fated air;

in his concrete cruel rule,

he defeats me.

My beloved is wildly free.

My beloved is like a whole instinct

in [the] core of a dark isolated isle. (17-24)

The speaker, who changed the sexual role of the man from the lover to her beloved, represents the male beloved conquest of her as a proof of his masculine power. The man’s domination over the speaker confirms the traditional figure of the man earlier in the poem. In this section of the poem, however, the man’s power comes from the wild nature rather than from conventional
social rules: “My beloved is wildly free. / My beloved is like a whole instinct / in [the] core of a dark isolated isle” (22-24). As Oehler-Stricklin says: “The beloved’s conquest of the speaker conforms to the law of power within nature, not society” (106). Elements such as “wildly free,” “instinct”, and “isolated isle” distance the male lover from society and connect him with nature.

The male beloved feels the gap between the ancient and the new world. He belongs to both past and present:

My beloved
is originally estranged,
like veiled gods, like lone monks.
My beloved
is a male from ancient eras,
and from the essence of beauty.

By his tread,
he awakens
the innocent sense of youth.

With his aura, he reminds
the fond flavor of mythical truth. (25-35)

He is “a male from ancient eras” (24), but the speaker, in the same stanza, describes him as a man who “is originally estranged” (22). In other words, although the male lover belongs to the past centuries, he is not familiar with his origins. Oehler-Stricklin declares that “veiled gods” are ancient and have a timeless quality. Yet, they are important for their worshippers and are not
aware of their past (107). The male beloved who is unaware of his past can be suggested to have a lack of self-consciousness and, consequently, is not aware of his ancient heroic qualities that we have seen at the beginning of the poem. This lack of knowledge about his heroic qualities strikes a balance between those qualities and the beloved’s everyday qualities that we see in the rest of the poem. For example, the figure of an ancient male beloved is “fearless, like death” (4), and the everyday man is the one who “loves with such faith / all bits of life” (37-38).

The poem finishes by the following stanzas:

He is a natural man.
[In this strange ominous land,]
He must hide away.

My beloved…
He is a simple man.
And like [the] last rest of the vast past beliefs,
I hide him always away,
in the wake of [the] warmth of my breasts. (48-55)

A close reading of the final stanza manifests two issues. First, both female lover and male beloved refuse to accept behavioral social standards. The figure of the male lover is that of a “simple man” and the female speaker has a protective role. Once again, a reversal of gender roles happens in these final lines. The aggressive man, who was compared to death, seeks refuge in the female lover’s strength. Second, the last stanza places the lovers in a “strange ominous land.”

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7 Dilmaghani translated this line to “And in this wicked wonderland” (49). Yet, Oehler-Stricklin’s interpretation from the original version is a bit different. I agree with Oehler-Stricklin that “Although ‘ajayeb,’ which I have translated as ‘strange,’ denotes strange in the sense of wondrous, ‘showm’ [ominous] gives the word a negative sense” (110).
According to Oehler-Stricklin, although the narrator describes some positive aspects of society ("laughs and sorrows" (39), for example), the couple seems to be departed from the rest of the society. Although the society ignored them, for they rejected social standards, it could not affect the lovers (110).

Like Farrokhzad, in her love poems, Livesay always gives voice to her feminine identity and tries to keep her individuality and freedom. In "Love Letters from an Unquiet Bed: Dorothy Livesay’s Poetics of Disquiet," Méira Cook asserts that Livesay’s poetics are women centered and she strongly argues that female poets possess a way of looking that is from a woman’s “eye” and a way of feeling that is from a woman’s “I” (110). According to Cook, in Livesay’s anthology The Unquiet Bed, the poet takes on the task of “self-completion,” through her keen construction of a passionate feminist identity (113). This is what Winnie Tomm asks women to do. In her essay “Knowing Ourselves as Women” she claims: “Knowledge is constituted through connections between the wildness of the body (nature) and the controlled structure of language (culture). Knowing ourselves as women includes ordering our realities in a language that reflects and nourishes our female subjectivity” (212).

In order to have a world “defined by them,” Barbara Godard argues, feminist critics struggle with the world “defined for them.” They try to make a new map by denying the map made for them. Women writers try to find bigger dimensions of space for women to give them more freedom of movement (Godard 2). In Livesay’s “When I Got Home” the female speaker of the poem struggles to find her own space. One can read this poem from two different points of view. Méira Cook asserts that although Livesay tries to present “the woman” as an obedient character, she uses diverse representations of “the man” (123). According to Cook, in this poem, the body of the male lover is metonymically replaced by different objects that partially or fully
displace him. The whirl of socks, a man’s jacket, and trousers leaping from the china cupboard represent empty substitutes for the male lover whom the female narrator has ignored in reprisal for his territorial presence (Cook 124). What Cook means is that the displacement of the body is a punishment for the male lover who leaves “no private ground” for the female lover (Cook 123-124).

One can analyze this poem from another angle. The female speaker says: “when I got home / there was a boot on my table” (1-2). Here “my table” is a metonymy for the female speaker’s home, a woman’s place, which is occupied by the male lover. According to Susan Zimmerman’s interpretation of women’s limits within houses in Livesay’s love poems, women are “housed” or “limited” (32). Yet, even that small place is engaged with the belongings of the male lover. Therefore, the female speaker of the poem complains about having “no private ground.” Both views toward this poem confirm Godard’s argument about women who must struggle to have their own place and to express themselves in their own voice.

According to Cook, the figure of a female body that looks for completion in the other is a repeated metaphor in Livesay’s love poems. As Cook notes, the female speaker mistakes her hand for the male lover’s. In “Mistakenly” (The Self-Completing 132), she feels his heartbeat that pulses at her wristbone. In “The Cave” (The Self-Completing 120), the male lover’s dream awakens her, and in “The Search for the Whole” (The Self-Completing 133), the female narrator compares both hers and the male’s body to halves of the same fruit. In “The Notations of Love” (The Self-Completing 126), both male and female lovers’ minds are compared to conjoined twins, and in “The Touching” the male lover’s penis completes the female narrator’s body (Cook 119-120).

The notion of a woman who looks for completion by a male’s penis/phallus is contrary to
contemporary feminist ideologies. Yet, Livesay’s love poems are profound and it is not easy to understand their complexities. “The Touching” is a good example of these complex love poems. The poem starts with the statement of sexual fulfillment through loss of identity:

    pierce me again
    gently
    so the penis completing
    me
    rests in the opening
    throbs
    and its steady pulse
    down there
    is my second heart
    beating (6-15)

The narrator concludes the poem by repeating this phrase (“the penis completing / me”) with a totally different emphasis. The first phrase shows completion as female desire and the second shows rebirth through desire. In both, sex is life-affirming and spiritual as well as physical:

    each time
    I drown
    in your identity
    I am not I
    but root
    shell
    fire
each time you come
I tear through the womb’s room
give birth
and yet alone
deep in the dark
earth
I am the one wrestling
the element re-born. (33-47)

The female narrator refers to the act of penetration as an act that leads her to “re-birth.”

According to Cook, in this poem, “through judicious use of space as emphasis, the cumulative weight of the ‘I’, and a resounding climax achieved through alliteration, the dissolution of identity eventually gives way to an astonishing and unexpected birthing of the self” (121-122).

Ironically, in the poem that reveals the abject “drowning of identity,” the first person pronoun “I” destabilizes the “I” that speaks and the “I” that refers to herself as “not I” (Cook 122). This disruption of identity causes an ambiguous subject, a subjectivity that is constructed at the intersection of the “hidden and the revealed” (Cook 122). In other words, the female subject is constructed by her two sets of feelings. The female lover needs to yield to a grand passion. As Nadine McInnis affirms, Livesay refers to the cultural myth that women have stronger sexual needs than men. Therefore, the female narrator’s dissolution into “root / shell / fire” is natural incidence (76). Significantly, this sexual need is subverted by the equally powerful desire to narrate this passion by a consistent speaking self the desire for voice and subjecthood (Cook 122).

Livesay and Farrokhzad both try to show that to be in love for a woman may mean to
lose one’s identity and accept commands from the male lover. But these poets and many of the female speakers in their love poems struggle for freedom and try to keep their individuality. As Peter Stevens argues: “Livesay’s later poems, however, show a great interest in woman’s individuality, her need for freedom, her right to exist in her own way” (“The Love Poetry” 33). Hillmann articulates the same idea about Farrokhzad: “Farrokhzad sees Iranian life as pitting powerless women against strong men, and she pleads directly with the women to fight” (A Lonely Woman 83). But these poets find that they can seldom keep their individuality and freedom in love and it results in the theme of distance and disappointment.

Farrokhzad’s “Love Song” is one of her brilliant love poems that manifests the notion of disappointment in love. This poem consists of 38 rhyming couplets that are similar to the form of romantic poems by Persian classic poet Rumi. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in an interview with Arash literary magazine, Farrokhzad clarifies that “Love Song” represents a sense of eternal love that no longer exists in today’s world. In that interview, Farrokhzad adds: “I had reached [this state of love] and this state was not ‘contemporary’…That feeling, in the limits of the particularities of this age, was a forlorn feeling and still is” (qtd. in Davaran 53). She shows this “forlorn feeling” in the poem. Farrokhzad also chooses Rumi’s classic masnavi form because she imagines that the quality and rhythm is in harmony with her feelings (qtd. in Davaran 253).

“Love Song” is a good title for this poem, for this is a rhyming poem that describes different notions of real love. The female speaker compares the sense of love to the beauty and energy of nature. For example, like the rain that cleans the soil, pure love washes all her sins: “Like rain washing through the soil / you have washed my life clean” (5-6). She also compares love to the richness and beauty of nature:

You are more bountiful than the wheat fields,
more fruit-laden than the golden boughs
against the onslaught of darkening doubts.

You are a door thrown open to the suns. (9-12)

Farrokhzad compares love to rebirth in nature. As the female narrator says: “You have brought me back to life from the grave” (30). This image of rebirth in love is repeated throughout the poem.

In “Love Song,” like most of her other love poems, Farrokhzad gives voice to her desire and refers to the notion of sexuality in love. The female speaker uses the physicality of diction and refers to different images of the body: “You are hidden under my skin / flowing through my every cell, / singeing my hair with your caressing hand” (39-41). She also uses the images of fire and burning to express her sexual desire “leaving my cheeks sunburned with desire” (42). The female speaker of the poem refers, more explicitly, to sexuality and her desire when she says: “You are the convulsions of ecstasy in my body” (57). Farrokhzad chooses the word “convulsions” to invoke the image of orgasm as well as mere trembling with passion. We can also find images of sexuality and the female body in some other lines of the poem: “You are, sweet love, a stranger to my dress” (43) and “but so familiar with the fields of my nakedness” (44) are other examples of implicit sexuality, expressed in figurative language. If we agree that “fields of nakedness” implies different parts of the female lover’s body, the male lover knows her body more than the dress. I interpret that the male lover wants the female lover to be naked and that implies the notion of private unveiling.

In “Love Song,” the phrase “sweet love” is repeated ten times. It is important to consider that “sweet love” is added by the translator, Karim Emami, and we do not have this phrase in the original poem. For example, the first line of the poem is translated to “My nights are painted
bright with your dream, sweet love” while the literal translation of the original line would be: “My night is painted bright with your dream.” In the original poem, however, we do not have a constant referent for the female speaker. Once, she is obviously referring to the male lover: “I would not take anybody else for you” (20), and once she is addressing the feeling of love: “Ever since love was awakened in my heart” (51). Sometimes, it is not clear if the speaker is referring to the male lover or to love itself. For example, in the first line, it is not obvious if the speaker is dreaming of the male lover or the beauties of love. Consequently, the translator used “sweet love” that can stand for the male lover or love itself. Emami also applied other changes in his translation of the original poem. In the first line, for example, Farrokhzad used the singular form of “night”, but Emami changed it to the plural form and used “nights”. What Emami tries to convey is that the dream of love is what the speaker experiences every night and not only one night.

In this poem, Farrokhzad questions conventional, patriarchal, Islamic ideologies: “discovering venom behind friendly smiles; / putting coins into deceitful hands; / getting lost in the midst of bazaars” (26-28). These lines imply the secrecy and the subterfuge female and male lovers seem to need to contact each other. “putting coins into deceitful hands;” reminds the reader of Farrokhzad’s early experiences. Before their marriage, Farrokhzad had to ask her sister’s husband to give her letters to Parviz and did not write her name on the letter (Salahi and Shahpour 14-15). In Farsi, putting coins into someone’s hands means to beg someone to do a job for you. This image of payment and another of hypocrisy, “discovering venom behind friendly smiles,” remind us of one of Farrokhzad’s early poem “Disillusioned”, in which she refers to the people who accused her of being a prostitute and of having lovers.8

8 This poem is discussed in Chapter 1.
As mentioned earlier, "Love Song" implies Farrokhzad’s experience of love in her youth that finished and disappointed her. Throughout this poem, Farrokhzad describes the beauty of love and being with the male lover, but she knows that it is all momentary and not "contemporary" (Davaran 253). Near the end of the poem, the female speaker asks: “This sad heart of mine and burning incense? / Music of harp and lyre in a prayer-hall? / This empty space and such flights?” (63-65) She doubts if she can experience all the beauty of love, such as sexuality, freedom, and unity with the male lover, in a conventional society that forbids sexuality outside of marriage, and allows men to dominate women.

In the last stanza of the poem, Farrokhzad conflates sexual desire, love and poetry:

You have touched me with the frenzy of poetry;

pouring fire into my songs,

kindling my heart with the fever of love,

thus setting all my poems ablaze, sweet love. (73-76)

The female speaker tries to imply that, in this poem, she used the rhythm and music of poetry to write a “Love Song” that described love and her sexual desires. For a feminist poet, like Farrokhzad, there is usually a connection between her desires and her poetry. She uses the language of poetry to give voice to her body and desire as a woman. In this stanza, “sweet love” is her muse, but once again we do not know if it is the male lover or love itself that inspires her, but it could well be both.

Livesay’s “Consideration” is one of her early love poems that expresses disappointment in love. This is one of her love poems in *Signpost* (1932) that is concerned with the personal relationship between male and female lovers. It is not clear if the speaker of the poem is the male lover or his female lover. Since the speaker of most of the other love poems in *Signpost* is the
female lover, we can suggest that the speaker of “Consideration” is also the female lover. The first stanza of the poem invokes disappointment and distance in love. The first stanza suggests that words are like weapons that disturb both lovers:

Should conversation be

What this has become,

A biting analysis

Of one another? (1-4)

Although, in this poem, there is no direct reference to the female lover’s identity, we can imagine that she is trying to keep her individuality and identity. Usually, lovers struggle with each other when they have different ideologies and desires. As Peter Stevens writes: “The partners in love try to keep each his/her own individuality, in order to prevent being overwhelmed and overpowered by the other partner” (“The Love Poetry” 36). The title of the poem implies that there is another way of conversation that they can consider. They should consider that they are in love and their conversations should not be “A biting analysis / Of one another,” but it should be “As one touches / Delicate china.” Indirectly, the female speaker questions the power relations in love, in which words are “biting analysis” and asks for respect and individuality in love. So their conversations should be in a way that “one touches / Delicate china” (8-9). Perhaps “delicate china” is a metaphor for the female lover, so the male lover should treat her in a way that one treats “Delicate china.” The image of “china” is also a domestic image which may suggest the lovers are married and this is part of the reason for their silence and distance.

Méira Cook argues that some of the poets who write poems about love start their poems with the end of love affairs (109). Farrokhzad and Livesay express disappointment with love in their poems. On the one hand, they like to have their own identity and freedom; on the other
hand, the male lover demands submission. As a result, in order to keep their identity and individuality, women have to keep a certain distance between themselves and their male lovers. But this is in contrast with the notions of completion and rebirth that they anticipated. Therefore, they are disappointed.
Conclusion:

Two Lonely Lovers
In 2006, while researching Canadian love poems, I came across an article by Méira Cook entitled “Love Letters from an Unmade Bed: Dorothy Livesay’s Poetics of Disquiet.” The sexually explicit theme of the poems discussed, those from Livesay’s anthology *The Self-Completing Tree*, reminded me at once of the works of feminist Iranian poet Forugh Farrokhzad. Similarity encouraged me to compare Livesay’s love poems with Farrokhzad’s: their personal life, their literary works, the construction of gender in Canadian and Iranian culture, Western and Iranian feminist ideologies, the reception of feminist ideologies and the body, the definition of love in Canada and Iran, and the poetic structure of the poems themselves.

As discussed in Chapter I, Farrokhzad’s father was a stern patriarch who had been a colonel in the army. Farrokhzad fell in love and married at the age of sixteen. Like her father, her husband, Parviz Shahpour, was an authoritarian man who placed limits on Farrokhzad’s work by discouraging her from publishing or socializing with other writers. In contrast, Livesay lived in a completely different family situation. Her parents encouraged and helped her as much as they could to improve their daughter’s writing skills. Susan Gingell declared that Livesay’s father was the first “to expose Dorothy to feminist ideas,” (2) and we also know that she had feminist antecedents in Canadian literature where women had been publishing poetry for almost a century. Livesay’s husband, Duncan Macnair, asked his wife to concentrate more on poetry. Comparatively, Livesay’s parents as well as her husband were supportive of her poetry while Farrokhzad’s family and her beloved husband tried to impede her from composing and publishing love poems.

There are different reasons that encourage us to review Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s biographical information in order to have a deeper understanding of their poems. First, many of Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s poems are autobiographical. Farrokhzad’s “The Sin,” for example, is
commonly believed to allude to her sexual affair with a man while she was married. “Love Song” is also a description of Farrokhzad’s experience of love in her youth. Livesay’s love poems in *The Unquiet Bed* are reflections of her love experience with a black man in Zambia. The male lover in Livesay’s “The Taming” is a black man and if a reader does not know that the image of the black man in “The Taming” is Livesay’s male lover in Zambia, he or she will miss a level of meaning of the poem. Second, both Farrokhzad and Livesay dedicated some of their poems to their family members. Third, from the beginning of her career, Livesay had mentors so her poems were edited by her parents and famous poets such as Raymond Knister, while Farrokhzad was alone in her writing and her poems were not edited by others. As a result, we see that Livesay’s early collections, such as *Green Pitcher* and *Signpost*, were included within notable collections of modern poetry. However, most of the major critics, like Hillmann, Davara, and Milani, criticized Farrokhzad’s poetic style in her first three collections of poems. All of these critics suggest that it was by her two last collections that Farrokhzad revealed her talent of writing modern poetry.

As a native speaker of the Persian language, I had the chance to read Farrokhzad’s poems both in their original and translated versions. A translated version of a poem helps a native speaker of Persian language to understand the deep meaning of the original poem, but it also mediates our understanding through the translator’s version of that meaning. What a translator of poetry does is to read the original poem and analyse it and try to imagine the real intent of the poem. Therefore, when you read a translated version of Farrokhzad’s poems, you are presented with the translator’s understanding of the original poem. However, each translator may have a different understanding of the original poem. When I read and compared translated versions with Farrokhzad’s original poems, I found that the translated versions were different from the
original. For example, Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved” is translated to “My Lover” by Hillmann, which changes the sexual dynamics of the love poem, as discussed in Chapter III. When you read the original poem you may not pay too much attention to the title of the poem. However, when you read different translated versions you may ask yourself “what is the difference between ‘My Lover’ and ‘My Beloved’?” It is the same for Farrokhzad’s “Love Song.” For example, in his translation of this poem, Karim Emami added “O” or “Oh” to the beginning of some of the lines, while we do not have these sounds in the original poem. However, these will help a reader to imagine the real feeling of sorrow of the female speaker.

In their love poems, both Farrokhzad and Livesay gave voice to female identities and sexual desires. Within the different worlds of Canadian and Iranian cultures, they struggled with domination and submission and tried to keep their individuality and freedom. Farrokhzad was living in a conventional Islamic society, in which sexual affairs outside of marriage and writing explicitly about sexuality were not welcomed. In Farrokhzad’s “The Sin,” and “Love Song” we see that Farrokhzad struggled with these conventional Islamic ideologies. In “The Sin,” from the title of the poem, the poet manifests that what she is going to write about what is considered a sin in Iranian Islamic society. She starts the poem with: “I sinned, a sin all filled with pleasure” (1). Obviously, the female speaker knows what she is committing is a sin, but she is not a person to ignore her desires because of Islamic ideologies. In “Love Song” the female speaker says: “getting lost in the midst of bazaars” (24), this line implies Iranian conventional society, in which it was forbidden to fall in love with someone outside of marriage and lovers had to escape somewhere where they are not known. Therefore, Farrokhzad’s love poems are less sexually explicit than Livesay’s late love poems.

Early modern Canadian society shared some similarities with Iranian Islamic society in
the sense that both were patriarchies. For example, it was not welcome to have sexual affairs outside of marriage and women did not generally leave their parent’s house before marriage except to go to college. As a result, critics like Dennis Cooley and Susan Zimmerman claim that women in Livesay’s early love poems are housed or enclosed. In those poems, Livesay referred to male and female lovers’ bodies through metaphorical language and images of nature, rather than explicitly. Most of these poems also referred to the relationship between a wife and her husband rather than unmarried lovers. In “Consideration”, for example, “Delicate china” stands for the female lover’s body that the male lover “touches”. The image of “china” is also a domestic image which may suggest the lovers are married and this is part of the reason for their silence and distance. Since Livesay’s early love poems were published between 1928 and 1932, one can imagine that it would not have been well received if Livesay referred to love affairs outside of marriage. Livesay’s later love poems, however, were erotic and they were published in the 1970s at a time when Canadian society had been greatly affected by the feminist revolution of the 1960s.

According to traditional Islamic ideologies, women have greater sexual feelings than men and it is men’s sexual honour and jealousy and women’s modesty that can control women’s sexual desires. In contrast, in Western traditional patriarchal society, it is often imagined that men have stronger sexual needs and women should be passive and receptive, while men are superior and aggressive. However, Farrokhzad and Livesay were among the first Iranian and Canadian female poets that broke these patriarchal assumptions. They gave voice to female sexual desire and women’s bodies. The female speakers in their love poems did not want to be merely the object of men’s desires. They tried to be the desiring subject and to maintain their subjectivities. The female speaker in Farrokhzad’s “The Sin” admits her desire for a man: “I
want you, mate of my soul / I want you, life-giving embrace / I want you lover gone mad” (14-16). “I want you,” which is repeated three times” is a direct expression of the female lover’s sexual desire and her subjectivity. All through the poem the female speaker reveals her sexual desires and unveils her body: “You are the convulsions of ecstasy in my body” (53), “My lips are the altar of your kisses, sweet love” (51), “I have become total devotion with desire” (48).

Livesay’s “The Touching” is one of her erotic love poems, in which the female speaker frankly describes her sexual affair with her male lover. This poem is very similar to Farrokhzad’s “Love Song,” in that both speakers use the first-person singular “I”, a strategy that sometimes minimizes the distance-between speakers and writers of the poems. In both of these poems the male lover is compared to “shelter” and “cover”: “shelter me now” (“The Touching” 2), “like a garment, the lines of your figure covering me” (“Love Song” 54). Both female speakers refer to their sexual desires as “fire” and describe sexuality as rebirth.

Livesay’s “The Taming” and Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved” are good examples of how both poets question power relations in love. Livesay’s “The Taming” was written in the context of the traditional, patriarchal society of Zambia, where Livesay had a love affair with a Zambian man. The speaker of this poem is a submissive female lover who is asked to do whatever the black male lover asks: “Do what I say, woman” (9). The female lover is supposed to prepare chicken for the male lover and she does not have “even the right / to turn in [her] own light” while they are making love at night (16-17). This also implies that the male lover dictates the conditions and terms of their love-making. This is physical, psychological and discursive dominance that reminds the reader of patriarchal rules that allow men to access women’s body and to make women do their domestic chores. However, the poem talks back through irony, exposing the male lover’s need for dominance. By the end of the poem, the figure of the
powerful and authoritarian male lover changes to a man who “faints”. Livesay subverted the image of the dominant male lover and represented him as a weak man or a man overcome by desire.

The image of domination and submission in love can be seen in Farrokhzad’s “My Beloved.” As we have seen, the image of the male lover is a man who is strong and the female speaker likens him to “death”. I believe that submission is like “death” for the female lover. All through the poem, the female speaker tries to show her beloved as an absolute dominant figure and imagines that men naturally like to dominate women: “My beloved / he is a natural man” (45-48). The female speaker also implies that the traditional Islamic rules give the power to the male lover to be dominant over the female lover: “My beloved / is a male from ancient eras” (28-29). Interestingly, Farrokhzad closes the poem in the same way that Livesay closes “The Taming;” the figure of the aggressive male lover who, at the beginning of the poem, was compared to “death” changes to a “simple man” who hides “in the wake of the warmth” of the female lover’s “breasts” showing a dominant man transformed by love.

Both Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s love poems are more comprehensible with the help of feminist readings. However, there is a great difference between Iranian and Canadian feminist schools of thought. As we have seen in Chapter IV, Iranian feminist ideologies are divided into Islamic and anti-Islamic feminism. Islamic feminists are those who assert that Islamic rules can defend women against patriarchy and gives equal powers to both men and women. Anti-Islamic feminists declare that Islamic laws are the main reasons for patriarchy. Although Farrokhzad argued that she was not a feminist and was not familiar with feminist ideologies, most of her love poems imply that she was an anti-Islamic feminist. As we have seen in “The Sin,” she broke Islamic divine laws by taking a lover in order to keep her individuality and follow female desire.
In most of her love poems, we can find a contradiction between the subject of the poem and Islamic laws.

The other theme in Livesay’s and Farrokhzad’s love poems is the notion of disappointment. As mentioned earlier, both Farrokhzad and Livesay tried to keep their own feminine identity. They did not want to be, economically or physically, under men’s control. They started their love poems with a happiness that resulted in a natural sense of love. But after a while, they understood that to be in love with a man meant to accept his identity and to be under his control. Consequently, the female lovers in Farrokhzad’s and Livesay’s love poems got disappointed. The notion of disappointment in love is revealed in Livesay’s “Consideration” and Farrokhzad’s “Love Song.” In “Consideration”, the speaker asks her male lover to speak in a way that one “touches / Delicate china” (9) implying the notion of distance because one does not touch “Delicate china” so often. When a love relationship is strained, sometimes lovers speak less for fear that the relationship will break down or fall into an argument or sarcasm’s “biting analysis” (3). The female speaker of Farrokhzad’s “Love Song” is disappointed when she says: “Oh it’s a dark pain, this urge of wanting; / setting out, belittling oneself fruitlessly” (21-22). The female desire is compared to a “dark pain” because one has to “belittle” oneself in order to fulfill one’s desires. Although, throughout “Love Song,” the female speaker admires the beauties of love and is eager to be with her male lover, she knows that all these beauties and the sense of unity in love are momentary.

The comparison of poems by two authors from different worlds manifested how their love poems, their feminist voice, and their themes of freedom, independence, and disappointment in love were rooted in the cultural context of their lives.
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Appendix I

Three Love Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad

The Sin

I sinned, a sin all filled with pleasure
wrapped in an embrace, warm and fiery
I sinned in a pair of arms
that were vibrant, virile, violent.

In that dim and quiet place of seclusion
I looked into his eyes brimming with mystery
my heart throbbed in my chest all too excited
by the desire glowing in his eyes.

In that dim and quiet place of seclusion
as I sat next to him all scattered inside
his lips poured lust on my lips
and I left behind the sorrows of my heart.

I whispered in his ear these words of love:

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http://www.forughfarrokhzad.org/selectedworks/selectedworks8.asp
"I want you, mate of my soul
I want you, life-giving embrace
I want you, lover gone mad"
Desire surged in his eyes
red wine swirled in the cup
my body surfed all over his
in the softness of the downy bed.

I sinned, a sin all filled with pleasure
next to a body now limp and languid
I know not what I did, God
in that dim and quiet place of seclusion.

ترا می خواهم ای جانانه من
ترا می خواهم ای آغوش جانبخش
ترا ای عاشق دیوانه من
هوش در دیدگانش شعله افروخت
شراب سرخ در پیمانه رقصید
تن من در میان بستر نرم
بروی سینه اش مستانه لرزید

گنه کردم گنهامی پر زانت
کنار پیکری لزان و مدهوش
خداوندا چه می دانم چه کردم
در آن خلوت‌ه تاریک و خاموش
Love Song

My nights are painted bright with your dream, sweet love, and heavy with your fragrance is my breast.

You fill my eyes with your presence, sweet love, giving me more happiness than grief.

Like rain washing through the soil you have washed my life clean.

You are the heartbeat of my burning body; a fire blazing in the shade of my eyelashes.

You are more bountiful than the wheat fields, more fruit-laden than the golden boughs against the onslaught of darkening doubts.

You are a door thrown open to the suns.

When I am with you, I fear no pain for my only pain is a pain of happiness.

This sad heart of mine and so much light? Sounds of life from the bottom of a grave?

Your eyes are my pastures, sweet love, the stamp of your gaze burning deep into my eyes.

If I had you within me before, sweet love I would not take anybody else for you.

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Oh it's a dark pain, this urge of wanting;
setting out, belittling oneself fruitlessly;
laying one's head on chests hiding a black heart;
soiling one's breast with ancient hatred;
finding a snake in a caressing hand;

You are my breath of life, sweet love.
You have brought me back to life from the grave.
You have come down from the distant sky,
like a star on two golden wings,
silencing my loneliness, sweet love,

Imbuing my body with odors of your embrace.

You are water to the dry streams of my breasts,
you are a torrent to the dry bed of my veins.

In a world so cold and so bleak,
in step with your steps, I proceed.

You are hidden under my skin
flowing through my every cell,
singeing my hair with your caressing hand,
leaving my cheeks sunburned with desire.

You are, sweet love, a stranger to my dress

You are, sweet love, a stranger to my dress

You are, sweet love, a stranger to my dress
but so familiar with the fields of my nakedness.

O bright and eternal sunrise,

the strong sunshine of southern climes,

you are fresher than early dawn,

greater and better-watered than spring-tide.

This is no longer love; it is dazzlement,
a chandelier blazing amidst silence and darkness.

Ever since love was awakened in my heart,

I have become total devotion with desire.

This is no longer me, no longer me,

Oh wasted are the years I lived with "me."

My lips are the altar of your kisses, sweet love,

my eyes watching out for the arrival of your kiss.

You are the convulsions of ecstasy in my body,

like a garment, the lines of your figure covering me.

Oh I am going to burst open like a bud,

my joy becoming tarnished for a moment with sorrow.

Oh I wish to jump to my feet

and pour down tears like a cloud.

This sad heart of mine and burning incense?

Music of harp and lyre in a prayer-hall?

This empty space and such flights?

This silent night and so much song?

شجاعي سیبزه زاران تنم

آه ای روشن طلوی بی گروب

آغت سرزمین های جنوب

آه ای از سحر شاداب تر

از بهاران تازه تر سیراب تر

عشق دیگر نیست این، این خیرگیست

چلچراغی در سکوت و تیرگیست

عشق چون در سینه ام بیدار شد

از طلب با تا سرم ایثار شد

این نگر من نیستم، من نیستم

حیف از آن عمری که با من زیستم

ای لیامت بوسه گاه بوسه ات

خیره چشمان به راه بوسه ات

اگ تشنح های لند در تتم

ای خطوط ییکرپت پیراهنم

آه می خواهم که بشکافم ز هم

شادام یکدم بیپالید به غم

آه می خواهم که برحیزم ز جای

همچو ابری اشک رزیم هراهایی

این دل تنگ من و این دود عود ؟

در شیستان زخم های چنگ و رود ؟

این قضای خالی و پروازها ؟

این شب خاموش و این آوازها ؟
Your gaze is like a magic lullaby, sweet love,
a cradle for restless babies.

Your breathing is a breeze half-asleep
washing down all my tremors of anguish;
it is hidden in the smiles of my tomorrows,
it has sunken deep into the depths of my worlds.

You have touched me with the frenzy of poetry;
pouring fire into my songs,
kindling my heart with the fever of love,
thus setting all my poems ablaze, sweet love.

ای نگاهت لای لابی سحر بار
گاهواره کودکان بی قرار
ای نفسهایت نسمه نیمی خواب
شسته از من لرزه های اضطراب
خفته در لبخند فردا های من
رفته تا اعماق دنیا های من
ای مرا با شعر شعر آمیخته
این همه آتش به شعرم ریخته
جون تب عشقم چنین افروخت
لا جرم شعرم به آتش سوختی
My beloved

with his bare bold body
rose over his legs,
fearless like death.

On his firm face
an array of brief lines
was tailored by his revolting limbs.

My beloved
surely belongs
to a faded clan.

In [the] deepness of his eyes, it seems
a Tartar is constantly longing,
for [the] advent of a knight.

In [the] brightness of his teeth, it seems
a barbaric male is patiently waiting
for cornering a prey.

http://foroughfarrokhzad.tripod.com/id14.html. (Words in brackets are added by muself).
My beloved is like the earth in his blunt fated air; in his concrete cruel rule, he defeats me.

My beloved is wildly free. My beloved is like a whole instinct in [the] core of a dark isolated isle.

My beloved is originally estranged, like veiled gods, like lone monks. My beloved is a male from ancient eras, and from the essence of beauty.

By his tread, he awakens the innocent sense of youth. With his aura, he reminds the fond flavor of mythical tales.
He loves with such a faith
drives every cell,
drives the very earth
all laughs and sorrows.

He loves with such a faith
roads of parish,
green veins of trees,
slight smell of soap,
fresh taste of milk.

My beloved
surely belongs
to a faded clan.

He is a natural man.
And in this wicked wonderland
he must hide away.

My beloved...
He is a simple man.
And like [the] last rest of vast past beliefs,
I hide him always away,
in the wake of [the] warmth of my breasts.
The Touching

i

Caress me

shelter me now

from the shiver

of dawn

‘the coldest hour’

pierce me again

gently

so the penis completing

me

rests in the opening

throbs

and its steady pulse

down there

is my second heart

beating


ii

Light nips the darkness
    a white frost
breaking in ripples
    on a dark ground
like light your kisses hover 20
    touching my nipples
under the cover

iii
Each time you come
    to touch    caress
me 25
I’m born again
deaf    dumb
each time
I whirl
    part of some mystery 30
I did not make or earn
that seizes me
each time
I drown
    in your identity 35
I am not I
but root

shell

fire

each time you come  

I tear through the womb’s room

give birth

and yet alone

deep in the dark

earth

I am the one wrestling

the element re-born.
The Taming

Be woman. You did say me, be
woman. I did not know
the measure of the words

until a black man
as I prepared him chicken
made me listen:
-No, dammit.
Not so much salt.
Do what I say, woman:
just that
and nothing more.

Be woman. I did not know
the measure of the words
until that night
when you denied me darkness,
even the right
to turn in my own light.

Do as I say, I heard you faintly

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5 Livesay, Dorothy. The Unquiet Bed. 1967: 45.
over me fainting:

be woman. 20
Consideration

Should conversation be

What this has become,

A biting analysis

Of one another?

Or must it end

In a placing of words

On little shelves –

As one touches

Delicate china?