



Body, Love and Maternity in Sylvia Plath and Forough Farrokhzad: A Study Based on Helen Cixous's *Écriture Feminine*

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Abstract

Sylvia Plath and Forough Farrokhzad share same themes and concerns in their poetry and same points in their lives. Living in the tumult of post-war era, they are the advocates of *Écriture Feminine* proposed by Helen Cixous in "The Laugh of Medusa" as a model which follows feminine desire and the language of body. By applying *Écriture Feminine* these poets deconstruct Jacques Lacan's phallogocentrism and Sigmund Freud's misogynist psychoanalytic closure. They are not afraid to talk about their bodies and love; they are pioneers who transgress phallogocentrism. The toils of motherhood and contradictory reactions toward pregnancy are major themes in their work.

Key words: Sylvia Plath; Forough Farrokhzad; Helen Cixous; *Écriture Feminine*; Body; Motherhood

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INTRODUCTION

Helen Cixous is a professor, French feminist writer, poet, playwright, philosopher, literary critic and rhetorician. Along with Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, she is considered one of the mothers of poststructuralist feminist theory. She has published widely, her first novel was a semi-autobiographical work named *Dedans* (Inside). Her other works include twenty-three volumes of poems, six

books of essays, five plays, and numerous influential articles. In the 1976's article, *The Laugh of Medusa*, she began writing about the relationship between sexuality and language. In this article she argues that despite their control of the signifying system and their intense self-regard, men had little to say about their own sexuality. To a psychoanalytic reading of culture, it is male sexual organ that operates to unify power, truth and order. Yet display of engorged or erect male sexual organ remains controversial, and is one of the key definitions of pornographic representation. The erection is therefore emblematic of masculine power: it operates most effectively when concealed (Mansfield, 96).

The Laugh of Medusa by Helen Cixous is a critique of phallogocentrism. According to Lacan discourse is phallogocentric: that is, it is centered and organized throughout by implicit recourse to the phallus (used in symbolic sense) both as its supposed "logos" or ground, and as its prime signifier and power source. Phallogocentrism, it is claimed, manifests itself in Western discourse not only in its vocabulary and syntax, but also in its rigorous rules of logic, its proclivity for fixed classifications and oppositions, and its criteria for what are traditionally considered to be valid evidence and objective knowledge (Abrams, 97).

Cixous also criticizes Freud misogynist psychoanalytic closure. For Freud the major determinant of subjectivity was the gender formation. This formation was distributed around the corners of the oedipal triangle. In this triangle the father is seen to be defined by ownership of penis, the mother by lack of penis and the son by his need to choose between the relationships to the penis that each of these positions seemed to offer. In this theory, the masculine is the defining norm of subjectivity, distributing positions around its fixity. These other positions lack a way of defining themselves. They can only be known in terms of something that they are not, or do not have. The feminine, therefore, is defined by what is absent from it, and the