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## Mirrors of Entrapment and Emancipation

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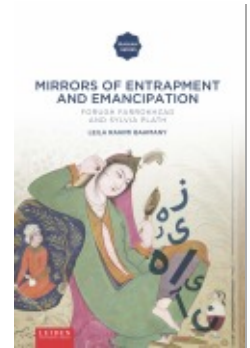
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## Mirror Imagery in the Works of Forugh Farrokhzad

حسن روی تو به یک جلوه که در آینه کرد  
این همه نقش در آئینه اوهام افتاد

With that one splendor that in the  
mirror, the beauty of Thy face fell,  
All these pictures into the mirror of  
fancy fell.<sup>1</sup> Hāfez

### A Herstory of a Subject-in-Process

In Iranian patriarchal culture, women are systematically robbed of their independent identity and their authentic voice. Like any other patriarchal culture, the Iranian manifestation socializes women to be voiceless and self-effacing. Women are forced to present an image dictated to them, to act as obedient daughters and wives, and as self-sacrificial mothers. In this process, women have indeed become metaphorized into mirrors, into passive slates with no face or voice of their own; a specular surface reiterating an illusionary image of the other. By systematically expunging their identity, patriarchal culture has turned women into surfaces for bestowing a delusive, copacetic identity on their male associates. In this context, if a woman insists on having any voice at all, that voice must be an echo of already well-established patriarchal voices, further entrenching women into their dark peripheral position.

Farrokhzad had to struggle, on the one hand, with the reservoir of contradictory images of womanhood constructed by her dominantly male culture and literary tradition. These images, produced by male imagination and imposed on her, had nothing to do with the reality of women's life and their experiences. For the main part, the treatment of women, and their relationship with men, be it one of love or other, was regarded as way below

the prestige and register of poetry. As for love, what we mainly have in Sufi literature is either celestial love for the Divine Beloved or love directed to a young (usually unbearded) boy. In Persian literature, this loving relationship between a man and a young boy is called *šāhed-bāzī* (literally meaning “witness-play”).<sup>2</sup>

In instances where poets start to regard the love between man and woman not as a hindrance to their acquisition of true love, i.e., that of their Ultimate Beloved, but as a step leading to that, they understandably fail to present a real image of woman and her experience in this love relationship. The image of woman presented in the mirror of male poetry remains unreal, distorted and at times reversed—what is happening in the process of presentation is called “the chiasmus of perception.”<sup>3</sup> In Persian literature, these images of womanhood hold woman as an ethereal virgin, self-sacrificial mother, totally obedient, face-less, voiceless wife, or hold her as a dangerous, voluptuous prostitute whose deceits should be avoided and suppressed, leaving no place in between for women *qua* women.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Farrokhzad had to come up with an image of herself, reconciling the contradictory images of womanhood that her age was presenting to her. Farrokhzad was living in a time when Iranians were experiencing rapid modernization—which some historians would later term untimely or too rapid for their society—initiated in the Qajar era towards the end of the eighteenth century which gathered momentum exponentially under the pro-western Pahlavi regime between 1925 and the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

All these transformations had grave implications for Iranian women and the image of womanhood in Iran.<sup>5</sup> Upper-middle-class Iranians started to know about the situation of women and their activities in the west, mainly through translations and descriptions by pro-western as well as pro-communist intellectuals returning from studying abroad. The ban on the *hejāb* (veil), the modernization of the education system, the establishment of schools for girls and universities, and the growth in the number of available publications had an irrevocable impact on women’s lives.

Farrokhzad, who grew up in such an upper middle-class family in Tehran, had to struggle painfully with all the contradictory images of womanhood in her culture. On the one hand, she had to deal with the dual images of traditional woman that her culture and literary tradition presented her with, and on the other hand she was presented with a spectrum of other possible images of womanhood which her culture was still looking at with

ambivalence, doubt and even great fear. Farrokhzad was tackling these contradictory images, struggling assiduously to reconcile them and to adopt an image of her own.

The meagre number of female poets in the Persian literary tradition clearly indicates the forced voicelessness and invisibility of women in Iranian culture. Nevertheless, Farrokhzad was not completely bereft of any literary grandmothers, mothers or even sisters.<sup>6</sup> But what makes Farrokhzad a phenomenal poet is her idiosyncratic candour in quest of her image and the frank presentation of her most personal and unspeakable feminine experiences. Farrokhzad not only tries to contradict the law of the Father of her patriarchal culture by having a voice and, more significantly, by voicing her feminine experiences in poetry, but she also tries to adapt the poetic form to her content, thereby stunning and angering the traditionalists in poetry, literature, the press and the prevailing cultural mores.

As Robbins observes, “the speaking subject” remains “a political and politicised subject.”<sup>7</sup> Farrokhzad and her poetry are indeed political and politicized. Her poetry, from the very first volume, was regarded as an immoral and dangerous form of expression which would corrupt Iranian society. This remarkable assessment of her work continued into the 1980s, long after her death. During the reign of the last Pahlavi shah her work was seriously censored; after the Islamic revolution it was completely forbidden for a long time. Farrokhzad’s work is available in Iran today, but only in heavily censored editions. Farrokhzad’s complete uncensored works were published for the first time in 2002 in Essen, Germany.<sup>8</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, Western culture has been criticized for its scopocentrism or ocularcentrism—the hegemony of eye/vision. This inherent ocularcentrism/scopocentrism characterizing patriarchal, phallogocentric cultures, to which Iranian culture is no exception, reduces women’s complexities into a physical appearance, presentable *in toto* on a flat glass. Women’s identity is constructed to appease the male gaze and his desire. This reductionist view of women has either turned them into the blind disciples of codes of beauty or forced them into the veil and the harem, or even both. In such contexts, women rely on their specular image to affirm their presence, their existence and their identity. Spencer remarks that within those cultures where “the male gaze is perceived as an agent of objectification and nullification of feminine identity, then it seems natural to turn to a feminine gaze for affirmation.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, women’s activity in gazing at and contemplating their mirror image becomes more “an act of self-exploration

and discovery” than “an act of self-expression.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the female’s gaze at her specular image can lay the foundations for constructing one’s agency through one’s self-image, as well as for developing one’s authentic voice—one’s self-image and one’s voice being inseparable.

Mirror imagery plays a crucial role in the works of Forugh Farrokhzad. For her, the mirror phenomenon and the contemplation of self-image serve myriad ambivalent functions. Her use of mirror imagery is not limited to the recurrent, traditional or even clichéd images and symbolisms found in classical Persian literature. Farrokhzad manages to move beyond the traditional. She establishes herself as a feminine, modern, non-mystical and anti-transcendental poet. Like many other modern female poets, she expresses, through her use of mirror imagery, the problematics of her female subjectivity, her identity crisis and the lack of a secure, stable and acknowledged subjectivity. For Farrokhzad, the mirror plays a more complex psychic function than a mere tool of solipsistic self-love and pure vanity, as it is widely held to be in Iranian culture.

Farrokhzad shifts among the three different modes of self-inquiry, self-reflection and self-expression in her mirror and in her poetry-as-mirror, particularly through the implementation of her mirror metaphors. These three modes imply different attitudes towards the self: a) through self-inquiry, the persona looks critically at her self; b) self-reflection is less emotional than self-inquiry; and c) through self-expression she presents an image of herself to others as well as to herself. By adopting a self-expressive attitude in her mirror imagery, Farrokhzad can express her desires, fears, anxieties, doubts and alienation, as well as her feelings of victorious reconciliation and emancipation. Through self-reflection, she exercises introspection and attempts to learn more about her fundamental nature, purpose and essence. Self-reflection invariably leads to inquiry into the human condition and the essence of humankind as general and into her gender-as-class in particular.

Farrokhzad’s psychology of mirroring underwent radical transformations indicative of her personal and poetic development. In her poetry, the meaning and the function of the mirror were constantly changing at different stages in her life. Her poetry is extraordinarily personal: even the titles of the collections reveal much about Farrokhzad’s personal life. The first and second volumes are entitled *Asīr* (*The Captive*) and *Dīvār* (*The Wall*), respectively, while the third and fourth collections, published during psychologically turbulent phases of her life, are entitled *‘Eṣyān* (*Rebellion*) and *Tavalod-ī dīgar* (*Another Birth*) and the fifth and final collection (published

posthumously) was given the title she had chosen for one of the poems, *Īmān biyāvarīm be āgāz-e faṣl-e sard ... (Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ...)*. It could be argued that there is a trend to be detected in Farrokhzad's choice of titles, reflecting how she felt at given stages in her life. Still, it would be specious (if not impossible) to draw absolute, clear-cut lines of demarcation between these phases, since she oscillated back and forth at psychologically critical times.

An overview of mirror imagery in the entirety of Farrokhzad's work reveals her feminine history of disturbed ego formation; a history of the subject-in-process, and at the same time her artistic development.<sup>11</sup> This is because almost any psychological stance of a woman can arguably be interpreted in reference to her relationship with her specular reflection. Due to the highly ambivalent nature of the mirror, Farrokhzad elicits ambivalent, even contradictory, reactions to her mirror image. For Farrokhzad, the mirror is a powerful tool; initially for negation, rejection and creation, but ultimately for the realization and presentation of her authentic "self" in the different phases of her life. At times she utterly fails to recognize her mirror-image as that of her own reflection, indicative of the alienation and detachment of her self.

At other times of psycho-emotional crisis, when Farrokhzad finds no other proof of her subjectivity, her visibility or her true identity within her society, she turns to the mirror for an answer, hoping that the mirror will relieve her of painful inner conflicts and give her existential proof of her being and its quality. The mirror is supposed to possess knowledge by revealing the world within and the world without. Like many other modern female writers and poets, Farrokhzad demonstrates her heavy reliance on the mirror and mirroring for defining her true self, as well as for relating her subjectivity to the world around her.

A close reading of how Farrokhzad manipulates the mirror imagery in her works may provide the reader with the developmental history of her female identity within the patriarchal context of Iranian society and its multifaceted oppression of women. In this reading, I will try to understand her psychology of mirroring and the mirror's inseparable interactions with the self and the eye (particularly the male gaze), as well as with the world around her persona. The stages in the developmental process of Farrokhzad's self, as studied here through her use of mirror imagery, easily fit Farzaneh Milani's tripartite classification of the poet's life and work into those of feminine, feminist and female.<sup>12</sup> Whether Farrokhzad was consciously engineering her mirror imageries or unconsciously resorting to them is inconsequential to this study.

### Captive to the Male Gaze

In the quest for her true self, Farrokhzad initially starts out as a captive of the male gaze. In this initial phase, she has internalized the male-defined concept of a woman as a mere object whose totality, presentable within the frame of a mirror, is to gratify male desire. As Berger observes:

men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.<sup>13</sup>

Berger's observation about men's cultural position on the side of seeing and women's on the side of seen, as well as women's internalization of the masculinity of the "surveyor" and the femininity of the "surveyed," should be considered in the more general picture of patriarchal cultures' hierarchical binary oppositions and their strict assignments of the gender roles on either side of the pole—active/passive, voiced/voiceless, having agency/lacking agency, authority/submission. On the other hand, one should also keep in mind the ocularcentrism or scopocentrism of these cultures which constitute subjectivity through the act of seeing and also exercise power through the act of gazing. Mulvey explains:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire.<sup>14</sup>

The internalization of this *looked-at-ness*, being on the side of seen/seem rather than seeing, has generally constituted women's subjectivity, their identity and their self-image as well as the nature of their relatedness with others in their society. Unavoidably, it shapes women's relationship with their mirrors.

Likewise, Farrokhzad has internalized the paradoxical definition of the mirror as a feminine tool for the effacement of one's true self, as well as a means of self-creation; a creation aimed to gratify the male's desire and his gaze. In this regard, her specular image gains overwhelming significance. At times her mirror functions as a replacement for an absent lover and his gaze. Farrokhzad uses the mirror primarily as an instrument to verify how she appears to men, to create her appearance in compliance with male-defined codes of beauty. Therefore, the mirror for Farrokhzad becomes a fundamentally essential tool for her consciousness of the self and for her position within her culture. For a woman who has no other self outside its confines, the mirror can determine her destiny in society, since everyone (including the woman herself) relies on that specular image for the definition and evaluation of her identity.

Although Farrokhzad is extremely disturbed and agonized by this male conceptualization of the woman as a mere object of *looked-at-ness*, she appears unable consciously to recognize and acknowledge it, and thereby become able to transcend it. In this initial phase, she is unable to disentangle herself from her culture's suffocating prototypes of femininity and thereby gain an independent subjectivity. It is only gradually and after passing through the painful stages of non-recognition, self-fragmentation and the rebellious act of mirror rejection that she can reach the stage of acknowledging the liberating power of the mirror in the exploration, conceptualization and construction of her female self.

In her first collection of poems, entitled *Asir (The Captive)*, published in 1952, Farrokhzad appears to be in her initial stage of feminine imitation and internalization of patriarchal gender definitions and their cultural values.<sup>15</sup> However, these codes and definitions fail to grant her peace or a sense of belonging to her culture. Tikku asserts that the first book is "the symbol of a psychological state in which a person finds himself imprisoned in a world of tradition and dogma with no or little hope of a fuller experimental life."<sup>16</sup> Farrokhzad feels herself an outsider, though still manacled by these codes and definitions.

The first appearance of the mirror image in this collection is in her poem "*Az yād raftē*" ("The Forgotten"), composed in the winter of 1954/55 in the city of Ahvaz.<sup>17</sup> In this poem, Farrokhzad expresses her melancholic longing for her beloved and his gaze; the beloved who has deserted her without even sending her a letter. The poem is in quatrains, and opens with a line overtly stating the poem's *ubi sunt* theme:



<p>The memories of the past linger in my heart and alas There is no friend to remember me My gaze is remained fixed to the path and he didn't send me A letter to brighten my heart<sup>18</sup></p>	<p>یاد بگذشته به دل ماند و دریغ نیست یاری که مرا یاد کند دیده ام خیره به ره ماند و نداد نامه ای تا دل من شاد کند</p>
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In her misery, the poetic persona—who is Farrokhzad herself—obsessively seeks the reason for this desertion. In her frustration, she asks herself the pathetic question: why has he stopped watching her?

<p>I do not know what wrong I have done That he disentangled his rope of kindness from me If I had a place in his heart Why has he stopped watching me<sup>19</sup></p>	<p>خود ندانم چه خطایی کردم که ز من رشته الفت بگسست در دلش جایی اگر بود مرا پس چرا دیده ز دیدارم بست</p>
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The persona openly reveals the importance of the male gaze to her and her reliance on it for her happiness. The language Farrokhzad uses indicates her need in being loved, desired and gazed upon. According to Freud's definition, the persona comes across a narcissistic woman whom "social restrictions" have trapped in an undeveloped primary narcissism, whereby she wishes to be loved and gazed upon rather than to be an active lover. The absence of the lover, who has been incorporated into the ego-ideal of the narcissistic woman, overwhelms her with melancholy and sense of self-loss.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted here that the last line is ambiguous. It can be rendered as "Why did he close (his) eyes to seeing me" or "Why did he close (his) eyes to my eyes," as well as "Why did he close (his) eyes to my face." This ambiguity arises due to the ambiguity of the term *dīdār*, which can mean "sight, vision, look," "the eye," as well as "the obvious, the apparent."<sup>21</sup> The alternative reading, i.e., "Why did he close (his) eyes to my eyes," would rather imply equality in the relationship of the (estranged) lovers.

In the next stanza, ironically, the persona confesses that everywhere she turns she is confronted with him gazing at her. He is not literally present but in her mirror imagination she sees him everywhere gazing at her; either the memory of the past is lingering in her mind or it is her unconscious method of wish fulfillment. She is sad no longer to be the object of his gaze and therefore she feels a lack of existence:

Everywhere I turn my eyes, it is he again	هر کجا می نگرم، باز هم اوست
Gazing at my wet eyes	که به چشمان ترم خیره شده
It is the agony of love that	درد عشق است که با حسرت و سوز
Has conquered my fiery heart with rue	بر دل پر شرم چیره شده
and regret <sup>22</sup>	

The original is ambiguous: he (the beloved) does not look at her (the persona/lover)—as we learn in the preceding verses—but she sees him everywhere gazing at her eyes.<sup>23</sup>

In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the melancholic woman further expresses how she misses the physical intimacy of her lover. With every kiss, she misses the burning kisses of that “ill-natured” one, and with every kind embrace, she wonders what has changed, missing the “burning fire” in his breath. Therefore, in the seventh stanza, in order to compensate for this loss, she turns to poetry:

I composed poems to lift from the heart	شعر گفتم که ز دل بردارم
The heavy load of grief for his love	بار سنگین غم عشقش را
Poetry turned out to be a manifestation of	شعر خود جلوه ای از رویش شد
his face	با که گویم ستم عشقش را
To whom can I tell the tyranny of his love <sup>24</sup>	

Farrokhzad composes poetry with the intention of disentangling herself mentally and emotionally from her lover and the thought of him. In fact, through composing poetry, the poet persona can create an introspective space where the other and his gaze cannot enter, and thereby she can overcome her melancholic dependency on him. The second line in Persian is ambiguous; the love could be her love for him, meaning a heavy load of grief deposited on her due to her longing for his love; on the other hand, it can be his love, meaning that his love is the cause of this load of grief. Therefore, it is love, whether his or hers, that is the cause of her grief. Through poetry, she tries to gain emotional detachment and independence; meaning that her creativity is developed out of a lost love.

But, contrary to her intention, the beloved appears reflected in her and also in her poetry. Farrokhzad’s text, like her mirror, appears to be devoid of her authentic subjectivity; it rather reflects her beloved and her dependency and captivity. It is the loss of his love that has turned her into a poet.<sup>25</sup> As Shengold observes, “Reversal of subject and object can be evoked with the mirror; active and passive can be simultaneously represented.”<sup>26</sup> The

poet's persona is still heavily dependent on the male gender and its systems of defining a woman for her sense of self. Although she struggles to free herself by having a voice of her own, this voice turns to be an echo of her dependence. Farrokhzad composes poetry with the intention of freeing herself from this servitude, of establishing an independent voice of her own, but poetry itself turns out to be a manifestation of her captive-ness.

At one point, the persona addresses her mother, telling her to stop combing her hair, to wipe the antimony from her eyes and to take off her dress.<sup>27</sup> She apostrophizes her mother, beseeching her to break the mirror. The effect of apostrophizing here is of a sudden emotional impetus in a rebellious act of breaking the mirror. Here, Farrokhzad plays with the concepts of male gaze, feminine make-up and the mirror, all still within their patriarchal definitions. Asking her mother to be the agent of breaking the mirror is significant. The persona is experiencing her subjectivity as the extension of her mother, the reproducer of her destiny—her *kismet*. Gallop explains, “The plea to the mother presumes the mother has the power to understand and fulfill the demand.”<sup>28</sup> The mother as the fellow victim is invoked because she is the one who understands. It is from her mother that she has received her “obliviousness of self.”<sup>29</sup> The mother is the perpetuator of this tradition by serving as a model and by teaching her how she should think and how she should behave. Therefore, it is the mother who should break the mirror.

As long as his eyes are not amazed by my face	تا دو چشمش به رخم حیران نیست
What use is this beauty to me?	به چکار آیدم این زیبایی
O Mother, break this mirror	بشکن این آینه را ای مادر
What do I gain by adorning myself? <sup>30</sup>	حاصلم چیست ز خودآرایی

By posing the rhetorical question as to the futility of a mirror in a context where the male gaze is absent, Farrokhzad intends to emphasize the certainty of the fact and its acknowledgement on the part of her readers. To rephrase it in the terminology of speech act theory, the illocutionary force of the rhetorical question is not to inquire after information but to assert information already acknowledged. Here, Farrokhzad presupposes that her readers will agree with her that, without the existence of the male gaze, the mirror becomes an absolutely useless thing. In other words, she is certain that her readers will be of the same mind as to the meaning of women, female mirror-image and self-adornment.

This usage of the mirror represents Farrokhzad's initial stage of feminine imitation and internalization of patriarchal gender definitions, as well as the masculine conceptualization of a woman as pure object. Accordingly, the mirror is considered a tool for self-creation, whose purpose is to gratify the male's desire and his gaze. Although Farrokhzad finds this reliance on men and the male definition of her feminine identity far from desirable, she still seems unconscious of this structuring, and instead of rejecting this conceptualization she rejects the mirror, her image and thereby her very self through the act of breaking the mirror. Farrokhzad's experience is not unique; it is shared by all women conscious of being captive to the male gaze; as Irigaray agrees:

I, too, a captive when a man holds me in his gaze; I, too, am abducted from myself. Immobilized in the reflection he expects of me. Reduced to the face he fashions for me in which to look at himself.<sup>31</sup>

Irigaray talks about femininity as constructed *by* and *for* the male gaze. The female subject is expected to efface her authentic subjectivity and to fashion a new face according to the images of femininity her culture provides her with, in order to grant man his desired self-image. In the process, the woman is immobilized into a flat and flattering mirror of the male ego. Elsewhere, in her essay "Divine Women," Irigaray further elaborates on captivity to the male gaze:

We look at ourselves in the mirror to *please someone*, rarely to interrogate the state of our body or our spirit, rarely for ourselves and in search of our own becoming. The mirror almost always serves to reduce us to a pure exteriority—of a very particular kind. It functions as a possible way to constitute screens between the other and myself. ... the mirror is a frozen—and polemical—weapon to keep us apart. I give only my double up to love. I do not yield myself up as body, flesh, as immediate—and geological, genealogical—affects. The mirror signifies the constitution of a fabricated (female) other that I shall put forward as an instrument of seduction in my place. I seek to be seductive and to be content with images of which I theoretically remain in artisan, the artist. ... All too often it [the mirror] sends back superficial, flat images.<sup>32</sup>

For Farrokhzad, in these poems, the mirror is a tool for her to observe how she would appear to the male lover, as well as to create a beautiful face for

his gaze. Now that the mirror has turned into something useless without his gaze, she wishes it to be broken. In this meaning, both the man and the mirror are closely interacting in depriving her of a sense of self, thereby constructing her destiny as a passive captive woman who is no more than an object on the side of seen/seem. In a context where a woman is defined only through the reflected image, that is to say, a context which equates a woman with her specular image, wishing to break a mirror can also be interpreted as self-destructive behaviour. This interpretation is confirmed further in the earlier stanza, where she explicitly states,

I said when I distanced him from my sight	گفتم از دیده چو دورش سازم
He would certainly leave my heart faster	بی گمان زودتر از دل برود
There is a need for death to find me	مرگ باید که مرا در یابد
Or it is not a pain to vanish easily <sup>33</sup>	ورنه دردی است که مشکل برود

In the final two stanzas, the persona desperately seeks solitude, and for this reason she openly declares that she is in love. She rejects messengers bringing a message from anybody other than her lover. The poetic persona appears to be a captive to the male gaze and to the cultural definition of woman as well as to the definition of the mirror. She wants to break the mirror because it fails to function as defined, that is, to prepare her for the male gaze. In these early poems, Farrokhzad expresses and interrogates her condition of self-loss and emotional dependency on a man in a way that other female readers can share and interrogate: particularly the emotions of self-loss, and the confrontation with a culturally constructed image which the man desires (and which she both is and is not).

The second appearance of the mirror image in the volume *Asīr* (*The Captive*) is in her 1954/55 poem “*Āine-ye šekaste*” (“The Broken Mirror”) composed in the city of Ahvaz. The whole narrative takes place in front of a mirror. The poet persona ponders over her reflection in the mirror. In this poem, the mirror is once again a replacement for an absent lover and his gaze. The title itself tells much about the ambience of the poem, and the mood of its poetic persona—who is again the poet herself. The broken mirror in Persian (as in western) culture and literature is considered a bad omen. In the patriarchal cultural context where the destiny of a woman depends totally on her father figures—fathers, husbands and sons—bad luck for a woman means failure on the part of her male associates. She and her other female associates play very little part in building her destiny.

In the first stanza, the persona puts on her green dress, applies make-up, arranges her hair and looks at herself carefully in the mirror, all in reminiscence of him and his love. It has again an *ubi sunt* theme, stated overtly in the opening line:

<p>Yesterday in reminiscence of you and that cheering love I clothed my body with a green dress I stared at my face in the mirror again Leisurely opened the band of my tress<sup>34</sup></p>	<p>دیروز به یاد تو و آن عشق دل انگیز بر پیکر خود پیرهن سبز نمودم در آینه بر صورت خود خیره شدم باز بند از سر گیسویم آهسته گشودم</p>
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Here the mirror substitutes for the currently absent male gaze. The mirror places the persona in the positions of both subject and object—passive and active, seen and see-er—simultaneously and facilitates her oscillation between the two. In other words, with the help of a mirror she can be subject and object at the same time. In addition, the delusory essence of the mirror has induced a confusion of roles. She can gaze at herself as he would have done, had he been present. In other words, she becomes simultaneously a voyeur and an exhibitionist, thanks to the mirror.

This simultaneous adoption of subject-object position in her imagination can ease the pain of his absence and the absence of his gaze. The simultaneity of subject and object positions turns the mirror into a utopian space where the subject in pain can assimilate union with the object lover, thereby mitigating the pain of separation. The de-realizing nature of the mirror and its ability to make the reality converge with fantasy gives rise to the overflow of the subject's unbridled desires on its surface. As Melchior-Bonnet observes:

The reflection de-realizes the spectacle, and through it, desire is given the legitimacy to express itself since it no longer fears the sanction of the real. It creates a truth unburdened by the weight of its consequences.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover the green of the dress mentioned in the first stanza is associative of nature and delusion. Farrokhzad has even entitled one of her poems "*vahm-e sabz*" ("Green Delusion"). Her green dress here works in close association with the delusionary effects of the mirror. Putting on her green dress foreshadows the delusion to follow. The grammar of the poem and the use of the word "again" leaves no doubt that she has more than once and perhaps constantly been involved in this seducing performance in the

mirror's theatrical stage. This delusive game has become a soothing ritual for her since delusion is the fundamental nature of the mirror, giving an ethereal, immaterial and distorted, as well as metaphoric/metonymic, image of reality.

In the second and third stanzas she is further involved in the act of self-creation, preparing herself to gratify her lover:

I fetched the perfume and spread it on my head and chest	عطر آوردم بر سر و بر سینه فشاندم چشمانم را نازکنان سرمه کشاندم
Mincingly drew antimony on my eyes	افشان کردم زلفم را بر سر شاهانه
Tousled my tress over my shoulder	در کنج لبم خالی آهسته نشاندم
Leisurely drew a beauty spot on the corner of my lip	

Then I told myself with a hundred regrets that alas he is not present	گفتم به خود آنگاه صد افسوس که او نیست تا مات شود زین همه افسونگری و ناز
To be astounded by all these charms and gracefulness	چون پیرهن سبز ببیند به تن من با خنده بگوید که چه زیبا شده ای باز
To say smilingly when he sees my green dress	
You have become such a beauty again <sup>36</sup>	

After this grooming ritual, set out in detail, in the fourth stanza the persona imagines that were her beloved present, he would be able to see himself in the black pupil of her eye. Indeed, she herself has turned into a mirror in which he might see himself:

He is not present to see the image of his own face	او نیست که در مردمک چشم سیاهم تا خیره شود عکس رخ خویش ببیند
Within the black pupil of my eye the moment he gazes	این گیسوی افشان به چکار آیدم امشب کو پنجه او تا که در آن خانه گریند
What is the use of this scattered tress tonight	
Where is his paw to settle into it <sup>37</sup>	

The first two lines contain both synecdoche and metaphor; her eyes representing herself as a whole and her whole self metaphorized into a mirror. The passive reflectivity of the mirror has been employed to metaphorize a female subject into a mirror of the male ego. Like Narcissus and like the figure of

Gigolo in Plath's poem (which will be studied in the following chapter), the male figure turns to the reflecting surface, here the eye of his beloved, for narcissistic gratification in his self. The image the woman-as-a-mirror reiterates to the male ego is distorted and therefore delusive. As Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* observes:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of a man at twice its natural size.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, in the last two stanzas, Farrokhzad engages in a dialogue with her mirror. She apostrophizes the mirror and the mirror listens to her and even replies. In this process, her mirror is anthropomorphized; it becomes a listening, talking and even crying mirror.<sup>39</sup> Reciprocity is in effect: the mirror introjects her attributes as a human being as she introjects the projected mirror image back into her consciousness of self. The persona addresses the mirror, complains to it and asks it for a solution to her problem. The mirror is supposed to hold "knowledge" and thereby is invested with great power:

He is not present to inhale	او نیست که بوید چو در آغوش من افتد
voraciously the charming scent of	دیوانه صفت عطر دلاویز تم را
my body	ای آینه مردم من از این حسرت و افسوس
When he falls into my arms	او نیست که بر سینه فشارد بدتم را
O Mirror! I died of this regret and	
alas	
He is not present to press my body	
against his chest <sup>40</sup>	

Ultimately, in the concluding stanza of the poem, the mirror breaks and cries in sorrow in response to her woeful complaints:

I was gazing at the mirror and it was	من خیره به آینه و او گوش به من داشت
listening to me	گفتم که چسان حل کنی این مشکل ما را
I asked: How would you solve my	بشکست و فغان کرد که از شرح غم خویش
problem?	ای زن، چه بگویم، که شکستی دل ما را
It broke and cried: By explaining your	
woes,	
O Woman! What can I say, you have	
broken my heart <sup>41</sup>	



The prosopopoeiac mirror claims to have a heart, a broken one—the projection of the heart of the woman. Whereas a woman is identified with her mirror image, a broken image equates with her sense of being fragmented. Farrokhzad projects her sorrow onto the mirror, because she feels she is nothing but that mirror image. By this projection and objectification of her sorrow she gains knowledge of her situation. This objectification onto the mirror also functions as a means of distancing her woes, thereby mitigating their effects. Farrokhzad is aware that the mirror holds answers regarding her subjectivity and its problems. In the later stages of her life again she turns to the mirror for the answer but, as will be discussed, the mirror will be able to give her a completely different kind of answer. This shift in the answers the mirror elicits reveals the poet's change of relation to her own subjectivity.

The knowledgeable mirror can also be read as an allusion to a very recurrent mirror motif in Persian literature, in which a surreal mirror reflects things beyond the present time and present space. It refers to the mythical *ġām-e ġām*—Jamshid's cup or goblet, a magical omniscient or “all-knowing” mirror that provides the owner with the knowledge its owner desires. Functioning as a microcosmic space onto which a macrocosm can be reflected, this mirror grants its owner a view of the whole universe, transcending the limits of time and space. This reflecting surface was by many authors credited with the empowerment of the Persian Empire.<sup>42</sup>

Mo'in, in his study of the motif *ġām-e ġāhān namā*, i.e., world-revealing glass or cup, lists various interpretations of this magical glass/cup: water, astrolabe (also called *speculum cosmographicum*, or cosmographical mirror), mirror, the globe, geographical maps, compass, magic lantern, wine, heart, a perfect human and the world, among others.<sup>43</sup> Due to their common qualities and functional overlappings, Persian poets have used these flat and concave reflective surfaces interchangeably, at times referring to a single entity.<sup>44</sup> In addition, by conflating the motif of the flat mirror of the heart and other mirror imageries, Persian poets were able to express their points in a highly metaphorical, multi-layered and at times ambiguous language.<sup>45</sup>

In the poem “*Šoq*” (“Enthusiasm”), in the collection *The Wall*, the mirror is again a means through which the female speaker in the first person—Farrokhzad herself—checks her appearance to see how she may appear to the world outside and particularly to her lover. Here, again, the mirror is functioning as a substitute for the male gaze. In reply to the lover's question as to what she has brought him as a souvenir from her journey, the speaker tells him to look at her face for the answer:

<p>Do you remember that you once asked me smiling What souvenir I had brought you from so far away? Look into my face so that my face answers you A tear of enthusiasm slumbering in the eyes of desire<sup>46</sup></p>	<p>یاد داری که ز من خنده کنان پرسیدی چه ره آورد سفر دارم از این راه دراز؟ چهره ام را بنگر تا به تو پاسخ گوید اشک شوقی که فروخته به چشمان نیاز</p>
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In the following two stanzas, the speaker lists further the things she has brought him from this journey: a breast burnt up in the desire of an impossible love; a gaze lost in the veil of a distant dream; a body inflamed from burning appeals for union; eyes agitated by inner enthusiasm; warm lips, on which reposes a kiss filled with hope and desire, hotter than the kiss of the southern sun. In the fourth stanza, the speaker explains that after wandering many times in the streets and bazaar in search of a fitting souvenir for her beloved, she decides to present him with her body; a body blazing with the flames of inner desire. In the fifth stanza, the speaker turns to her mirror, consulting it to see if her face and her body would be a worthy present:

<p>When I looked into the mirror, I saw, alas That separation from you has decreased the glow of my face I beseeched the sun to grant me Thirst, brilliance, incandescence, and reflection<sup>47</sup></p>	<p>چو در آینه نگه کردم، دیدم افسوس جلوه روی مرا هجر تو کاهش بخشید دست بر دامن خورشید زدم تا بر من عطش و روشنی و سوزش و تابش بخشید</p>
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Farrokhzad metaphorizes her face into a waning moon, whose brilliance, glow and reflectivity have decreased due to the pains of separation. Like the moon, she turns towards the sun for the source of her thirst, light, heat and brilliance. In this poem, the mirror and the image within it are associated with the moon. Moreover, the mirror turns into a temporal site. It is a slate for registering the passage of time and the deterioration associated with it. On the surface of her mirror, the speaker can observe the changes happening to her face over time by summoning up the different previous appearances and re-identifying with those previous images.

In the concluding stanza, the speaker asks the lover to open his embrace so that she can reveal what souvenir she has brought him from this distant journey,

<p>Now, this is me, I am this soul-burning fire O you, the hope of a mad and woe-embracing heart Open your embrace so that I may reveal to you What I have brought from this far-off place<sup>48</sup></p>	<p>حالیا، این منم، این آتش جانسوز منم ای امید دل دیوانه اندوه نواز بازوان را بگشا تا که عیانت سازم چه ره آورد سفر دارم از این راه دور</p>
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In Farrokhzad's early poems, love for a man is a major issue and the poetic self relentlessly and almost with a singularity of commitment seeks man's desire and his gaze for a sense of happiness and fulfillment. In the three poems "The Forgotten," "The Broken Mirror" and "Enthusiasm," discussed above, Farrokhzad uses her poetry mainly for self-expression. Through her mirror imagery she seeks to express her emotional dependence on men and her sense of self-loss when confronting the culturally constructed image which the man desires; the image which she paradoxically *is* and *is not*. Expressing her dependence on a man's love and his gaze through her poetry is indeed a way of overcoming such dependence by setting her voice against the power of the male gaze and creating an introspective space into which the male gaze cannot enter.

In these early poems, the otherness of Farrokhzad's specular image is directly associated with the otherness of the male lover and his gaze. Her mirror experiences show that the mirror and the male gaze function interchangeably in the construction of the female persona's sense of self. In all these instances, the persona defines and portrays herself as being seen by the other, rather than describing the features of her lover: an instance of undeveloped female narcissism, as defined by Freud. In all these identifications, inaugurated by the initial identification at the mirror stage, Farrokhzad invariably identifies with male lovers and depends on her reflection of them to experience her subjectivity and its continuance. In this way, her poem (as she herself mentions), like her self, becomes a reflection of this other.

These mirror experiences reveal the conceptualization of womanhood and the strictly defined sex relationships promoted by her culture: woman as a mere physical appearance created to satisfy male desire and his gaze. The presentation of mirror imagery in these early poems may hint at Farrokhzad's unconscious internalization of her culture's conceptualization of womanhood. Nevertheless, by presenting and objectifying these images

in her text, she becomes able to distance herself from them, gain consciousness over them and ultimately reject them and seek for real, more authentic images.<sup>49</sup> Farrokhzad's descriptions of her encounter with her mirror imagery reveal the female subject's exasperating difficulty in coming in terms with her cultural images of womanhood. The presentation of these images of womanhood and female sexuality, with her unprecedented, explicit frankness in a society expecting solemnity, modesty, immobility and silence from women was revolutionary.

Through its simultaneous implementation of the "I" and "the other," subject and object, the see-er and the seen, the mirror can feed the female subject with fantasies in which she assimilates the presence of the other and his gaze and even imagines physical intimacy with him. Therefore, the persona gets involved in a continuous ritual performed in front of the mirror in order to fulfill her inner needs and bring her closer to the aim of her existence as defined by her culture. Indeed, the mirror turns into a theatrical stage where she can observe how she appears to others and to the world outside. There she often creates herself according to those images of womanhood of her social codes of beauty. The mirror is a space where the subject can act out the reality and the imaginary simultaneously, merging the exterior world and the inner psychic world, the visible realm and the invisible realm reciprocally. Therefore, for women this space of relatedness with others may remain a space of anxiety.

### **The Mirror as an Eye**

The close reciprocity between the mirror and the eye and their reflection of one another has made the mirror a popular metaphor for the eye. As Melchoir-Bonnet argues, "Reciprocal transparency, the eye-mirror achieves both fusion and separation, identity and difference."<sup>50</sup> In Persian literature, too, poets have recurrently identified the mirror with the eye; shining brilliance and the internalization of the image of anything within their scope of vision being their common features. Moreover, the round shape of mirrors (most popular in older times) and the ringed form of the eye make them especially similar for the classical Persian poets.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the mirror was most often metaphorized to a wide-open, wakeful, alert and at times astonished eye. Zipoli, discussing the mirror image in some stylistic periods of Persian poetry, asserts, "Because the mirror is usually white, round and bright, it has always evoked the alert eye."<sup>52</sup>

As discussed in the previous section, Farrokhzad recurrently (though implicitly) turned to the mirror as an eye of the other, particularly the male gaze. In a 1957 poem composed in Munich, entitled “*Dīr*” (“Late”), in her collection *ʿEṣyān (Rebellion)*, Farrokhzad explicitly associates the mirror with the eye through the use of a simile. The poet persona, in this poem, addresses herself in the second person “you” in a depressed, melancholic tone. In the first stanza, the day is coming to an end and darkness is invading. The day is personified in the one whose eye is invaded by the the mute and dark dream of sleep. It is time for the speaker to hasten alone towards home.

In the second stanza, Farrokhzad turns to the image of a dark shadow—her double:

As long as your black shadow  
Is always by your side like this  
Do not ever think that an eye  
Will be expecting you there<sup>53</sup>

تا سایه سیاه تو اینسان  
پیوسته در کنار تو باشد  
هرگز گمان مبر که در آنجا  
چشمی به انتظار تو باشد

The rhetorical evasion of the first person by adopting tuism is significant here. Through tuism, the poet adopts the position of distant, objective and censuring observer, who has come out of her body and is critically watching herself, as if through a mirror. This “black shadow” appears to be the invisible, evil side of her personality—the Jungian shadow. The persona thinks that, as long as she has not got rid of this shadowy side of her personality, no one—mentioned through the synecdochic eye—will be looking forward to spending time in her company. Farrokhzad is, therefore, blaming her own “dark shadow” for her loneliness.

In the following stanzas, the persona hastens home on a late, sad and rainy night. Farrokhzad portrays the atmosphere of the house in the rain, her dark depressing room and her arrival by resorting to extravagant similes and metaphors. Even time seems stagnant; the wall clock is devoid of any chimes and refuses to strike. Then, in the seventh stanza, Farrokhzad turns to photographs; themselves mirror images frozen in a point in history:

In the worn-out frames, the images  
—these ridiculous mortal faces—  
Pale from the passage of time  
Perhaps they once existed!<sup>54</sup>

در قابهای کهنه، تصاویر  
—این چهره های مضحک فانی—  
بی رنگ از گذشت زمانها  
شاید که بوده اند زمانی!

By doubting the existence of these “ridiculous,” “mortal” images in the old frames, grown pale with the passage of time, Farrokhzad is actually revealing her doubt as to her own existence and its continuity—psychological projection. This psychological projection is further asserted by Farrokhzad’s repositioning of her attention from the pictures to the mirror in the eighth stanza. She draws upon the close association of the mirror and the eye to compare them explicitly:

A mirror, like a big eye  
Is sitting in a corner, busy watching  
Upon the glass of its gaze  
It has posed the rebellious spirit of the night<sup>55</sup>

آینه همچو چشم بزرگی  
یک سو نشسته گرم تماشا  
بر روی شیشه های نگاهش  
بنشانده روح عاصی شب را

In the following stanzas, the persona, like an “old bird,” turns to the warmth of her bed and with her trembling closed eyelids places her head on the “breast of a notebook.” The ghosts of the dead who once slept in her bed are now crying beside her. Like effervescent bubbles on the condensed face of a swamp, these ghosts are now silently moving and moaning restlessly. The old pine tree is dense with the evil cawing of the crows and the silk scented rain dances on the windowpanes. In the concluding stanza, the speaker feels that she would regret it if she battled with her woe. Instead, she breathes her woe in, keeping it inside her, in order to compose a new poem:

You feel that it is regrettable  
To fight with your own woe  
You smell that blossom of woe  
To compose a new poem<sup>56</sup>

احساس می کنی که دریغ است  
با درد خود اگر بستیزی  
می بویی آن شکوفه غم را  
تا شعر تازه ای بنویسی

“*Tā*” in the last line of the quotation is ambiguous: beside “to” or “in order to” (as translated above), it could also mean “until.” Therefore, the line could alternatively be translated as “*Until* you have composed a new poem.” Both meanings are important here, since Farrokhzad describes the prerogative and at the same time the soothing effect of creativity. In order to be creative you have to feel the pain which, paradoxically, by the same act of creativity is also soothed. “Late” is a poem describing the creative process of writing poetry: creativity as a result of pain, and pain comforted by creativity.

## The Mirror of the Heart

### a – *Non-mystical*

The metaphor of “*āīne-ye del*” or “the mirror of the heart” has been used recurrently in both non-mystical and mystical classical Persian literature. In its non-mystical usage, the receptivity and the sincerity of the mirror in reflecting an image have been drawn upon to liken the heart to a mirror; the heart being a metaphor for something beyond physical existence, for human spirit.<sup>57</sup> In experiencing worldly love, the heart should be polished like a mirror to reflect nothing but the beauty of the beloved.

In her poem “*Ārezū*” (“The Wish”), published in the collection *The Wall*, Farrokhzad employs the image of “the mirror of the heart” in its non-mystical meaning; to express her wish for her beloved’s presence and for physical intimacy with him. The poem consists of nine quatrain stanzas, all of them beginning with the refrain “I wish,” which signifies the concrete anticipation of the speaker. It also reveals much about the depressed mode of the persona feeling a desperate lack of companionship and love. The persona expresses her anticipation of the fulfillment of her sense of lack through kaleidoscopic similes and metaphors.

In the first four stanzas, the I-narrator—Farrokhzad herself—wishes that she could be the mysterious scent of a plant on the bank of a river, so that when the beloved passes by, she can kiss him all over. She wishes that she could sing to the tune of his “mad heart” like a shepherd’s pipe; that she could pass his door while sleeping on the breeze’s wavy camel-litter; that she could shine in the mornings like a “ray of the spring sun” through the “trembling silk curtain” of his window and see the colour of his eyes; that she could be the “laughter of a wine cup” in his luminous feast; or that she could be “the laxness and the drunkenness of a sleep” in his “painful midnight.”<sup>58</sup>

Here in this poem (as well as in many other poems included in her two early collections), Farrokhzad’s speech is rich with extravagant metaphors, lyrical free associations, and obsessively explicit sexual references. These are all considered the classic symptoms of “love melancholy” or “love madness.” A love-mad woman who originally was stable becomes insane due to being deserted by her lover. The love-mad woman employs exuberant metaphors and similes, and in order to assimilate them she displays a tendency towards self-effacement and self-annihilation—generally in the form of a death wish.<sup>59</sup>

In continuation of this sequence of metaphors and similes, expressing her desire for physical intimacy, Farrokhzad resorts to the mirror image in the fifth stanza, beginning with the same “I wish.” But instead of being lit by the divine light, Farrokhzad wishes her heart to be illuminated by the light of an earthly love:

<p>I wish that my heart would, like a mirror, be lit by Your image and your smile That each morning the warmth of your caressing hand Would touch my body<sup>60</sup></p>	<p>کاش چون آینه روشن می شد دلم از نقش تو و خنده تو صبحگاهان به تم می لغزید گرمی دست نوازنده تو</p>
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The poet-persona wishes her heart-mirror be lit by the image of her lover’s face, an earthly creature of flesh and blood, and by his smile. In the simile she employs, the image of her beloved and his laughter is expected to be reflected like daylight upon the otherwise darkened mirror of her heart, with her heart functioning as metonymy or metaphor for her spirit or even her whole being. The lack of substance, immateriality and their supposed ethereal essence make soul and the mirror image intimate associates. Sincerity, selfless receptiveness and brilliance are considered qualities common to both the mirror and her heart-soul.

The mirror is meant to reflect the external world, but here Farrokhzad uses her poetic imagination to manipulate the mirror to depict her interiority, the internal world into which she has introjected her beloved. This is made possible because, as discussed in the previous chapter, there is a psychological interiority to the mirror.<sup>61</sup> The mirror is not only able to reveal to its contemplating beholder the visible world, but also the otherwise invisible world, by means of “speculation.”<sup>62</sup>

In this poem (as in many of her other poems), Farrokhzad is concerned with her bodily existence. She draws upon the mirror of the heart in its mundane meaning to help her express her desire for a this-worldly love. This tendency towards the body is shared by other authentic writings of female authors. As Cixous asserts, “More so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, women are body.”<sup>63</sup> Farrokhzad often comes across in her poetry as anti-transcendentalist; she accepts her physicality and tends to reject the transcendentalism so much adored in classical Persian literature. To make the body—particularly the female body—and physical love holy actually becomes polemical. Indeed,



in some of her poems, Farrokhzad explicitly glorifies what is down-to-earth.<sup>64</sup>

In the sixth stanza, the persona wishes that at midnight the moon could watch her dance like “an autumn leaf”; that her sensation could raise a commotion in the heart of his house’s garden. In the seventh stanza, she expresses an even more intimate wish:

I wish I could anxiously crawl into your heart	کاش چون یاد دل انگیز زنی
Like the cheerful memory of a woman	می خزیدم به دلت پرتشویش
Suddenly I could see your eyes	ناگهان چشم تو را می دیدم
Gazing on my beauty’s radiance <sup>65</sup>	خیره بر جلوۀ زیبای خویش

Here again, as in the poems discussed earlier in the section “Captive to the Male Gaze,” the persona is seeking her lover’s gaze in her concrete anticipation. In her narcissism, she appears to desire not so much to love, but to be loved and be gazed upon. The eighth stanza continues in the same spirit, expressing her melancholic desire for his physical intimacy through different exaggerated metaphors. The persona wishes her body could burn, like a “candle of sin,” in the beloved’s bed of loneliness, burning away the roots of his asceticism, as well as those of her desires.

I wish from the green branch of life	کاش از شاخه سرسبز حیات
You would pick the flower of my woe	گل اندوه مرا می چیدی
I wish in my poem, O you [my] life drive	کاش در شعر من ای مایه عمر
Could see the flame of my secret <sup>66</sup>	شعله راز مرا می دیدی

Once again Farrokhzad concludes her poem with a reference to her poetry, making the beloved, as well as the reader, aware of her presence through textualized subjectivity. The persona—Farrokhzad herself—wishes that her lover could understand the flame of her secret burning within her poems; within the text she has inscribed her innermost thoughts, feelings and wants—otherwise veiled or feigned. Therefore, as will later be shown, her poems are indeed a mirror of her self, a female subjectivity in her continual “process of becoming,” as Mitchell calls it, truthfully reflecting her thoughts and feelings, as well as her lacks or deficiencies.<sup>67</sup>

In the poems studied so far, I have endeavoured to show how Farrokhzad is suffering from an ever-present sense of *la manqué*—a feeling of lack, deficiency or absence—which she tries to fill through a series of identifications with the other—often her male lover. In this context, she relies on

a man's desire for her, as well as on his gaze, for her sense of self and for the fulfilment of her inner lack. In the poem "The Wish," likewise, Farrokhzad exemplifies what Freud defines as a woman's primary narcissism, whose happiness and sense of fulfilment depends on male lovers desiring her. Within this conceptualization of her self and her inner world, her mirror is metamorphosed into the male eye by means of which she can see how she appears to him, as well as to some extent quench her desire for his gaze by assimilating the presence of his view. All this is achieved through the simultaneous subject and object positioning promoted by the mirror, as well as through the mirror's ability to reveal the visible together with the invisible.

#### b – *Mystical*

The mirror of divinity, often in the form of "*ā'īne-ye del*" or the "mirror of the heart," has been a recurring metaphor in Persian Sufi literature ever since at least the eleventh century. In this key metaphor, man's heart is depicted as a mirror reflecting God's *imago(es)* and his different manifestations. In Islamic Sufi thought, the culturally significant metaphor of the mirror of the heart has been used to explicate, as well as to prescribe, the relationship between man and his Ultimate Beloved. The metaphor of the mirror of divinity remains a key metaphor in Persian Sufi literature; its function transcending beyond mere description and becoming constitutive. Through appropriation of this metaphor, the Sufis configure and describe their entire *Weltanschauung* and mould their cognitive ethos.<sup>68</sup>

It is believed that the pure, untarnished heart can reflect the divine light of God. Through self-indulgence, however, this mirror gathers rust, hampering its ability to reflect the divine light. In order to polish the mirror and restore its reflectivity, the *sālek* (path seeker) has to refrain from involvement in the self and its desires. The perfect, spotless polish of this mirror is maintained only when the path seeker succeeds in attaining the state of absolute self-annihilation and self-abnegation (*fanā*). It is at this stage that the *tağallī* (theophany) occurs to the Sufi's heart and he revels ecstatically in the *Unio Mystica*, the divine receptivity upon his heart. Thereby, for the Sufi, the heart as a mirror becomes a space where microcosm and macrocosm mutually reflect each other and man becomes one with the universe and its creator. To put it in literary terms, Sufis use the vehicles of mirror and heart to convey the tenor of their love relationship. As understood in *Unio Mystica*, when the soul is turned into a mirror, it is not merely reflect-

ing, but also contemplating and participating in the image and its beauty to which it is exposed. By assimilating the image, the soul-mirror undergoes metamorphosis and ultimately becomes part of that beauty.

However, before the perfect annihilation of the self in his God there is a stage in which the two presences of the man-as-a-mirror and the Truth coexist. The Sufis assert that this stage is marked by an imperfection, a deficiency, because the Sufi is still in dubious suspense between these two presences, such that his view fluctuates between them.<sup>69</sup> This occurs because the mirror figure represents the schism between two ostensibly identical worlds or two modes of being. While it can serve as a bridge from one level of reality to the higher level of reality, from the known to the unknown, it can also become a locus of illusion and deception.

The metaphorical image of the mirror of the heart-soul originated in Neoplatonic thought, as did the twofold division of macrocosm and microcosm, as well as the division of the world into the visible and the invisible, the human soul and the Divine Being, where one reflects the other. The metaphor of the human soul as a mirror for God's reflection has been a culturally significant mirror metaphor in Western thought, and it is omnipresent in the spiritual literature of the Middle Ages.<sup>70</sup> Muslim mystics seem to have inherited this metaphor from the Hellenistic tradition. Descending from Plato by the way of Neoplatonic thinkers, particularly Plotinus, this metaphor can be traced in the writings of Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna (d. 1037), Abū Hāmed Ġazzālī (d. 1111), his younger brother Aḥmad Ġazzālī (d. 1123 or 1126) and Sohrawardī (d. 1191), who explored the idea further in their writings.<sup>71</sup>

According to this belief (subsequently embraced by Muslim mystics), the whole of creation, in particular human beings, is a mirror in which God sees himself. Burckhardt, who studied the phenomenon of mirror symbolism in Islamic mysticism, observes that the mirror has long been the most appropriate symbol for demonstrating the essential nature of mysticism, which is "purely spiritual," as well as for "the spiritual vision, the *contemplatio*, and more generally the knowledge, because through it the approximation of subject and object is revealed."<sup>72</sup> This appears particularly valid when one is referring to intuitive knowledge. Burckhardt further explains:

When the heart turns into a clear mirror, on one side, the world is reflected on it as it really is, that is without any distortions caused by emotional thinking. On the other side, the heart reflects the divine

truth to some extent immediately, that is first in the form of symbols (*išārāt*), then in the form of intellectual properties (*sefāt*) or presences (*‘ayān*), which are the basis of the symbols, and finally as divine realities (*ḥaqīqa*).<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, it is also believed that God, who is beautiful and loves beauty, has brought the universe into being in order to reflect his own beauty. Creation was necessary for God’s beauty and his grandeur to be revealed and reflected.<sup>74</sup> And man is considered potentially the most perfect created being mirroring this beauty.<sup>75</sup> It becomes more comprehensible when read in the light of the idea that the whole world (containing beauty) originally consisted of luminous essence. It is also discussed that man can never comprehend the Truth *in toto*. He can only grasp incomplete representations of the Divine Truth through the ongoing reflections from pieces of the shattered mirror.

The mirror’s ability to bring subject and object together, its unyielding obedience, as well as its lack of agency and its passive reflectivity were frequently drawn upon by certain Persian Neoplatonic philosophers, theologians, Sufis and poets to promote their ethico-religious doctrines. They recurrently resorted to this mirror metaphor to highlight their esoteric doctrine of supremacy of experiencing divine receptivity over reason. When they attempted to assign a more active agency to the part of the Sufi seeker, they used the term *kašf* (unveiling) instead. Among the Persian classical poets employing the metaphor of the mirror of the heart in its mystical meaning, evoking the semblance of God, were ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1221?), Rūmī (d. 1273), Faḥr ol-Dīn ‘Erāqī (d. 1289), Sa‘dī (d. ca. 1292), Ḥāfez (d. 1389/1390), and Bīdel (d. 1720).<sup>76</sup>

In her poem “*Bandegi*” (“Servitude”), published in the collection *‘Ešyān (Rebellion)*, Farrokhzad draws upon the traditional, mystical and metaphorical meaning of the mirror.<sup>77</sup> In this poem, in which she apostrophizes God, Farrokhzad depicts herself as a simulacrum to God. However, the poet uses the extended metaphor of man as a mirror of God to convey a rebellious, one might even say blasphemous, meaning. “Servitude” is a long poem of some four hundred lines, composed in quatrains, and replete with Qur’ānic allusions. It is divided into thirteen sections of unequal numbers of stanzas. The speaker complains to God and questions his grace; thereby questioning the whole Sufi tradition present in Persian literature. Somehow the poem is an open refutation of Sufism, which has had an enormous influence on Persian literature and the living culture.

The first two stanzas open with the persona—Farrokhzad herself—announcing that there exists a shadow of a mysterious question on her lips and that today she is going to share with Him the secret of this rebellious spirit's bewilderment.<sup>78</sup> This is despite the fact that she is well aware that He will reject her over and over again as long as He maintains His position as master and she hers as servant. As long as their relationship is that of master and servant, God will be involved at the beginning and the end of her dark story. In the following sections, the persona goes on to portray nihilistically dark and frightening images of human life, where man does not have the slightest control over his fate.

At one point, the persona even wonders if God is hearing her moans. She asks Him to break his glass/cup of narcissism (*ḡām-e ḥod-parastī*) and sit for a while with her, with this earthly I (*man-e ḥākī*) and drink the agony of existence from the lips of her poem.<sup>79</sup> In the fourth section, the poet persona starts recounting her story from birth, when she was conceived out of “a luscious supper” (*ṣām-e lezatbār*) and was born unwillingly.<sup>80</sup> She was never left alone for a second to choose freely, here echoing the fatalism of religious discourses. She is born “without being an ‘I’”, having no agency, no subjectivity of her own. As she is roving in the illusory deserts (*bīyābān-hā-ye vahm-angīz*), her ears are incessantly being filled with God's voice.<sup>81</sup> Here, Farrokhzad is referring to the constant religious echoes which mould her identity into a pre-designed form—a simulacrum of God—from early childhood, depriving her of her authentic individuality. Afterwards she starts questioning the identity of her being, her origin and her end in an unfolding series of questions; but she realizes that “I am naught head to toe, I am naught, naught.”<sup>82</sup> She realizes that God is pulling the ropes tight around men's necks “while their eyes stared at the image of the other world.”<sup>83</sup>

Farrokhzad employs a mirror image in the fifth section of the poem. Here, she herself is metaphorized into a mirror of God. As in the case of the mirror of the Sufis, discussed above, the persona is transformed into a mirror devoid of any agency, subjectivity or distinctive identity of its own. The speaker is utterly passive, having no will to act or any control over her fate. For her, mankind is created and doomed to life and death for no other reason than to be “a manifestation of your [God's] power” (*ḡelvegāh-e qodrat-at*).<sup>84</sup> But in contrast to the Sufis, this passivity and lack of agency—for the speaker—is not a source of absolute serenity and consolation. Sometimes she sees the image of God's “power” (*qodrat*) reflected in this mirror, at other times His “tyranny” (*bīdād*) and even the image of His “self-worshiping eyes” (*dīdegān-e ḥodparast*).<sup>85</sup>

To Farrokhzad, God has created her as a mirror out of solipsism, out of sheer narcissism, just to enjoy seeing Himself in her:

<p>I saw myself as a mirror devoid of myself At any moment an image falls upon it by your hand Sometimes the image of your power, sometimes your tyranny And sometimes the image of your self-worshipping eyes<sup>86</sup></p>	<p>خویش را آینه ای دیدم تویی از خویش هر زمان نقشی در آن افتد به دست تو گاه نقش قدرتت، گاه نقش بیدادت گاه نقش دیدگان خودپرست تو</p>
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After being metaphorized into a mirror, in the following stanza Farrokhzad metaphorizes herself into a “sheep” (*gūspan*), wandering with no purpose among her flock (*gale*), while, on the other hand, metaphorizing God into a shepherd (*čūpān*), reposing drunk from his narcissistic game.<sup>87</sup> Mirror and sheep are both drawn here to reveal her state of having no agency and no will.

From the last stanza of the fourth section, Satan (*šeytān* or *div*) makes his appearance in the poem. The poet starts reflecting about the identity of Satan and his function. She speaks of her many dialogues and interactions with him.<sup>88</sup> Satan constantly transfigures himself into different shapes and forms in order to tempt human beings. At one point, he even becomes the image of a cupbearer reflected in a cup of wine:

<p>He became a melody, circulating in the hand of a harper He became a tremor, falling on silver breasts He became a smile, revealing the teeth of moon-faced beauties He became the image of the cupbearer, reflected in the inverted cup<sup>89</sup></p>	<p>نغمه شد، درینجه چنگی به خود پیچید لرزه شد، بر سینه های سیمگون افتاد خنده شد، دندان مه رویان نمایان کرد عکس ساقی شد، به جام وارزون افتاد</p>
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In this quatrain, Satan manifests himself by transfiguring into different forms and shapes, and therewith appealing to human senses; first objectifying himself, in an auditory image, in a musical melody, in the visual and kinesthetic image of a tremor, in the visual image of a smile and finally incarnating itself through the image of the *sāqī*, the cup-bearer.

The term *'aks* (originally from Arabic) in Persian can be played upon as a homonymic paronomasia or pun, containing the interrelated meanings of “picture,” “image” and “inversion,” “reversal” and “reflection.” The term *ḡām* means cup and mirror at the same time. It also figuratively refers to wine. For Sufis, *ḡām* recurrently refers to the mirror of the heart.<sup>90</sup> *Sāqī*, literally the “water-carrier,” “cup-bearer” and the “page,” in Sufi terminology means the *pīr* or *moršed*, that is the experienced (often aged) spiritual guide and instructor. It also connotes the images and manifestations of Divine Beauty the viewing of which makes the seeker intoxicated and drunk. Satan becomes an image or/and an inversion of the image of spiritual guide and manifests itself upon the upturned cup—a convex mirror. *Sāqī-ye rūḡānīyān*, literally the cup-bearer of the spirituals, in addition to Adam and Gabriel, may also refer to Satan in Persian literary tradition.<sup>91</sup>

The observer is beguiled by the illusory effect of the mirroring surface, reiterating a distorted, reversed image. Satan’s appeal for man, often through illusions and deceptions, can best actualize itself through a deluding medium—here the mirror. Moreover, the upturned cup does not make a flat mirror; it turns into a convex mirror which not only inverts the right and left sides of the image, but also disturbs proportion and the size of the thing in front of it, thereby making the grotesque delusory effect of it stronger. Once the beholder comes very close to it, this convex mirror reiterates a larger image, hence producing an illusion of grandiosity and self-aggrandizement. On the other hand, the inverted cup makes a globe of an inverted cosmos through which Satan can traverse.

Farrokhzad’s lines seem to be alluding to Ḥāfez’s famous *ḡazal*, which opens with:

When Thy image was reflected on the  
mirror of cup

The *'āref* from the smile of the wine  
fell into vain desires

عکس روی تو چو در آینه جام افتاد  
عارف از خنده می در طمع خام افتاد

With that one splendour that in the  
mirror, the beauty of Thy face fell,  
All these pictures into the mirror of  
fancy fell

حسن روی تو به یک جلوه که در آینه کرد  
این همه نقش در آینه اوهام افتاد

All these reflections of wine and  
varied images (of the beautiful  
beloved) that have appeared  
Is one splendour of the face of the *sāqī*  
that into the cup fell.<sup>92</sup>

این همه عکس می و نقش نگارین که نمود  
یک فروغ رخ ساقیست که در جام افتاد

Farrokhzad proceeds to list the satanic temptations appearing in a variety of forms and images, just as the manifestation of God comes forth through the diversity of its *imagoes*. After many dialogues with Satan, she finally decides to exonerate Satan of any blame while, on the other hand, she condemns God for her own present condition and that of humanity.<sup>93</sup> In the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth sections, the persona asserts that God can hold on to his position of mastery, vanity and tyranny only by frightening man with the fire of his hell. Farrokhzad then goes on to list many other proofs of God's vanity and tyranny in the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth sections, while repeatedly alluding to the Qur'an.

In the third stanza of the final section, the second mirror image makes its appearance. In this quatrain, the whole world is metaphorized into the mirror of God. In this section, the persona poses God the question: "What are you?" four times, not only so as to question his identity, but also to denigrate him. Servitude here has a twofold significance. Not only has God created her as a passive servant, but, ironically, God himself has also become subservient to his own name and to his own glory, by the very virtue of having created the world to function as a passive mirror:

What are you? A slave to your own  
name and majesty  
[You have] seen in the mirror of the  
world the reflection of your own  
beauty  
At every moment you turn this mirror  
around  
To better gaze upon your immortal  
manifestations<sup>94</sup>

تو چه هستی؟ بنده نام و جلال خویش  
دیده در آینه دنیا جمال خویش  
هردم این آینه را گردانده تا بهتر  
بنگری در جلوه های بی زوال خویش

For Farrokhzad, God is continually preoccupied in changing creation—essentially reflected images—as if taking delight in the game of having different perspectives of his self reflected in them. Again, this change of mirrors has its origin in the Neoplatonic and subsequently Sufi belief



that all creation and its particles function as countless mirrors, all reflecting different aspects of one unity.<sup>95</sup> Farrokhzad goes on to denigrate God by condemning him for: being incessantly preoccupied with moulding clay (alluding to the Qur'ānic story that God moulded man from clay); being a “barrier on the path of our quest”; being “the sparkle in the eyes of a mirage”; being “the colour of deceit”; “the ooze of ominous nights”; “the darkness of a grave”; “that old bat”; “thirsty for the redness of blood”; “the enemy of light”; and ultimately the “self-worshipper.”<sup>96</sup> Then she asks, “If you are God, repose in my heart and purge me [from the dirt of my blasphemies and disgraces].”<sup>97</sup> In the last stanza, the persona pleads with God to leave them alone just for a second, for “An opportunity, to save provisions for the journey.”<sup>98</sup>

Farrokhzad uses the poem “Servitude” as a mirror in which she becomes deeply involved in self-inquiry and self-reflexivity. In her poem-as-a-mirror, she inquires about the essence of her being, the nature of her relationship with her God and her position in the world he has created for her. The mirror is known not only for revealing the visible, but also for revealing the invisible; herein lie its power and significance. The mirror becomes a bridge connecting this world to the other world. Man as a mirror of divinity has been a very popular and culturally significant metaphor. Theologians and moralists advocate the mirror when it is used in this sense—to propagate the simulacrum of God in man. On the other hand, if man’s mirror fails to receive divine light, it is susceptible to reiterating an image of the devil or Satan in a panoply of delusory images.

Farrokhzad in this poem is struggling to define the identity of the human being, God and Satan for herself through their reflecting reciprocity with each other. The persona confuses the identities of God and Satan, portraying them as reciprocal, though reversed, images of each other.<sup>99</sup> She evokes the popular metaphor of man as the mirror reflecting God, only to criticize it harshly. The mirror metaphor in this poem functions not only as a tool of revelation, but also as a constitutive medium. It reveals to her the servile nature of her relationship to her God and her desperate position in his world-as-a-mirror prison. On the other hand, being a key metaphor in Persian classic texts, it has been a constitutive and constructive metaphor, constructing the very nature of her being, her relationships and her *Weltanschauung*.

### The Otherness of the Self-image

Farrokhzad's use of mirror imagery contradicts the (Iranian as well as Western) culturally held view that immediately associates the woman-with-a-mirror image with entrapment within the self, with vanity and narcissism. At times of psycho-emotional crisis, when Farrokhzad feels no other proof of her subjectivity or authentic identity within her society, when she feels desperately alone and an outsider in her world, she consults her mirror for answers. Farrokhzad does so, hoping that the mirror will relieve her of painful inner conflicts and give her existential proof of her being and its essential quality. For her, the mirror becomes a space where her inner division, her inner fragmentation and her doubts are enacted, as well as expressed. In the examples that will be studied here, the inner division revealed in her mirror, as the direct outcome of the contradictions of her inner predicaments and the forced cultural definitions and norms of womanhood, is explicitly documented. Therefore, in these poems, rather than being a source of consolation and unity, the mirror exposes her painful experiences of anxiety, pain, shock and terror.

The poem "*Šedārī dar šab*" ("A Sound at Night"), in which the mirror image appears, was composed in Tehran in 1955/1956 in her collection *The Captive*. In this poem, Farrokhzad inaugurates a departure from her old conceptualization of female selfhood as well as that of the mirror according to which it was a space through which she could assimilate being gazed upon by the male other. The poem "A Sound at Night" contains five cinquain stanzas, narrated in the first person. In the first stanza, the sound of footsteps in the silence of a dark and desperately lonely night provokes her to cast a look at herself in the mirror. The persona hopes that the sound in the corridor may be that of her lover's footsteps coming to visit her.

At midnight, in the heart of the silent  
corridor

The stroke of footsteps fell echoing  
Like the heart of spring flowers, my  
heart

Brimmed with the trembling dews of  
certitude

I told [to myself] this should be he  
who has returned<sup>100</sup>

نیمه شب در دل دهلیز خموش  
ضربه پای افکند طنین  
دل من چون دل گل‌های بهار  
پر شد از شبیم لرزان یقین  
گفتم این اوست که باز آمده است

These lines portray the desperate loneliness of the poet persona—Farrokhzad herself—anticipating the return of her lover.

In hope, stimulated by this external sound stimulus, the persona rushes to the mirror to check herself, whereupon she is immediately baffled by her image. Her turn to the mirror is motivated by the other, by an exterior force: supposedly by the sound of her lover's footsteps and by the anticipation of his gaze. For Farrokhzad, confrontation with the mirror image raises doubt and a sense of bewilderment in the essence of her being—a bewilderment that she projects to the mirror. She expresses her experience of self-alienation through the quality of her countenance with her mirror imagery. La Belle observes, “when a woman feels a disunity between herself and the image in the mirror, it is often a sign of revolt or the beginning of a psychological disorientation,” whereas for a man, “the split is normative.”<sup>101</sup>

At times, when Farrokhzad turns to the mirror in her existential angst, to her shock she is confronted with something unknown, unnamed—something monstrous. She expresses her wonder at the reflected image as it might be a mere illusory projection of her imagination, far from the reality of her existence. Her enthusiasm soon turns into melancholy. The mirror is obfuscated by her sigh. She feels utterly insecure:

I jumped up from my place, and in the  
bewildered mirror  
Cast a look at myself with eagerness  
Ah, my lips trembled with love  
The mirror's face darkened from my  
sigh  
Maybe *ū* (s/he) was looking at an  
illusion?<sup>102</sup>

جستم از جا و در آینه گنج  
بر خود افکندم با شوق نگاه  
آه، لرزید لبانم از عشق  
تار شد چهره آینه زاه  
شاید او وهمی را می نگریست

The whole atmosphere evoked in this poem is one of extreme loneliness; the speaker longs for companionship. The mirror is personified, and the speaker's bewilderment is projected onto it. Here the subject and the object (the poet and her mirror image) change places, and there is a shift in mood parallel to this shift in perspective, from one of enthusiasm and hope to one of disillusionment and melancholy. The mirror for the speaker becomes the agent, a powerful tool capable of changing her feelings.

Here, as in some other poems, Farrokhzad conveys her inability to recognize and acknowledge her image, partly through the grammar of the poem.

Despite the use of the first person singular pronoun *man* (“I”) throughout the poem, Farrokhzad, at this point, abruptly adopts the gender-free third person pronoun *ū* (“she” or “he”)—a rhetorical device called illeism.<sup>103</sup> Illeism, the act of referring to oneself in the third person, used here serves multiple functions. Through illeism, the poet adopts the position of external, often impartial observer, as if she has come outside her body and is now watching herself from an objective distance; separating her consciousness from her physical body, the specular self from the experienced self. Furthermore, illeism illustrates a twist in the identity of the speaker who cannot reconcile herself with her own self-image.

This sudden shift of pronoun from “I” into “s/he” indicates the dominating authority of the mirror, which can change the perspective configurations on the one hand, and the exteriority of her female self-conception, self-detachment and inner fragmentation of the self on the other. Through its process of reflection, the surface of the mirror becomes the agency of the relocation of gaze—thereby, the power. On the surface of the mirror, the observer and the observed, the gazer and the gazed upon, the see-er and the seen constantly shift their places and their power. The textual alterations in perspective configurations, occurring in confrontation with a mirror or a window, making the syntactic relationship and the ontological references ambiguous, are indeed significant.

Farrokhzad lacks a sense of “self-continuity”; she is not sure if her existence extends beyond her own experience. This doubt over her specular image reflects the insecure ambivalence she is experiencing in relation to her subjectivity. She doubts the reflection in the mirror; it is perhaps a mere illusion. The mirror becomes a vehicle of truth, an instrument of self-reflection, reminding her of her illusionary existence, of her lack of a solid subjectivity. Melchior-Bonnet argues:

Consciousness of the reflection, and reflection of the consciousness, the mirror image never ceases to be an illusion. Yet the illusion is not always deceptive. It can even provide a useful moment of psychic reality. The mirror is the place of transfer, a space of imagination in which the subject disguises his self and makes contact with his fantasies. The fiction of the mirror refuses the rigid distinction between real and imaginary and allows a more subtle dialectic of the subject.<sup>104</sup>

Farrokhzad introjects her projected image into the construction of her subjectivity, thereby becoming a “presence without substance.”<sup>105</sup> Never-

theless, the assimilation of the immaterial, ethereal and transitory image into the structure of self remains incomplete. For Farrokhzad, it is this partial assimilation which becomes the perpetual source of division and doubt.

Another point regarding the pronouns in this poem is that the gender-free *ū* can be taken not only as she or he; it can also refer to the poetic persona herself and/or the mirror itself personified, making the poem ambiguous and multiple interpretations possible. In all these interpretations, a sudden and unexpected shift emerges. If the pronoun is she, it means that the persona—Farrokhzad herself—wonders if she herself is looking at an “illusion” in the mirror in a moment of non-recognition. Though at first she is the acting subject (the one who jumps to see herself in the mirror in the hope of finding security in her image), soon she is disillusioned and becomes a passive object and the pronoun switches to a detached and desolate “she.”

The mirror gains such overwhelming power over her that she feels a total lack in her being—a *manque*, to adopt Lacan’s terminology. Accordingly, in her encounter with her mirror Farrokhzad experiences an utter effacement of her subjectivity. By identification with the mirror image, which provides only a distorted and metaphoric/metonymic semblance with the subject, the person develops a split and fragmentary sense of self. It is important to note that in Persian literature the mirror has been recurrently employed as a metaphor for a gaping eye. As such, the mirror has been associated with the state of shock and bewilderment, i.e., a time when the eyes are wide open and rarely blink. The bewildered eye is also unable to sleep; therefore, the mirror has also been associative of insomnia.<sup>106</sup>

In this example, looking at one’s mirror image is far from vanity; it is accompanied by pain and confusion. The mirror is obfuscated by her sigh. It is her inner darkness that dims this external apparatus. The interjection *āh* (“Ah”) and the mirror are frequently paired in classical Persian literature. Given the fact moreover that ancient mirrors were traditionally made of polished silver, steel, iron or some metal amalgam, sighing onto them caused mirrors to rust and darken with humidity.<sup>107</sup> Zipoli observes, “Rust and sighs thus take on a simple chromatic and formal role, while their function is reduced ... to that of an obfuscating veil.”<sup>108</sup>

In the third stanza, by looking at her mirror image, the persona finds her physical appearance, corresponding to her inner state of mind, in a mess:

<p>My locks in disarray and my lips arid          My shoulder naked in my night-dress          But in the darkness of the silent corridor          The passer-by was momentarily adding              to his haste          Suddenly my breath caught in my chest<sup>109</sup></p>	<p>گیسوم در هم و لپایم خشک          شانه ام عریان در جامه خواب          لیک در ظلمت دهلیز خموش          رهگذر هر دم می کرد شتاب              نفسم ناگه در سینه گرفت</p>
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In the fourth stanza, Farrokhzad turns to the image of a window, through which she is being observed. Now it is the “spirit of the breeze” who is looking; not the persona herself and not even the image in the mirror:

<p>As if the spirit of the breeze from the windows          Saw the grief of my lonely “I”          Poured over my confused locks          The burning scent of acacias          Hastily and restlessly I ran to the door<sup>110</sup></p>	<p>گویی از پنجره ها روح نسیم          دید اندوه من تنها را          ریخت بر گیسوی آشفته من          عطر سوزان اقاقی ها را          تند و بی تاب دویدم سوی در</p>
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Here, her desperate loneliness is communicated unequivocally. In the concluding stanza, the stranger passes her door, leaving her lonelier and even more desperate:

<p>The stroke of feet, in my breast          As a sound of the reed, in the breast of              the plain          But in the darkness of the silent corridor          The stroke of feet, slipped by and passed          The wind set out a melancholy song<sup>111</sup></p>	<p>ضربه پاها، در سینه من          چون طنین نی، در سینه دشت          لیک در ظلمت دهلیز خموش          ضربه پاها، لغزید و گذشت          باد آواز حزینی سر کرد</p>
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Through an analogy, the persona compares the sound of outside footsteps reverberating in her breast to the sound of a reed in the plain. *Ney*, the reed, used by many Persian poets, such as Neẓāmī, ‘Aṭṭār and Rūmī, among others, has accumulated rich meanings and symbolisms in classical Persian literature. As a wind instrument, it produces calming, meditative and often melancholic effects. It has often been played by lonely shepherds in the plains as if blowing their sighs into it. Therefore, this rustic instrument can stand for separation love poems, too. Through its plaintive sounds, the reed reveals the secrets of its separation from its origin. It can also associate knowledge, viz. reed pens and papyrus made of reed. The lean shape and yellow colour of the reed makes it a proper metaphor for the pale and

melancholic status of the lover suffering separation from the beloved.<sup>112</sup> In Farrokhzad's poem, too, the sound of the reed recalls the persona's heavy-heartedness as well as the melancholic song of the wind. It also hints at the moans and groans of separation.

The concluding sentence stresses the sad tone of the persona. Her interior mood becomes externalized and is projected onto her outside world. The simple sound of footsteps has given rise to the flimsy hope of companionship in the heart of this desperately lonely woman; a hope which soon turns into hopelessness as the passer-by moves away. By weaving the mirror image into the structure of her verse, Farrokhzad manages to depict the complex problematics of her female self. She can express her sense of self-distancing through the mirror mechanism, which promotes the object-subject dialectic. According to the discussions initiated by Lacan, the subject remains an image of the image, through projecting an image onto the reflecting surface and then by introjecting that image into the structure of one's self.<sup>113</sup> The mirror can not only breed illusion, it can also serve as a space in which the illusion can be unveiled. The whole experience she goes through in this poem functions like her mirror experience; she is disillusioned by her dreamlike anticipation of companionship, just as she is disillusioned by the image that reflects the reality of her lonely subjectivity.

The search for identity in the mirror is nowhere more explicitly expressed than in the poem "*Gomšode*" ("The Lost"), in the collection *The Wall*. The poem centres on Farrokhzad's inner conflict between her desire to compose poetry and her wish to remain silent and obedient within the walls of domesticity. The title of the poem reveals much about her confused psychological state. The poet persona—again Farrokhzad herself—is lost, oscillating between two or more psycho-emotional states. In this poem, the persona overtly declares that she does not know her real self. She turns to the mirror for an answer. Farrokhzad illustrates the duality of her subjectivity and the incompatibility of her experienced self and specular self, on the one side, and her self-image and the cultural images of womanhood, on the other, through the rhetorical device of illeism. Though the first person perspective is adopted throughout the poem, the subject dislocates itself to the gender-free third person singular pronoun *ū* (s/he) in the first stanza, while still referring to herself. This time Farrokhzad even places it within quotation marks to stress her careful choice, as well as to emphasize its inherent otherness.

Alas, after all those madnesses,  
 I can't believe that I have grown sane  
 As if the "ū" (s/he) has died in me  
 Turning me into one so exhausted, so  
 silent and so futile<sup>114</sup>

بعد از آن دیوانگی ها ای دریغ  
 باورم ناید که عاقل گشته ام  
 گوئیا "او" مرده در من کاینچنین  
 خسته و خاموش و باطل گشته ام

The persona claims that previously she had been behaving madly. But still she cannot bring herself to believe that she has regained her sanity. She believes that this *ū* or her former self has died inside her, transforming her into someone exhausted, silent and futile.

In the second stanza, Farrokhzad uses the mirror image to express her lack of a settled identity and the duality of her personality. One self seems to be her genuine self, now referred to in the distanced third person *ū*, i.e., her authentic self that she has been constantly suppressing in order to comply with the cultural definitions of womanhood and in order to receive acceptance and acknowledgment as a sane woman. By referring to her authentic self by the third person pronoun, instead of the first person pronoun "I," a disparity between her experiencing self and that of her mirror image is signalled—a rift between the speaking subject and the spoken subject, between the see-er and the seen, and between the being and the seeming. Through her cunning manipulation of the pronouns, Farrokhzad conveys a disturbing sense of self-detachment, as well as the essential paradox in mirroring which encompasses both the "I" and the other. This other self—exhausted, dumb und masked—is not even a shadow of her authentic self:

Every moment I ask the mirror in despair,  
 What else am I, what am I in your eyes?  
 But in the mirror I see—alas—  
 I am not even a shadow of what I used to be<sup>115</sup>

هر دم از آینه می پرسم ملول  
 چیستم دیگر، به چشمت چیستم؟  
 لیک در آینه می بینم که وای  
 سایه ای هم ز آنچه بودم نیستم

In order to know her self, the persona constantly consults her mirror, the site of introspection. Through this mirror she can observe the emergence of a dichotomy between her former self—with all its "madnesses"—and her present self. The mirror's verdict is cruel: she is not even a shadow of who she used to be. When she turns to her introspective mirror and contemplates the nature of her inner self, she is confronted by a mad woman—the image her culture provides her for the female transgressors of the spheres. Gilbert and Gubar, exploring the image of the madwoman in the nineteenth-century English literature of woman writers, observe:



The madwoman in literature by women is not merely, as she might be in male literature, an antagonist or foil to the heroine. Rather, she is usually in some sense the *author's* double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. Indeed, much of the poetry and fiction written by women conjures up this mad creature so that female authors can come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be.<sup>116</sup>

This is valid in this poem where the mad Farrokhzad appears as an embodiment of her fragmentation and duality as well as her anger towards it.

Asking the mirror can also be interpreted as questioning oneself, or a certain aspect of oneself, which again points to a split in the self in a concrete way. This kind of interrogation also signifies the temporality of the mirror, as if the mirror still maintains the images of her previous selves that once appeared on its surface; images with which she can now contrast her present self. In this way the mirror here symbolizes memory, too. The dichotomy subsists between her “false self” or “performative self”—the one formed by self-repression and social role-playings—and her authentic “real self.”

Influenced by Freud's notions of self, generally divided into a central part governed by instincts and an outward part for relating to the world, Winnicott divides the self into two: the True Self and the False Self. The True Self, which remains totally or partially hidden to the subject and others, is that spontaneous, instinctive core of one's personality. It is the authentic and vital self developed by the mother's responsiveness to the infant's feeble ego. It gives the subject its sense of reality and it is the self that can truly be creative. On the other hand, the False Self is a defensive mask that the subject develops to protect the “True Self” from social threats and external rules and codes. It is developed, unconsciously, in compliant adaptation to external demands, codes and rules, and in line with the person's attempts to relate to others. The existence of the False Self disturbs the person with feelings of unreality and futility. Others, and even the person himself, at times fail to discriminate between his True Self and his False Self.<sup>117</sup>

In Farrokhzad's case, the “False Self” is developed to protect her “True Self” from exterior threats; to present to the world a picture of a silent and passive woman, settled within her assigned sphere of domesticity, a woman who complies with the forced “figurations of womanhood,” or “cultural noise pollution,” allowing her thereby to protect herself from being stigmatized as mad.<sup>118</sup> Following Forugh Farrokhzad's nervous breakdown

in early September 1955, when she was hospitalized in a psychiatric clinic for about a month, a popular magazine of the time, *H"āndānī-hā*, published an article under the title "Zan-hā yek dande kam dārand" (Women Have One Rib Too Few), in which the writer says:

Rumour has it that Ms. Forugh Farrokhzad has gone insane. This news reminded us of what the famous poet and writer Tha'ālebī had said: "Poets lack reason, and reason is no criterion of poetry. The daughters of Eve who are lacking a rib, heaven forbid the day when they become poets and beware the day they go crazy—it is truly worth seeing." In any case, we hope the rumour is not true.<sup>119</sup>

Being a woman culturally makes her an object of *looked-at-ness*, being on the side of gazed upon. Now being a mad woman, a woman who does not conform to society's definitions of sane womanhood, makes her even more worthy of being gazed at.

What is disturbing Farrokhzad at this point in the poem is that she has not completely assimilated her outside image, her mask, the "False Self," into the structure of her being, i.e., her defensive projected image is not internalized. Her present self is being disturbed by the consciousness of radical change. The dichotomy seems to be more between her "former self" and the present "lack of self," a lack of agency, a sort of "selflessness" which is evidently false and performative. In her continual self-effacements, Farrokhzad has struggled to suppress her real self—the active self, useful as well as voiced. This authentic female self with a voice was the one considered mad by the cultural definitions of womanhood; hence, it was forced into silence and futility. Now that her false self conforms to the ideal of the sane, virtuous, silent and passive woman, Farrokhzad feels "futile" and "exhausted" due to the continual repressions.

Finding the "real self" seems to be a disturbed process in Farrokhzad's poetry. In this regard, her "real self" is not necessarily her "former self" nor even her present "silent and futile self," but could be a foreshadowing of what she will grow into in the future, typifying Kristeva's  *sujet en procès*—a continuously plural subject, incessantly mutable. Process of course here retains a double meaning: the subject going through a continuous series of changes, and also continuously committing the subject to trials.<sup>120</sup> Farrokhzad depicts the experience of her "subject in process" by resorting to a mirror; an instrument which can reveal the multiplicity and fragmentation of a subject to her; the subject which can only be momentarily and

relationally defined; a subject incessantly changing and incessantly put on trial by the very subject herself. By questioning both the former and the present self, Farrokhzad is struggling to find her “real self”; or, to draw upon Freudian interpretation, by criticizing both her former and her present self, Farrokhzad is straining to catch up with her “ideal self.” Nevertheless, the ongoing debate among the antithetical warring selves undermines the notion of a true self as a fixed, established and definable entity.

The continual repression and silencing has led to the persona acquiring a split character. Though she believes that she has been mad previously and doubts whether she has become wise and normal even now, she is sure that she is no longer her true self. Farrokhzad has attempted to murder her “true self” brutally, simply in order to cast the label of “mad” aside, and this has been done with great suffering and self-denial. By echoing the language of her patriarchal society in calling herself mad, Farrokhzad’s unconscious internalization of her madness is revealed; madness in the sense of a cultural stigmatizing of female non-conformism as a method of control and punishment.

In the following stanzas, Farrokhzad depicts the source of her inner conflicts and her sense of fragmentation.

Like that Hindu dancer, I am  
Stamping my feet with grace, but  
upon my own grave  
Alas, with a hundred unfulfilled  
wishes I have  
Illumined this ruin by my own light<sup>121</sup>

همچو آن رقاصهٔ هندو به ناز  
پای می‌کوبم، ولی بر گور خویش  
وه که با صد حسرت این ویرانه را  
روشنی بخشیده ام از نور خویش

Though she seems gracefully dancing, she is dancing on her own grave. Only by murdering her real self can she stage a spectacle of graceful dance before the eyes of others. Only by rejecting a hundred wishes burning her insides can she bring light into her home, referred to as “this ruin.” This is in a ruinous state because it has been built upon the debris of her wishes.

I seek no entrance to the City of Day  
Undoubtedly I am slumbering in the  
depths of a grave  
I retain a gem but out of fear  
I have hidden it away in the heart of the  
swamps<sup>122</sup>

ره نمی‌جویم به سوی شهر روز  
نی‌گمان در قعر گوری خفته ام  
گوهری دارم ولی او را ز بیم  
در دل مردابها پنهفته ام

The persona claims that she owns a precious gem, but because of her fears she has hidden it in the swamps. Farrokhzad acknowledges her talent, her desire for her art, but she hides it within the swamps of imposed domesticity for fear of her society's cruel reactions. She tries to force herself to conform to the expectations of her patriarchal culture for fear of being labelled mad again. These irreconcilable conflicts between her authentic self and her desires on the one hand, and the social expectations of silent domesticity on the other, have led to Farrokhzad's painful experience of multiple selves, as well as the internalization of her madness. Hence, at this stage, Farrokhzad does not seek entrance into light, livelihood, song or creativity, but remains in the darkness of a grave.

In the next stanza, Farrokhzad acknowledges that she is being driven passively along, without aim or consciousness:

I am going, but I do not ask myself	می روم، اما نمی پرسم ز خویش
Where is the road, where is the station,	ره کجا، منزل کجا، مقصود چیست؟
what is the destination?	بوسه می بخشم ولی خود غافلم
I bestow kisses but I myself am unaware	کاین دل دیوانه را معبود کیست
Who is worshipped by this mad heart <sup>123</sup>	

In the final two stanzas of this poem, again she overtly expresses her sense of split personality as well as her madness:

When <i>ū</i> (s/he) died in me, suddenly	”او“ چو در من مرد، ناگه هر چه بود
whatever there was	در نگاهم حالتی دیگر گرفت
Took on another expression in my view	گوئیا شب با دو دست سرد خویش
As if night with his two cold hands	روح بی تاب مرا در بر گرفت
Cloaked in my restless soul	

Ah, yes, this is me, but to what avail?	آه، آری این منم، اما چه سود
The <i>ū</i> (s/he) who was in me is no	”او“ که در من بود، دیگر نیست، نیست
more, is not	می خروشم زیر لب دیوانه وار
Madly I roar under my breath	”او“ که در من بود، آخر کیست، کیست؟
This <i>ū</i> (s/he) who was in me, who is	
it after all, who is it? <sup>124</sup>	

Together with her “former self,” Farrokhzad finds all of her old worldviews dead; she has cast off her old perspectives. Though she, like the Hindu dancer, stamps her feet, it is over her grave—death-in-life. In her quest for

the authentic self, Farrokhzad turns to her mirror for an answer. She asks the mirror, as well as herself, to reveal the identity of that *ū*, the “former self.” Here, Farrokhzad plays with the tenses: she uses a present tense question word *kīst* (who is) for the bygone self, and a present negative for the *ū* who *nīst* (is no more). She asks herself “who ‘is’ this *ū* who ‘was’ in me,” a method through which she aesthetically demonstrates her split personality and her madness. The sentence also reveals that the uncanny ghost of this dead *ū* is still lingering inside her.

In this poem again the mirror is expected to see, speak and answer her questions. The mirror is supposed to be in possession of the knowledge she seeks. Her mirror appears to be a modern descendent of the Persian omniscient mirror, the catoptronic *ġām-e ġām*. It is expected to resolve the psychological conflict of a modern woman, caught in the in-between world of tradition and modernity. The mirror, with its power to provide the onlooker with her ethereal transient images, with the otherwise invisible psychological interiority, facilitates the portrayal of Farrokhzad’s “subject in process.” For the female “subject in process,” the surface of the mirror turns into a court where she continuously puts her subjectivity on trial. In the continual process of becomings and trials, Farrokhzad does not return to someone she was, but incessantly becomes a new person, adopting new perspectives, even though her “old self” lingers on, on the surface of her mirror. The title of the poem and the final line explicitly show the painful psychological crisis she was going through and her desperate search for her definition of self.

In this poem, Farrokhzad believes that she has been “burned,” “silenced,” “exhausted,” “futile” and “dead,” has become one who does not even seek entrance into the city of light. By inscribing a portrait of her problematic self into her text, by unveiling the irreconcilability of cultural codes with her inner desires and talent, and by objectifying them in her text, Farrokhzad gains knowledge and thereby control over them, foreshadowing a more liberated subjectivity. Farrokhzad is struggling to come to terms with the multiple images reflected in her mirror. Through this very act of voicing her madness, her forced entrapment and her silenced position, Farrokhzad steps beyond the private and becomes, in feministic terms, political. By textualizing her silence and invisibility, her very text becomes a loud clamour against the silencing and invisibility of woman forced upon her by her culture.

### The Mirror of the Memory and of the Imagination

In July 1956, Farrokhzad left Iran for the first time. She travelled for about nine months to Italy and Germany. In the same year, she published the memoirs of this journey under the title, “*Dar diyāri dīgar*” (“In Another Land”) in the influential magazine, *Ferdowsī*.<sup>125</sup> This trip provided Farrokhzad with enough distance, enabling her to acquire another perspective on her society. It also provided her with respite from all the lingering rumours and the suffocating sense of confinement at being a cultural misfit.

The poem “*Bāzgašt*” (“The Return”), composed in September 1957, recounts Farrokhzad’s melancholic experience of re-encountering her hometown Tehran and noticing the differences of ambiance after her stay in Munich. The poem, composed in thirteen quatrain stanzas, is narrated in the first person. In the first stanza, the street line comes to its end. The persona—Farrokhzad herself—arrives dusty, her eyes rushing ahead while her lips are holding “a warm greeting.” In the second stanza, she recreates the atmosphere in highly metaphorical language: “in the furnace of noon,” the city was boiling; the alley was burning in the “fever of the sun.” Her feet, shaking uncontrollably, proceeded along the “mute cobblestones.” In the third stanza, Farrokhzad depicts the differences that her eyes discerned between her hometown and the place whence she had returned, thus:

The houses were of a different hue  
Dusty, dark and depressing  
The faces between the veils  
Were like ghosts in fettered feet<sup>126</sup>

خانه ها رنگ دیگری بودند  
گرد آلوده، تیره و دلگیر  
چهره ها در میان چادرها  
همچو ارواح پای در زنجیر

Being a female observer, the difference in women’s appearances and their mood in the two countries is what catches her attention first. In Tehran, she comes across women as ghosts enchained. Within their veils and chains, they represent Coleridgean “Life-in death,” represented in his “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”<sup>127</sup>

In the following six stanzas, Farrokhzad provides an unrolling series of discrete images of what she had encountered upon her arrival through metaphors and similes: the dried-up stream like a blind eye was empty of water or any trace of it; a singing man passes by, his song filling her ears; the familiar dome of the old mosque was like a broken bowl; a believer was reciting the *azān* (call to prayer) in a melancholic melody from the minaret; barefoot kids holding stones were chasing dogs; a woman laughed from

behind a veil; the wind made a shutter slam shut; the dark openings of the vestibules reeked of the damp of the grave; a blind man was walking with his stick; someone familiar was approaching. Then the persona reaches her house. Again she depicts her arrival through discrete images: a door silently opened; stretched hands invited her to an embrace; a tear dropped from the cloud of an eye; hands repelled her. Within the house, on the wall the old ivy still rippled like a trembling fountain; over the body of the ivy's luxuriant leaves was the greenness of old age and the dust of time.

In the tenth stanza, upon her entering the house, her eyes search for a sign of her son, but she finds that her room is devoid of his childish cries:

My eyes asked searchingly  
 "Where is a sign of him?"  
 But I saw that my small room  
 Was devoid of his childish clamour<sup>128</sup>

نگهم جستجوکنان پرسید:  
 "در کدامین مکان نشانه اوست؟"  
 لیک دیدم اتاق کوچک من  
 خالی از بانگ کودکانه اوست

Farrokhzad is desperately looking for her son, Kāmyār, of whom she lost custody when she was divorced, even to the point of being denied the right to sporadic visits. Therefore, she indulges in her memory of him and the visual images stored in it. In her delusion she can see him in the mirror:

From the heart of the mirror's cold earth  
 His body, like a rose, suddenly grew;  
 His velvet eyes rippled,  
 Ah, even in [my] delusion he was seeing me<sup>129</sup>

از دل خاک سرد آینه  
 ناگهان پیکرش چو گل روید  
 موج زد دیدگان مخملی اش  
 آه، در وهم مرا می دید

Here, Farrokhzad compares the surface of the mirror to the "cold earth," from whose core the memory of her son's body and his eyes simultaneously blossom like a flower. The mirror is cold; it is a dispassionate, objective reflector. It is indeed the graveyard of her memories. In her maternal desire to blur the boundaries between herself and her son Kāmī (shortened form of Kāmyār), Farrokhzad resorts to the mirror's delusive quality. The mirror has been traditionally associated with the imagination and consciousness, because it, like the imagination, can reiterate a picture of the visible world and its reality. Indeed the mirror has traditionally been considered "a metaphorical prism of the imagination."<sup>130</sup> The close association of the mirror and the imagination or dream is due to their common opacity of images, their transient ethereality; being capable of surprising us by making visions suddenly appear and disappear in our psychological illusions. Farrokhzad's

mirror in this poem has a magical quality. It can reflect things across time and space, just like the classical *ḡām-e ḡām*. Yet Farrokhzad is well aware that this is no more than her delusion.

Farrokhzad relies on the psychological interiority of the mirror fleetingly to ease the terrible pain of loss she was experiencing; hence, for her, the mirror provides a transient utopian space where she can experience the presence of her son; a space in which not only can she see him, but he can see her also; this simultaneity of seeing and being seen can be enacted through one's mirror. As explained in Chapter One, the virtuality common to the mirror and memory has given rise to recurrent references to each in terms of the other. In both these ambivalent spaces, memory and mirror, the duality between reality and virtuality, the illusion of reality and the reality of illusion are negotiated. The mirror as a memory is transformed into the "cold earth" of a grave of dead experiences, where the spirits of bygone things grow like vegetation.

The mirror functions not only as a site of illusion and delirium; ironically, it is a site where the reality of an illusion is unveiled, often leading to a series of other painful disillusionments. In the following stanza, the mirror-memory-imagination fails in its function of producing an image; it can no longer retrieve an image, a body or a presence. It can produce nothing but a name:

I leaned against the wall's breast,  
Softly I said: "Is this you, Kāmī?"  
But I saw that from that bitter past  
Naught but a name remained<sup>131</sup>

تکیه دادم به سینه دیوار  
گفتم آهسته: "این تویی کامی؟"  
لیک دیدم کز آن گذشته تلخ  
هیچ باقی نمانده جز نامی

Through the mirror, as well as the imagination and memory, things lose their substance and are cast into transient ethereal existence in the form of images. Her son loses substance while being transformed into an image. Then the name and image as signifiers lose their referent, the signified, as the image disappears from her mind-mirror, leading to her disturbing disillusionment as to the presence of her desired figure.

The melancholic tone of the poem corresponds to the dark and ghostly images that Farrokhzad depicts. Farrokhzad concludes the poem with a repeat of the opening stanza, adding that her hometown is indeed the grave of her desires; a town that fetters women into veiled ghosts and murders their dreams and desires; a town that abrogates the visiting rights of a mother to her only child:



At last the line of the road ended  
 I arrived dusty from the journey  
 The thirsty could not find a way to the  
 spring and alas  
 My town was the grave of my wish<sup>132</sup>

عاقبت خط جاده پایان یافت  
 من رسیدم ز ره غبارآلود  
 تشنه بر چشمه ره نبرد و دریغ  
 شهر من گور آرزویم بود

By bringing reality and imagination together, the mirror can become a site of desires. In this poem, the mirror is a utopian space where the persona imagines the presence of her son of whose company she has been cruelly deprived. In her illusion, she fulfills—at least momentarily—her desire by unearthing the images buried in her mirror-memory. Her poem serves here as a mirror for her self-expression; as a space in which she can give voice to her desires; the desires which should not be disclosed in the world outside, let alone be fulfilled.

### The Grotesquery of the Mirror Image

It is generally assumed that mirrors reiterate exact replicas, reflecting the objects before them as they really are. But in fact there is a distortion to mirrors in that they give back a reversed image—a reversal of left and right, and even in some cases top to bottom. There can be an even greater distortion to the mirror than the mere reversal of right and left. Walker calls mirror's process of reversal "the chiasmus of perception."<sup>133</sup> The perfect mirror is only a theoretical one; indeed, domestic mirrors, absorbing a significant portion of the light cast on them, are far from being perfect. This distortion and the inherent otherness of the specular image have persistently appealed to the imagination of poets and artists. Through the mirror image, the poet can perceive and represent the reality of a being, as well as the reality of an illusion. Ironically, one can also perceive and represent the illusion of a reality and being, owing to mirror's highly ambiguous nature. Therefore, the mirror has been repeatedly employed as a deceptive tool in literature.<sup>134</sup> Farrokhzad too relies on the reversing and distorting characteristic of the mirror and the delusory otherness of its image in her portrayal of grotesque imagery. By resorting to the inherent distortion in the mirror, Farrokhzad depicts the disharmony, the grotesquery, and as well the lack of a rational relationship between the self and its image, between the self and the outside world or even between any social and cultural phenomena.<sup>135</sup>

Farrokhzad's apocalyptic poem "*Āye-hā-ye zamīnī*" ("Earthly Verses"), published in the collection *Another Birth*, contains many evocations of the Old Testament and Qur'an. The poem is prophetic, and the persona has in fact turned into a prophet.<sup>136</sup> In this poem, Farrokhzad presents a portrayal of the eschatological *yawm al-qiyāmat* (the Day of Resurrection or the Day of Judgment), and the *āḥīr al-zamān* (the End of Time) as described in the Qur'an; the day when darkness, chaos, confusion and tyranny overwhelm the earth. On that day the sun grows cold; darkness spreads; blessings flee the earth; all vegetation dries up; the earth rejects its corpses; roads lose their continuance; nobody thinks of love, of triumph or of anything; loneliness and futility reign supreme; blood stinks of drugs; infants are born headless and cradles take refuge in the grave; they are "bitter and black days" when bread has defeated the wondrous power of prophecy.<sup>137</sup> In the sixth stanza, Farrokhzad resorts to the mirror's distorting feature and the inherent other-ness of the specular image to present a portrait of the grotesquery of the world outside and the social disorder:

As if in the eyes of the mirrors  
The motions and the colours and the images  
Were reflected, inverted  
And above the heads of the debased clowns  
And the harlots' shameless faces  
A glowing sacred halo burned  
Like a parasol aflame<sup>138</sup>

در دیدگان آینه ها گویی  
حرکات و رنگها و تصاویر  
وارونه منعکس می گشت  
و بر فراز سر دلنکان پست  
و چهره وقیح فواحش  
یک هاله مقدس نورانی  
مانند چتر مشتعلی می سوخت

Here, once again, the close reciprocity of the mirror and the eye has been restored in the metaphorical use of "the eye of the mirror."<sup>139</sup> Through the eye of the mirror, one can perceive and reflect naked realities, whereas the eye, without the help of the mirror, would be drawn into the illusions persistently induced by the outside world and personal inclinations.

Through this mirror, Farrokhzad acquires the artistic ability to reveal the reality of the illusionary world without. The mirror as a delusory site helps the onlooker realize the reality of illusions as well as the illusion of realities. Farrokhzad sees no rational relationship to the phenomena of her cosmos. All that she finds is uncanny grotesque imageries. Farrokhzad herself once said in an interview, "If you pay close attention you will see that we are living in a period of time when all concepts and scales are losing their meanings and are becoming, not to say valueless, but shaky."<sup>140</sup> And elsewhere she argues, "[the world outside] is so inverted that I don't want to believe in

it.”<sup>141</sup> Through reflecting on the nature of the illusion, Farrokhzad uncovers the uncertainty and precariousness of the real.

Farrokhzad manipulates the delusory nature of the mirror to depict the grotesquery present within her society and its value system. In the midst of her surroundings, she perceives a lack of rationality, a disharmony in the rules governing her culture. Through her mirror image (and by extension, through her art) Farrokhzad demonstrates the distorted reality of her outside world. The world in the mirror emerges as more reliable than the source world. The distortion in the mirror is emphasized not to delude but to reveal the already existing delusion. In fact, the logical distorting function of the mirror is pushed further into the realm of illogicality, in order to reveal the illogicality of the values and relations within her world. All she can see in her world are inverted, false values. Within her society, the individuals with the lowest traits are idolatrized.

This reversal of values for the poet marks the End of Time, as described in the sacred texts on the apocalypse. Through the inherent distortive feature of the mirror Farrokhzad reveals her painful bewilderment, as well as her contemptuousness. Apocalypse (in Persian *mokāšafa*) literally means “unveiling” or “lifting of the veil.” Also recurrently employed as a Sufi term, apocalypse is the time when the veils of all misconceptions and falsehoods, dominating the world of mankind, are lifted and the naked realities are revealed to the Sufi. The mirror as a space of misconception seems to be the most appropriate site for revealing the misconception to the beholder. The surface of the mirror not only reveals the visible world, the world of appearances; it is also a very space where the veil of appearances is lifted and the invisible is rendered visible. In this poem, Farrokhzad manipulates the mirror image in this sense to unveil the grotesquery, the misconceptions and falsehood dominating her society.

The poet continues by depicting the world in a series of discrete images: the intellectuals have drowned in swamps of alcohol; the mice have chewed the pages of the books; the sun has died and the word “tomorrow” has a confusing obscure meaning in the minds of children. It is a time when people, dead in the heart, slim and bewildered, carrying their evil corpses, keep migrating from one strange land to another, while a painful lust for crime swells in their hands. Farrokhzad continues by portraying an excessively depressing dark and violent image of man and his world. In the final stanza, the persona, addressing herself as a captive in this uncanny grotesque world, starts wondering if “voice of the prisoner,” “last voice of all voices,” would ever be able to dig its way from this side of spiteful night to the other side of light.<sup>142</sup>

## The Mirror and the Window

Through constant oscillation between the mirror and the window in her poetry, Farrokhzad demonstrates the complex reciprocity of one's self-image and one's worldview, the "I" within and the "I" without. The "alienated," "frozen" and "reversed" image in the mirror (to draw upon Lacan's terminology) serves to bridge the gap between the subject and the world.<sup>143</sup> The function of the mirror stage, inaugurated by the child's initial self-recognition of his mirror image, is to establish a relationship between the two dialectical worlds. Lacan holds that the initial recognition and identification of the image in the mirror, which serves as an introduction to a process of lifelong identifications, is essentially a *méconnaissance* (misrecognition). In Freudian terminology (which Lacan turns to), these two worlds are known as the *Innenwelt*, the imaginary interior space that the "I" occupies, and the *Umwelt*, the external physical world in which the living human subject is situated. Lacan emphasizes the essential role of the mirror image as a "virtual complex" in the development of the human psyche and the individual's entry into social and linguistic identity. In the case of Farrokhzad's poetry, Sandler observes that the window provides the speaker with "a sense of connection":

Unlike the problematic embrace of a lover, the *window* is a reliable haven. The *window* provides a sanctuary that is much more effective .... The *window* is a place for reflection, for writing .... The *window* is the place where the poet makes contact with the sum and substance of her existence.<sup>144</sup>

Like the mirror, the window provides her with relatedness, not only to her most inner self (*Innenwelt*), but also to the world outside (*Umwelt*). Farrokhzad constantly oscillates between the window and the mirror as her means of "awareness." In her poetry, the blurring of the distinction between these two dialectical worlds, the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* (normally represented by the mirror and an opening such as a window) reveals the complex interaction of the self-image and worldview. For instance, in the poem "*Didār dar šab*" ("Meeting at Night"), all through the night the speaker is involved in a desperate dialogue with an "astounded face" which she spies through an opening, variously called a shutter, a window or a crack.<sup>145</sup> What at first seems to be an apparition turns out to be the reflection of herself. The poem is a narration of her painful experience of encountering an eidetic projection of herself.

The adjective *šegoft* (or *šegeft*), used here as an attribute of the face, in Persian denotes astounded, bewildered, strange and foreign, as well as miraculous. Thereupon, by the synecdochic phrase *čehre-ye šegoft*—face here referring to the person, to a subjectivity *in toto*—not only is the confused and astounded state of the subject conveyed, but so is its foreignness and strangeness when regarded in an objective position. In addition, by the use of “miraculous,” the uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit* in Freudian usage) of experiencing the fragmented duality of ego is implied. It is through this window-mirror that the invisible presence intrudes itself, making itself perceptible and visible. This unknown presence, the frightening stranger within, is what Freud calls *Unheimlich*, literally “unhomely” and often translated as “uncanny.” Freud defines it in the following words:

Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*.<sup>146</sup>

Therefore, there seems to be no clear demarcation line between the two terms of canny and uncanny and their feelings. As portrayed here in Farrokhzad’s poem, there is fluidity between the two presences.

Death and a sense of nihilism overshadow the whole poem. Farrokhzad encloses the words of the other-I—the “astounded face,” referred to in the gender-free third person *ū* (s/he)—within quotation marks to make it distinct from the words of the speaker, who interrupts only to pass on her descriptive observances. The poem begins:

And the astounded face	و چهرهٔ شگفت
From the other side of the shutter told me:	از آن سوی دریچه به من گفت:
“Whoever sees is right	”حق با کسی ست که می بیند
I cause fear, like the feeling of being lost	من مثل حس گمشدگی وحشت آورم
But, my God,	اما خدای من
How is it possible to be afraid of me?	آیا چگونه می شود از من ترسید؟
Of me, me	من، من که هیچگاه
Who has never been anything	جز بادبادکی سبک و ولگرد
But a light vagrant kite	بر پشت بام های مه آلود آسمان
Above the fog-wreathed roofs of the sky	چیزی نبوده ام
And a mouse named death	و عشق و میل و نفرت و دردم را
Has gnawed my love, my desire, my hate,	در غربت شبانه قبرستان
and my pain	موشی به نام مرک جویده ست
In the nightly exile of a cemetery” <sup>147</sup>	

Seeing this “astounded face”—a ghostly, uncanny and haunting self—through a shutter fills the speaker with an overwhelming sense of horror. The nightly visitation renders this strangely familiar presence even more uncanny. It is the sense of being lost—the realization of the fragmented and detached self—that fuels her panic. The speaker is confused, unable to decide between the realities of two present entities: the self she is experiencing or the self she is visiting. In her struggle to bring the fragmentation of the self into a unity, to resolve the conflict, and to decide which one is real, the face in the opening tells her: “Whoever sees is right”; acknowledging the power on the part of the see-er over the one being seen; the gazer over the gazed upon.<sup>148</sup> This claim to righteousness apparently fails to resolve her inner conflict. It is because in specular experience the subject assumes both positions simultaneously, that is she is both the subject and the object of the gaze.

In her horror, the speaker poses another rhetorical and ambiguous question: “How is it possible to be afraid of me?” Are others afraid of her, or is it she who is afraid of herself? In any case there exists a monstrosity, something unknown and un-named as the cause of such a horror. The persona reveals her inability to recognize and acknowledge her own image partly through the grammar of the poem. At this point, again, Farrokhzad turns to illeism; she opts for the gender-free third person singular *ū* (s/he), despite having adopted the first person *man* (“I”) elsewhere in the poem. The shift of perspective points to the disparity between the experienced self and specular self, and between self and the body, which makes the speaker (and by extension Farrokhzad) feels so lost and terrified. The second stanza continues:

And the astounded face  
 With those faint protracted lines  
 Whose fluid traces the wind, moment  
     by moment  
 Was effacing and altering  
 While the hidden movement of the  
     night was stealing  
 Its soft, long tresses  
 And was spreading them all over the  
     night's reaches  
 Like the plants of the seabed  
 Flowing on the other side of the shutter

و چهره شگفت  
 با آن خطوط نازک دنباله دار سست  
 که باد، طرح جاری شان را  
 لحظه به لحظه محو و دگرگون می کرد  
 و گیسوان نرم و درازش  
 که جنبش نهانی شب می ربودشان  
 و بر تمام پهنه شب می گشودشان  
 همچون گیاههای ته دریا  
 در آن سوی دریچه روان بود  
 و داد زد:  
 ”باور کنید  
 من زنده نیستم“

And it shouted:  
 "Believe me  
 I am not alive"<sup>149</sup>

The speaker is here expressing her horrible experience of an unstable, fragmentary and fluid self. She is indeed going through a painful crisis; unable to see her face within its borders. The shutter is functioning as a mirror for her, reflecting her face back to her. The omnipresent stranger, this unknown, alienated "I," frozen into an image, declares herself to be dead: "Believe me/ I am not alive." By the paradoxical declaration of herself to be dead, a self-contradiction in the starkest terms is revealed. As La Belle asserts. "To exist in multiplicity is, in a sense, not to exist at all because self-conception requires some conviction in the singularity of one's being."<sup>150</sup> What she observes through the terrifying/terrified other "I," or the *ū* (s/he), is an accumulation of darkness. Although the speaker can discern the outside world and "the pines' silver fruits," she is all the time conscious of the presence of this stranger; this *other-ness* spreading itself over all inside and outside phenomena. The persona feels powerless to free herself from the overwhelming existence of this omnipresent duality:

Beyond s/he I could still see the  
 congestion of darkness  
 And the pine's silver fruits  
 Ah, I could see, but s/he ...  
 Was slipping over them all  
 And his/her infinite heart was reaching  
 its peak  
 As if s/he were the green feeling of the  
 trees  
 And his/her eyes were extended into  
 eternity<sup>151</sup>

من از و رای او تراکم تاریکی را  
 و میوه های نقره ای کاج را هنوز  
 می دیدم، آه، ولی او ...  
 او بر تمام این همه می لغزید  
 و قلب بی نهایت او اوج می گرفت  
 گویی که حس سبز درختان بود  
 و چشمهایش تا ابدیت ادامه داشت.

The guilt-ridden part of Farrokhzad's personality, hiding and being repressed in the mornings, is what Jung called "shadow."<sup>152</sup> The projection of the illusory shadow obliterates one's relation with his/her outside world and instead poses an illusory one:

As we know, it is not the conscious subject but the unconscious which does the projecting. Hence one meets with projections, one does not

make them. The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's unknown face.<sup>153</sup>

The speaker's inner darkness extends itself over every outside phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, the colour green, for Farrokhzad, is recurrently associated with illusion and imagination.<sup>154</sup> The illusory sense of the "I" permeates whole the world where this "I" is positioned. The other "I" is an illusionary green image of herself—"like the plants of the seabed." It is indeed a mirror image, which by its metaphoric/metonymic representation of the self remains essentially illusive. To emphasize her terror of the self, the speaker turns to the mirror in the fourth stanza, where she can observe herself as dead:

"You're right  
I have never dared to look  
Into the mirror after my death  
And so dead am I,  
That nothing remains to prove  
My death  
Ah,  
Did you hear the cricket's cry  
From the far end of the garden  
Which under the shelter of the night,  
was fleeing to the moon?"<sup>155</sup>

"حق با شہاست  
من هیچگاه پس از مرگم  
جرئت نکرده ام که در آئینه بنگرم  
و آنقدر مرده ام  
که هیچ چیز مرگ مرا دیگر  
ثابت نمی کند  
آه  
آیا صدای زنجره ای را  
که در پناه شب، به سوی ماه می گریخت  
از انتهای باغ شنیدید؟

Death has wiped out her existence so thoroughly that no one can ever prove that she has even died; as if she had never lived. The speaker seems to have developed an eisoptrophobia; she fears encountering her mirror image because it is within her mirror that the multiplicity, fragmentation and the frightening otherness of the self, as well as her death, are enacted. Shengold observes that "Associations to mirrors sometimes connote denial: it's only a reflection, it doesn't count."<sup>156</sup> In a context where the person confuses the self with its image, subject with the object, and the real with the illusory, denial of one's existence is a natural outcome. The speaker feels that she has no existence beyond that reflected image in her mirror. Through internalization of the specular image—ethereal, transient and immaterial in its essence—she feels *de*-substantiated and *de*-realized in the process. The



persona seems to be trapped between the two worlds of life and death. After confessing to being “so dead,” she is suddenly given a hint of life by hearing the sound of a cricket.

In the following stanza, the speaker believes that all the stars have migrated to a lost sky. Her city is a ghostly necropolis; so depressingly silent that, on her way, she meets nothing but a few pale statues, street-sweepers and sleepy patrols. Farrokhzad not only considers herself dead, she extends this lifelessness to the world outside and to others. Later in the same poem, she depicts people as corpses:

I think all the stars  
Have migrated to a lost sky  
And the city, how silent was the city  
All along my way, I  
Faced nothing  
But a group of pallid statues  
And the exhausted sleepy patrols  
And a few street sweepers  
Reeking of garbage and tobacco

من فکر می کنم که تمام ستاره ها  
به آسمان گمشده ای کوچ کرده اند  
و شهر، شهر چه ساکت بود  
من در سراسر طول مسیر خود  
جز با گروهی از مجسمه های پریده رنگ  
و چند رفتگر  
که بوی خاکروبه و توتون می دادند  
و گشتیان خسته خواب آلود  
با هیچ چیز روبه رو نشدم

Alas  
I am dead  
And this night still seems to be  
The extension of that same futile  
night<sup>157</sup>

افسوس  
من مرده ام  
و شب هنوز هم  
گویی ادامه همان شب بیوده است

Once again, Farrokhzad reminds the reader that she—ironically the speaking persona—is dead and her outside world is the extension of the same absurd world described earlier in the poem. At this point Farrokhzad closes the quotation mark, adopts the perspective of the other “I,” and inserts her observation. The “astounded face” turned silent and felt the blurring bitterness of tears in her eyes. This shift of perspective and the self-objectification are a sort of defence mechanism at a time when pain or terror becomes overwhelmingly unbearable. By watching herself in this way as an object whose eyes are filled with tears, instead of acknowledging herself to be subjectively crying, she takes the edge off the pain, making it more bearable. In the following stanza, the other “I” resumes her dramatic monologue, addressing the reader in the second person as “you”:

“O you who hide  
Your face  
In the shadow of life’s depressing mask  
Have you ever pondered  
The grievous truth  
That the living beings of today  
Are nothing but the discarded pulps  
of a living one?”<sup>158</sup>

”آیا شما که صورتتان را  
در سایه نقاب غم انگیز زندگی  
مخفی نموده اید  
گاهی به این حقیقت یأس آور  
اندیشه می کنید  
که زنده های امروزی  
چیزی بجز تفرقه یک زنده نیستند؟

On the other hand, the persona is addressing herself whom she is visiting through the opening, the one who is hiding her true identity behind a mask, adopting images other than her own, and in the process turning to mere “discarded pulps of a living one.”

In this and the following stanzas, Farrokhzad portrays the tragedy of modern man in his grotesque modern world: when the baby becomes old in his first smile; when the heart does not trust its own stony validity; when the addiction to being and to tranquilizers has abolished all the pure, humane desires; when the spirit has been exiled to an uninhabited islet; when swift-footed cavalry have turned into infantry, leaning on their spears; when the high-thinking mystics (*‘āref-ān*) have turned into lean curved opium takers; when man is no longer awaiting any Advent; and when the girls-in-love have pierced their incredulous eyes with long embroidery needles. The persona even doubts hearing the sound of the cricket, a sign from a different kind of world; perhaps it was in her dreams that she heard it.<sup>159</sup>

In the twelfth stanza, the second mirror image of the poem appears. This time the mirror is personified; thereby granted a power beyond the power of individuals.

Now the cawing of the crows  
Is felt  
In the depths of morning slumber  
The mirrors come to consciousness  
And the isolated lonely forms  
Surrender themselves  
To the early trail of wakefulness  
And to the secret onslaught of ominous  
nightmares<sup>160</sup>

اکنون طنین جیغ کلاغان  
در عمق خوابهای سحرگاهی  
احساس می شود  
آینه ها به هوش می آیند  
و شکل‌های منفرد و تنها  
خود را به اولین کشتاله بیداری  
و به هجوم مخفی کابوسهای شوم  
تسلیم می کنند

The crow, this black carrion-eating bird, is like the raven associated with imminent death.<sup>161</sup> It is a messenger bird—an “ill-omened gossip monger.”<sup>162</sup> The presence of a crow in a given place or its cry is considered a bad omen. In the Persian mystical cosmos, crows and ravens are also symbols of the mundane, material lower world.<sup>163</sup> In this poem, the crows accompany the arrival of morning, but it is the mirrors that wake up, not the people.

Farrokhzad metaphorizes people to the mirrors and paradoxically an awakening to the swarming of nightmares. In this interpretation, people are reduced to their specular image, to the appearances of the lower world. They are merely what can be seen within the confines of mirrors: mere soulless, flat images, and nothing beyond. It is only their physical bodies, visible in the mirrors, which are waking up, while their true selves remain dormant or even dead, exiled on an isolated island. Here, Farrokhzad draws upon the reversing, distortive and delusive nature of the mirror to portray the state of modern man trapped in his delusions and delirium: it confuses man with his mirror-image, nightmares with wakefulness and realities with illusions. Therefore, the distortive delusionary nature of the mirror promotes the delusory and delirious man, when he is in fact an image of his image.<sup>164</sup>

In the fourteenth stanza, Farrokhzad closes the monologue, once again to insert the persona’s observation of the other uncanny “I”—the “astounded face”—in the third person. Crumbling down on her both sides, she extends her begging hands towards the persona (in the first person) through the cracks:

S/he trembled	لرزید
And tumbled down on her both sides	و بر دو سوی خویش فرو ریخت
And through the cracks, her begging arms	و دستهای ملتمسش از شکافها
Like extended sighs	مانند آه های طولی، به سوی من
Reached out to me <sup>165</sup>	پیش آمدند

Fantasies of corporeal disintegration, decomposition and dismemberment, as expressed in this poem (as well as in other poems by Farrokhzad), bear similarities to fantasies manifested in the dreams of depressive and neurotic people. According to Lacan, before the identification of self in the mirror, the child conceives of himself as a *corps morcelé*, in a “fragmented image of the body,” as an aggregate, or a body in bits and pieces.<sup>166</sup> With the identification and internalization of his mirror image, the child can, for

the first time, conceive an image of his body in its *gestalt*; a totality, as a whole body. Yet at times of psycho-emotional crisis, the disturbed subject fears regressing to the previous infantile state of having an “aggregate” or fragmented body; an anxiety which seems inevitable.

Farrokhzad’s fantasies of disintegration, decomposition and fragmentation are further explained in an undated letter to her ex-husband, Parvīz Šāpūr. In this letter Farrokhzad expresses her bodily experiences thus:

I am very mad tonight. ... Nothing can fill the loneliness of my soul. ... I wish I could, like others lose myself in the absurdity of life. ... I am very lonely. Today I was watching myself in the mirror. Now, gradually I fear my face. Am I the same Forugh? Am I the same Forugh who used to stand in front of the mirror from morning till night and make herself into a hundred faces and was contented with it? Are these sick eyes, this broken and gaunt face and these untimely lines beneath the eyes and on the forehead mine?

... My dear Parvīz, it is not easy to persist. Desperation, like a termite, is turning my soul into dust .... I don’t know where I will end up with these sick nerves. ... If I don’t leave here I will go insane. ... I have a clear sense that I am decomposing day by day. Sometimes it is as if I collapse into myself. While walking in the street, I feel as if my body turns into dust and collapses from my sides. ... but I am well aware that I can no longer deceive myself. My soul is burning in the hell of distress and I am gazing into its ashes with desperation.<sup>167</sup>

This passage from a letter, as do her poems, bears clear testimony to the desperate loneliness and outcast position of a woman poet in Iranian patriarchal culture. In the lines cited above, Farrokhzad also refers to an earlier phase when looking into a mirror was extremely copacetic to her narcissistic vanities. Here, she overtly talks about the fundamental changes in her relationship with her mirror image. She has gradually distanced herself from these definitions. The mirror is no longer a place of solipsistic self-love, a place where she can make herself pleasant for the male gaze, or even the replacement of his gaze; it is now a place within which she fears encountering her true self, a place where her fragmentation surges into view, where she casts off her adopted mask for the world.

The mirror/window provides Farrokhzad with a space in which she can see the strange uncanniness, soullessness, confusion and absurdity of her being and that of other individuals; it is where their voicelessness and their

immobility, otherwise invisible, are rendered visible. Individuals turn into “exterior,” “alienated” and “frozen” entities, just like their mirror images. It is for this reason that Farrokhzad says it is the mirrors that wake up in the mornings, not the people. The fragmentation of the self is often translated into the fragmentation of her whole world, where she is unable to find any logical relationship among the exterior realities. As revealed in many of her poems, Farrokhzad sees a continual process of disintegration and degeneration working within any outside or inside phenomenon.

In the following stanzas, the “astounded face” continues her monologue thus:

<p>“It is cold And the winds slash through my [body border] lines Is there anyone left in this abode Who does not fear Meeting Her own annihilated face?</p>	<p>”سرد است و بادها خطوط مرا قطع می کنند آیا در این دیار کسی هست که هنوز از آشنا شدن با چهره فنا شده خویش وحشت نداشته باشد؟</p>
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<p>Hasn't the time yet come To open this window wide wide wide For the sky to rain down And for man mournfully To pray over his own corpse?”<sup>168</sup></p>	<p>آیا زمان آن نرسیده ست که این دریچه باز شود باز باز باز که آسمان ببارد و مرد، بر جنازه مرد خویش زاری کنان نماز گزارد؟“</p>
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These two stanzas, in which the “astounded face” finishes her speech, foreshadow a shift. With the approach of day, the time for a change in the person approaches; time for casting off the old mask; for the death of depressing multiplicity and for the death of otherness. The “astounded face” wonders if the time has arrived for self-realization and the resolving unity of inner fragmentation.

In the last stanza, the persona reveals her confusing uncertainties and doubts. The poem is a candid portrayal of the subject's standing on trial before herself as a merciless judge all through the night—Kristeva's  *sujet en procès*. It is a subject in a state of constant change which defies any fixed and ever-valid definition; a subject who is not only changing all the time, but is also constantly on trial, questioning and rejecting former identities, as depicted by Farrokhzad's posing many questions, as well as by her

metaphorical, metonymic and synecdochic analogies. The window, mirror and her text turn into her courtroom, providing the heterotopic space for this trial. At the end the subject is left alone with the strong feelings of *ta'asof* (regret), *šarm* (shame) and *dard* (pain) before the bitterly reproaching, synecdochic, hands of the judge.

Perhaps it was the bird that moaned	شاید پرنده بود که نالید
Or the wind among the trees	یا باد، در میان درختان
Or was it me myself who against my heart's impasse	یا من، که در برابر بن بست قلب خود چون موجی از تأسف و شرم و درد
Was rising	بالا می آمدم
Like a tide of regret, shame and pain	و از میان پنجره می دیدم
And through the window I could see	که آن دو دست، آن دو سرزنش تلخ
Those two hands, those two bitter reproaches	باز، همچنان دراز به سوی دو دست من در روشنایی سپیده دمی کاذب
Still reaching out for my two hands	تحلیل می روند
Were fading	و یک صدا که در افق سرد
In the false dawn's light	فریاد زد:
And a voice on the cold horizon	“خداحافظ”
Cried out:	
“Farewell” <sup>169</sup>	

In this poem, Farrokhzad employs the words *dar-ī-če* (small door, shutter), *ā'īne* (mirror), *šekāf* (crack), and *panğare* (window) alternatively as the means for introspection and encountering the *alter idem*—the other self; therefore, they all function like a mirror by reflecting her self, or a part of it, back to her.<sup>170</sup> The speaker's other “I” emerges on a lonely night like a ghost and starts to melt away by the “false dawn,” leaving her lonely again. In this “false dawn” she evokes her “false self,” the performative self shaped or imposed on her by social dictates. When women have to adopt images so distanced from their real ones, it is inevitable that they come up with such disturbing fragmentations.

For Farrokhzad, the real self, who apparently disappears in the mornings, haunts her on real nights, at the time when she is free from social masks. With the “fake dawns,” paradoxically associated with evil dreams and nightmares, the ghosts of real selves abandon the city, while the mirrors, the appearances and the masks start to wake up. Apart from oscillating among the mirror, window, and other opening imagery, Farrokhzad plays with different perspectives: “I,” “s/he” and even “you”—illeism and tuism—in order

to express her tumultuous experience of an uncanny ego, fragmentation and split personality.

Farrokhzad herself explains her intention as to the meaning of this poem in the following words:

Everything was upside down. Even I myself was upside down. I hated this desperation of mine and was shocked by it. This poem is the result of such contemplations. After this poem I was able to improve myself a little bit. I manipulated the text of my thoughts and ideas and drew a red line across some of my moods. But the outside world is still like that, it is so upside down that I don't want to believe it. I worked on the language of this poem, too. In fact this was my first experiment with the language of dialogue.<sup>171</sup>

Farrokhzad inscribes an image of her self within her text. After projection and objectification of this image, with its "thoughts and ideas," she introjects the projected image, now in the form of a text, within her self. Then she gets involved in contemplation, criticism and correction of that self. Therefore, text, for her, functions like a mirror; through its medium she can engage in self-correction.

In the next poem in the same volume, entitled "*Vahm-e sabz*" ("Green Delusion"), the same oscillation between the mirror and window as well as the blurring of their distinction is at work.<sup>172</sup> Like the previous poem, "Meeting at Night," this poem, too, is an expression of the speaker's specular experience. The poem begins with a mirror image in its very first line where the persona announces that she has been watching herself cry in the mirror all day:

All day long I wept in the mirror  
Spring had entrusted my window  
To the green delusion of the trees  
My body could not be crammed into the  
cocoon of my loneliness  
And the reek of my paper crown  
Had polluted  
The atmosphere of that sunless realm<sup>173</sup>

تمام روز در آینه گریه می کردم  
بهار پنجره ام را  
به وهم سبز درختان سپرده بود  
تم به پیله تنهایی ام نمی گنجید  
و بوی تاج کاغذی ام  
فضای آن قلمرو بی آفتاب را  
آلوده کرده بود

The mirror here has myriad functions for the poet persona. It provides her with a private and intimate heterotopic space for the outpouring of her

innermost emotions. It has turned into a courtroom where she puts herself on a trial, castigating her present and older selves—Kristeva's *sujet en procès*. As a site of introspection and memory, it inflicts on her, as Milani expresses it, a “colossal pain”:

This colossal pain stares back at her like the blinding sun, a pain so terrible that no kind mirror should ever remember it. But who said mirrors have to be kind? You look at them for too long and they open up old wounds—wounds that had closed in on themselves to alleviate the pain; wounds that, through layers upon layers of forgetfulness, had covered what was hidden underneath. That is the way it is with mirrors.<sup>174</sup>

The persona is observing herself cry in the mirror. By distancing herself from the subject in pain, through the act of objectification in a mirror, it is as if she were watching somebody else cry. Through isolating the experiencing self from the specular self by means of a mirror she can isolate herself from the thing in pain. This isolation and detachment make the pain bearable. The objectification functions as a defence mechanism for the person in excessive pain. La Belle explains it with regard to “the oxymoronic nature of the mirror”:

When someone is suffering, physically or mentally, detachment comes as unbidden relief. The mind distances itself from the body because the body is making the person suffer. There is also a detachment that comes through literature, bringing a formal feeling to the moment of distress. The literary association gives the sorrow a frame, an objectified context or correlative.<sup>175</sup>

The same detaching mechanism occurring through the mirror is at work in the text. The poet objectifies and distances herself from her subjectivity by inscribing it within her text. By watching herself cry in her mirror, as well as by textualizing her pain, the persona is indeed experiencing a sort of Jungian “affect,” where the suffering is not repressed or even rendered unconscious, but is seen to stand in another light. In this “different light,” the problem, otherwise insoluble, seems to lose its urgency with the individual. The objectification in text/mirror allows the poet to gain a consciousness over the problem which facilitates her solving it. Studying Chinese yoga, Jung writes:



I have often seen individuals who simply outgrow a problem which had destroyed others. This “outgrowing” revealed itself on further experience to be the raising of the level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest arose on the person’s horizon, and through this widening of his view, the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically on its own terms, but faded out in contrast to a new and stronger life-tendency. It was not repressed or made unconscious, but merely appeared in a different light, and so became different itself. What, on a lower level, had led to the wildest conflicts and emotions full of panic, viewed from the higher level of the personality, now seemed like a storm in the valley seen from a higher mountain top. This does not mean that the thunderstorm is robbed of its reality; it means that, instead of being in it, one is now above it. ... he is aware of a higher consciousness which prevents him from being identical with the affect, a consciousness which takes the affect objectively, and can say “I know that I suffer.” ... instead of the negatively devastating thought “I am equal to suffering, My life is suffering.”<sup>176</sup>

By turning herself and her desperation into signs, either in her mirror or in her text or even both (as is the case here), the observer or the author can distance herself from her subjectivity as the signifier. She becomes able to transcend the pain and see herself from a higher level of consciousness and thereby “outgrow” it. This psychological process has been the secret of many great works of art, as it is to Farrokhzad’s confessional poetry.

The mirror image in the first line is immediately followed by the image of a window in the second line. The delusiveness of the mirror experience is brought to a wider context through the window. The green illusion of the trees in spring is beheld in stark contradiction to their naked reality in the winter. On the other hand, the painful reality of her experiencing self, over which she has gained consciousness through her specular self, is set in contrast to the illusory outside world. The persona expresses a desperate overwhelming loneliness, beyond the tolerance of her body; her body could not cram itself inside the cocoon of her loneliness. In this poem, the poet denigrates her rejection of the cultural image of womanhood; the conventional way of life ordained for a woman, a way of life which could have granted her the security of an insider within her culture. She reproves herself for sacrificing so much in choosing to become a poet, particularly an unconventional one. Farrokhzad mocks herself as a recognized poet carrying a stinky “paper crown.” In the midst of her devastating mental

crisis, the poet experiences a disturbing detachment between her self and her body. She expresses her inability to continue in this state:

نمی توانستم، دیگر نمی توانستم  
صدای کوچه، صدای پرندۀ ها  
صدای گم شدن توپهای ماهوتی  
و های هوی گریزان کودکان  
و رقص بادکنکها  
که چون حبابهای کف صابون  
در انتهای ساقه ای از نخ صعود می کردند  
و باد، باد که گوئی  
در عمق گودترین لحظه های تیره همخوابگی نفس می زد  
حصار قلعه خاموش اعتماد مرا  
فشار می دادند  
و از شکافهای کهنه، دلم را به نام می خواندند

I could not, I could not any longer  
The sound of the ally, the sound of the birds  
The sound of tennis balls being lost  
And the fleeting clamour of the children  
And the dance of the balloons  
Ascending like soup bubbles  
At the tip of a stem of string  
And the wind, the wind as if  
Panting at the bottom of the deepest abyss of the dark moments of  
lovemaking  
Were all pressing against  
The walls of the silent fortress of my confidence  
And calling my heart by name through the ancient cracks<sup>177</sup>

In these lines, Farrokhzad appears to have reached the nadir of her despondency. Within her mirror, a space of illusion and disillusionment, the persona doubts the reality of all the things happening around her. The mirror bridges her *Innenwelt* and her *Umwelt*. She is losing trust in the reality of her outside world, in “the sound of the alley,” in “the dance of the balloons” and in “the wind,” as she has lost her trust in herself. All these illusory phenomena of the outside world seem to infiltrate her innermost self through her “ancient cracks.” In the third stanza, the persona continues to gaze at her self in the mirror, a site of introspection:

All day long my gaze	تمام روز نگاه من
Was fixed on my life's eyes	به چشمهای زندگی ام خیره گشته بود
Those two anxious, fearful eyes	به آن دو چشم مضطرب ترسان
Fleeing my unflinching gaze	که از نگاه ثابت من می گریختند
And like liars taking refuge	و چون دروغگویان
Behind the safe retreat of the eyelids <sup>178</sup>	به انزوای بی خطر پلکها پناه می آوردند

All day, the persona has been deeply involved in introspection. On the surface of her mirror, she has been gazing into her own eyes and examining her life. She puts her older selves and their illusions to a cruel trial. The invoking of the past selves becomes possible through the temporality of the mirror. The persona is anxious and can no longer tolerate her own reproaching eyes, gazing unflinchingly at her. The older selves have been deceiving her by promising happiness and fulfillment if she can establish herself as a poet. Here mirror functions as memory, too. On this temporal surface she can revise her past life. Her feeling of self-detachment is evidently the result of her continual self-abnegation and rejection of her feminine body, as expressed in the fourth stanza. The experience is so disturbing that she closes her eyes and stops watching her image. Then she shifts from the mirror to the words, the language, rejecting both signs of the image and the words:

Which summit, which peak?	کدام قله، کدام اوج؟
Do not all these winding roads	مگر تمامی این راههای پیچاپیچ
Converge on the finishing point	در آن دهان سرد مکنده
In that cold sucking mouth?	به نقطه تلاحق و پایان نمی رسند؟
What have you given me, O simple	به من چه دادید، ای واژه های ساده فریب
words of seduction	و ای ریاضت اندامها و خواهشها؟
O renunciations of bodies and	اگر گلی به گیسوی خود می زدم
desires?	از این تقلب، از این تاج کاغذین
If I had put a flower in my hair	که بر فراز سرم بو گرفته است، فریبنده تر نبود؟
Would it not have been more	
charming than this deceit,	
This paper crown gone foul upon	
my head? <sup>179</sup>	

Within this interior dialogue, Farrokhzad poses an aporia, wondering whether the words of her poems as well as her constant rejections of her body and desires have all been futile, granting her nothing in exchange.

Farrokhzad feels that she has been betrayed by this seductive phallogentric language. For her, writing functions as an extension, a supplement and also at times a substitution for her mirroring. The visual reflection in the mirror and the mental reflection had an existential significance for her ego. In her desperation, the poet turns to her reader, asking if it would not have been better for her to adopt the cultural images of womanhood and involve herself in self-adoration than to become a poet. She continues by portraying her feelings of desperate barrenness and absurdity:

How the desert spirit took me	چگونه روح بیابان مرا گرفت
And how the moon's enchantment	و سحر ماه ز ایمان گاه دورم کرد
estranged me from the herd's faith	چگونه ناتمامی قلم بزرگ شد
How the imperfection of my heart	و هیچ نیمه ای این نیمه را تمام نکرد
grew	چگونه ایستادم و دیدم
And no other half ever perfected	زمین به زیر دوپایم ز تکیه گاه تهی می شود
this half	و گرمی تن جفتم
How I stood and watched	به انتظار بپوچ تم ره نمی برد
As the ground under my own two	
feet was depriving me of its	
support	
And the warmth of my mate's body	
Couldn't find its way to the absurd	
anticipation of my body <sup>180</sup>	

Farrokhzad has distanced herself from the beliefs of her culture and hence senses a great alienation and loneliness; even physical intimacies do not resolve her lonely desperation. All these disillusionments are initiated and enacted within her illusory mirror. In the following three stanzas, Farrokhzad draws upon the images related to the closed sphere of feminine domesticity—unprecedented in Persian poetry for their evocation of the feminine experience and therefore traditionally beneath the dignified diction of poetry, which should deal only with transcendentalism, spirituality, divinity and culture (reserved only for men). In these lines, the persona seeks refuge in the security of women living according to the social-cultural construction of femininity; women, in Milani's words, "whose singleness of commitment saves them from the agony of ambivalence, guilt, or loneliness";<sup>181</sup> women bound together by virtue of the stereotypical image of womanhood that their society has constantly been imposing them:

کدام فاه، کدام اوج؟  
 مرا پناه دهید ای چراغهای مشوش  
 ای خانه های روشن شکاک  
 که جامه های شسته در آغوش دوده‌های معطر  
 بر باهمای آفتابی تان تاب می خورند

مرا پناه دهید ای زنان ساده کامل  
 که از ورای پوست، سرانگشت های نازکتان  
 مسیر جنبش کیف آور جنینی را  
 دنبال می کند  
 و در شکاف گریبانان همیشه هوا  
 به بوی شیر تازه می آمیزد

کدام فاه، کدام اوج؟  
 مرا پناه دهید ای اجاقهای پرآتش—ای نعلهای خوشبختی—  
 و ای سرود ظرفهای مسین در سیاهکاری مطبخ  
 و ای ترنم دلگیر چرخ خیاطی  
 و ای جدال روز و شب فرشها و جاروها  
 مرا پناه دهید ای تمام عشقهای حریمی  
 که میل دردناک بقاء، بستر تصرفتان را  
 به آب جادو  
 و قطره های خون تازه می آراید

Which summit, which peak?  
 Shelter me O perturbing lights  
 O bright sceptic houses  
 Where upon your sunny rooftops the laundry  
 Is swaying in the embrace of fragrant smoke

Shelter me O simple perfect women  
 Whose delicate fingertips  
 Trace beneath the skin  
 The rapturous route of an embryonic motion  
 And in the cleavage of your collar the air  
 Always mingles with the scent of fresh milk

Which summit, which peak?  
 Shelter me O fire-filled ovens—O lucky charm horseshoes—  
 O song of the copperware in the oppression of the kitchen

O depressing melody of the sewing machine  
 O night and day dispute of the carpets and brooms  
 Shelter me O all the greedy love  
 That the aching desire for permanence has adorned  
 Your bed of deflowering  
 With the magic water  
 And the drops of fresh blood<sup>182</sup>

The rhetorical question “which summit, which peak?” is repeated three times in the beginning of these stanzas, a refrain revealing the extremely disturbing effect of disillusionment for the persona. Within these lines, Farrokhzad presents a portrait of a womanhood regarded as the norm and fossilized into the structure of her culture with ambivalence. She openly reveals her feelings of envy towards the safe and accepted position of such women accredited with normal womanhood. On the other hand, the lines are marked by her undertone of contempt for their simplicity and incarceration within domesticity. The bounded sphere of domesticity held for these “simple perfect women,” though providing a safe shelter, is indeed oppressive and depressing. The interminable “night and day” domestic labour, lacking creativity and unappreciated, makes the domestic activities Sisyphean.

The love within these apparently secure walls is “greedy” and the bed for lovemaking is a space for *taşarrof*, which, in Persian, means not only deflowering, but also alternation in one’s state, deceit and trickery, capturing, taking possession of, total ascendancy and exercising power over, all signifying the power imbalance in the marital relationship.<sup>183</sup> Though the houses of these “simple perfect women” provide them with secure shelter, much doubt and uncertainty can be found in them, as suggested in the phrase *hāne-hā-ye rošan-e šakkāk*, “O bright sceptic houses.”<sup>184</sup>

The poet had chosen ‘The Road Not Taken’ by deciding to leave the security of wedlock and by becoming a poet; “And that has made all the difference.”<sup>185</sup> She has been cruelly punished by society for her choices and now she enviously seeks shelter in the “simple perfect women” who live as their society requires them to and by choosing the well trodden road. The difference is not only the “difference *between*,” as Johnson calls it, but also the “difference *within*.”<sup>186</sup> On the one hand, the difference is *between* her self as a female author—a subversive force in itself—and the limiting images of womanhood her culture imposes on her: the images of “simple perfect women” limited to their forced sphere of domesticity. On the other hand, this difference is marked by the excruciating cryptic multiplicity *within* the

self. In explaining the difference between the “difference *within*” and the “difference *between*,” Johnson writes:

A difference *between* opposing forces presupposes that the entities in conflict be knowable. A difference *within* one of the entities in question is precisely what problematizes the very *idea* of an entity in the first place, rendering the “legal point of view” inapplicable.<sup>187</sup>

The last two stanzas portray the extreme desperation of the persona through moving metaphors. The illusory spring, passing through the shutter, reminds her of her illusion of having proceeded. It disillusiones her to the bitter reality of her moving deeply downwards, instead of moving forward:

All day long, all day long	تمام روز، تمام روز
Abandoned, abandoned, as a corpse	رها شده، رها شده، چون لاشه ای بر آب
on the water	به سوی سهمناکترین صخره پیش می رفتم
I was moving towards the most	به سوی ژرفترین غارهای دریایی
ghastly rocks	و گوشته‌خوارترین ماهیان
Towards the deepest sea caverns	و مخره های نازک پشتم
And the most carnivorous fish	از حس مرگ تیر کشیدند
And the slender vertebrae of my back	
Were twanging with pain from the	
sensation of death	

I could not, I could not any more	نمی توانستم، دیگر نمی توانستم
The sound of my footsteps was rising	صدای پام از انکار راه بر می خاست
in the denial of the road	و یأسم از صبوری روحم وسیعتر شده بود
And my desperation had outgrown	و آن بهار، و آن وهم سبز رنگ
the patience of my soul	که بر دریچه گذر داشت، با دلم می گفت
And that spring, and that green	”نگاه کن
delusion	تو هیچگاه پیش رفتی
Passing through the shutter, told my	تو فرو رفتی“
heart	
“Behold	
You have never moved forward	
You have moved downward” <sup>188</sup>	

The poem “Green Delusion” is an open expression of the agonies of a woman poet struggling to resolve the societal contradictions within the construc-

tion of female subjectivity. In following her own predilections for striving to establish her own authentic subjectivity and for choosing her own words she has made great sacrifices. The poet has declined to reiterate an image her culture was constantly feeding her, the image of the “simple perfect woman” confined in the tyrannical domesticity of the kitchen, the woman whose “perfect” vocation is considered to be housewifery and motherhood and for whom the only creativity permissible is mothering. The poet paid dearly for transgressing the boundaries and now she feels dejected, lonely and an outsider. In her text-mirror, Farrokhzad portrays her realization of desperate self-loss when her self-image comes into face-to-face confrontation with the culturally constructed images of womanhood—the images which she simultaneously is and is not—in such a way that other readers can also share and interrogate it.

In this poem, Farrokhzad oscillates between the mirror and the window (and also the shutter) as her means of relating to the two dialectical and delusory worlds: the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*. The mirror entices her all day long by its invitation to introspection, to contemplate her inner world—an autoscopic mirror of self-scrutiny. The mirror becomes a space in which memories of dreams and illusions are invoked. The delusory mirror is the perfect site for disillusionment. Therefore, the mirror becomes an intimate space for the “*sujet en procès*,” a space in which she can summon the older selves and put them on trial.

The window on the other hand is where she can relate to the outside world. It is a space through which she can see the spring’s “green delusion,” the “bright sceptic houses,” and all the attributes of the other “simple perfect women,” busy in their secure sphere of housewifery and motherhood. As Lacan observes, the mirror is a place where the *Innenwelt* is bridged to the *Umwelt*. With the primal identification with one’s specular “I” in the mirror stage, the subject launches on a series of lifelong identifications. In the case of female subjectivity, women are expected and forced to identify with the images that their culture constantly sends them, with the images of “simple perfect women.” In the case of Farrokhzad, she has failed to identify with these images sent by the *Umwelt*. For this reason she has been estranged from her “flock” and left abandoned, lonely and desperate. The mirror, for Farrokhzad, is a space where all these conflicting images, the cultural images of womanhood, sometimes contradictory in themselves, on the one hand, and the contradictory self-images, on the other hand, engage in a frontal battle.



### Mother-Daughter Reciprocity in the Mirror

Farrokhzad in her poetry was not oblivious to the temporal dimension of the mirror. After all, the mirror registers multiple changes in what appears before it with the passage of time. Here the issue is not identification or ego-formation, nor even narcissistic gaze, but rather re-identification. The individual is reassured that she closely resembles the person who last glanced at herself in the mirror. The female beholder traces in her mirror the painful advance of old age, of physical degeneration. When she turns to the mirror and is confronted with her mother's image instead of her own, it signifies the ability of the mirror to map the passage of time and the onset of old age. It also gives a sense of destiny, which is usually an unhappy one; the implication is that the young woman is doomed to the same destiny as her mother and grandmother before her. In other words, the viewer is set to perpetuate the same tradition of self-effacement. As Woolf says, "We think back through our mothers if we are women."<sup>189</sup>

In her poem "*Be āftāb salāmī dobāre ḡ'āham dād*" ("I Shall Salute the Sun Once Again"), in the collection *Another Birth*, Farrokhzad draws upon the temporality of the mirror to show that she has attained a certain peace with her self and her world. Although she is alarmed at the approach of old age and death, she seems to have peacefully accepted it, even to the point of saluting it. The poem is in two (twelve-line and nine-line) stanzas, and is presented in the first person. In the first stanza, the speaker declares that she is going to salute a series of things. After greeting the "sun," the "stream" running through her, and the "clouds" which were her "lengthy thoughts"; after saluting the aspens in their "painful growth" which, like her, were passing through "seasons of drought"; and after saluting "the flock of crows," the speaker proceeds to salute her mother:

به آفتاب سلامی دوباره خواهم داد  
 به جویبار که در من جاری بود  
 به ابرها که فکرهای طولیم بودند  
 به رشد دردناک سپیدارهای باغ که با من  
 از فصلهای خشک گذر می کردند  
 به دسته های کلاغان  
 به عطر مزرعه های شبانه را  
 برای من به هدیه می آوردند  
 به مادرم که در آینه زندگی می کرد  
 و شکل پیری من بود

و به زمین، که شهوت تکرار من، درون ملتپش را  
از تخمه های سبز می انباشت، سلامی دوباره خواهم داد

I shall salute the sun once again  
The stream running through me  
The clouds that were my lengthy thoughts  
The painful growth of aspens in the garden which accompany me  
In passing through seasons of drought  
The flock of crows  
Who bring me gifts of the scent of nocturnal fields  
I shall salute once again  
My mother who was living in the mirror  
And was the image of my old age  
And the earth, whose lust to repeat me,  
Crammed its burning innards with green seeds<sup>190</sup>

The persona seeks to salute, to be united with her mirror image, a replication of her mother's. Irigaray in her book, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, declares, "I am seeking, in simplest terms, to be united with *an image in a mirror*."<sup>191</sup> Immediately after saluting her mother, the speaker salutes the earth which is anticipating her return. The line "my mother who was living in the mirror" is ambiguous. One interpretation, marking an image dislocation, is that whenever the speaker turns to the mirror she confronts her mother there. In this way, as Cixous observes, the mother becomes a metaphor for the daughter, as well as the daughter for the mother.<sup>192</sup> In this reading, the ego boundaries of the mother and the daughter merge and they attain an empowering unity which is possible due to their common experiences as well as their exclusive access to "subliminal, subversive, pre-verbal" knowledge; a knowledge flowing within and between them.<sup>193</sup> Therefore, the mirror becomes a mantic tool; prophesying the assimilation of mother-daughter as well as their identical destiny, since the mother has always been closely associated with the implacable unformulated destiny, a destiny which the daughter, as an extension of the mother, will ultimately reproduce. Gallop asserts:

It is naivety to believe that one could ever totally separate the daughter from the mother, secure their separate identities. It is to deny that one's mother is a woman, to deny any identification with one's mother. Certainly it is a stultifying reduction to subsume femininity into the

category of maternity. But it is an opposite and perhaps even equally defensive reduction to believe in simple separation of the two categories. The relation to the other woman only approaches its full complexity with some recognition that the “other woman” as well as oneself is and is not “Mother.”<sup>194</sup>

Hence, the welcome embrace of the mother’s presence in her mirror signifies the persona’s inner desire to re-construct “the mother-child dyad,” severed in the mirror stage and transformed into the “*maternal language*.”<sup>195</sup> The persona desires to re-enter into what Kristeva calls “the voiced breath that fastens us to an undifferentiated mother” which once existed prior to the mirror stage.<sup>196</sup>

The other valid interpretation is that her mother is living within the frame of the mirror; she has no further presence, no identity outside its limits. Her mother is a woman of male-defined femininity, merely an object of outward appearance. She is a woman who needs a specular reflectiveness to verify her continual existence. In the process of the continual assimilation of the image, the mother has been petrified and frozen into an image, signifying her total lack of selfhood. The speaker believes that the image in the mirror, or the image of her mother there, resembles her in old age. In other words, the speaker believes that she is an extension of her mother and will continue in the same tradition of self-effacement. Irigaray reports, “You look at yourself in the mirror. And already you see your own mother there. And soon your daughter, a mother.”<sup>197</sup>

But there is a difference between the two. The daughter’s position is at least augmented by “knowledge.” Understanding the mother and reconciling with her, as well as with one’s own image, means coming to terms with the eternal paradoxes within the universe and within ourselves. This reconciliation is a heroic act requiring knowledge and courage. Once reconciled, it becomes a source of empowerment for the female subject, an empowerment which frees her from her misery; it becomes the source of mutual psychological support and consolation; a power which does not exist in the patriarchal vocabulary. Birkle explains the difference in the following words:

Power, in patriarchal understanding, is always seen as power over someone, as a concept of hierarchy with superiority and inferiority. Instead of focusing on the mother’s power *over*, it should be possible to see it as her power *with* others, thus changing the pattern of hierarchy to a net of

horizontal relationships that recognize the values that lie in acceptance (instead of the destruction) of difference.<sup>198</sup>

It should be mentioned here that saluting takes place when one sees another person for the first time, or after being temporarily distanced. The speaker has been detached from her self, her mother and the world around her (at least temporarily). But now that her self and the world have been revealed to her, she can salute these two worlds. The speaker re-discovers and re-enters into the bond with her mother; into a bond, a “mother-child dyad,” that has been severed, according to Kristeva, only with the daughter’s entrance into the Symbolic order and identification with the father, initiated in the mirror stage. The mother, kept so far within the shadows, surges into the daughter’s mirror. As Kristeva explains:

Transforming this identifying support into an Other—into the place of pure signifier—maintains the presence of a maternal, substantial, and ego-related opacity in the shadows. The mother reemerges as the archetype of the infinitely interchangeable object of the desiring quest.<sup>199</sup>

The mother who appears to have been Farrokhzad’s “object of the desiring quest” reemerges, at this point of her life, from the shadow on the surface of her mirror. Farrokhzad is now mature enough conciliatingly to embrace the image by saluting it. Moreover, Kristeva adds:

To rediscover the intonations, scansion, and jubilant rhythms preceding the signifier’s position as language’s position is to discover the voiced breath that fastens us to an undifferentiated mother, to a mother who later, at the mirror stage, is altered into a *maternal language*.<sup>200</sup>

The identification with the mother in the mirror marks the indelibility of the mother-daughter bond, as well as the speaker’s re-entry into this realm of “maternal language.” The poet believes in a sort of reincarnation; a rebirth of subjectivity on the other side of the wall. She announces that she will come from the other side, the dark side of the wall. She will emerge with an authentic subjectivity, equipped with the knowledge of experience:

می آیم، می آیم، می آیم  
 با گیسویم: ادامه بوهای زیر خاک  
 با چشمهایم: تجربه های غلیظ تاریکی  
 با بوته ها که چیده ام از پیشه های آن سوی دیوار  
 می آیم، می آیم، می آیم  
 و آستانه پر از عشق می شود  
 و من در آستانه به آنها که دوست می دارند  
 و دختری که هنوز آنجا،  
 در آستانه پر عشق ایستاده، سلامی دوباره خواهم داد

I am coming, I am coming, I am coming  
 With my tresses: the continuation of the underground scents  
 With my eyes: the dense experiences of the darkness  
 With the bushes I have picked from the other side of the coppice  
 I am coming, I am coming, I am coming  
 And the threshold fills with love  
 And at the threshold, to those who love  
 And to the girl still standing  
 In the threshold filled with love, I shall salute once again<sup>201</sup>

Farrokhzad is here asserting her symbolic rebirth, her extension beyond the death of the self. She is going to salute the girl standing at the threshold; the girl who is none other than herself. The mirror can indeed turn into a threshold leading her from “the dense experiences of the darkness” into a luminal space. Through the use of “I” and “the girl” Farrokhzad has simultaneously adopted the position of subject and object—a mirror reflection instance. The speaker has objectified herself into another (the girl standing there) to illuminate her knowledge of the girl (and herself). By saluting the girl, Farrokhzad shows her acceptance of her self, also implied by saluting her mother in her mirror. Rediscovery of the mother and the self provides Farrokhzad with consolation, authority and power; as Bennett asserts:

The acceptance of the self, whatever that self is, is the base upon which the woman poet must work, the source of her greatest authority and strength. But for her to arrive at this self-acceptance, she must possess a definition of her womanhood that is broad enough, flexible enough, to encompass all that she actually is.<sup>202</sup>

Expressed through the image dislocation within her mirror, in the poem “I Shall Salute the Sun Once Again,” Farrokhzad acknowledges that she has taken on the identity of her mother in her incessant “process of becoming”; but, instead of rejecting it, she embraces it.<sup>203</sup> The conscious espousal of the mother’s image within the construction of her self-image renders the resentful power of the mother’s hold *over* her subjectivity, a central problematic in the development of female subjectivity, into a consoling power *with* her. This reconciliation with the mother image in her mirror is part and parcel of the reconciliation of the paradoxical conflicts within her self and within the world outside her—her *Innenwelt* and her *Umwelt*.

Thereupon, the poet seems to have cast off her inner darkness, a darkness raised through the disturbing otherness, a darkness which used to spread itself over everything, inside and out.<sup>204</sup> After all those bitter censures and harsh trials of the self, held in the courtroom of a mirror, the poet—Kristeva’s *sujet en procès*—seems to have ultimately reached a peaceful conclusion, resolving all those conflicting images in her mirror. Now that the poet has resolved the conflicting multiplicities within and outwith her “I,” and now that she has been augmented with the empowering knowledge bestowed on her by her dark experiences and disillusionments, she seems to be standing at the threshold of peace. Now the poet appears to be ready to embrace her old age, degeneration and even death.

### **The Emancipated and Emancipating Mirror**

Farrokhzad’s mirrors vividly capture the tumultuous developmental stages she passes through. Upon the glittering surface of her mirror she is confronted by grotesque uncanniness, the baffling uncertainty over the reality of her self, the unsettling multiplicity and the creepy fragmentation of her body and her self, all leading to her aversion to and rejection of the mirror. Nevertheless, in her later poems, Farrokhzad is ultimately able to value the mirror as a tool for self-realization. Now she can acknowledge the mirror’s power in the reconstruction of a unified female identity.

By gradual reintegration of her fragmented self, by recalling the projected image back into the structure of the self, Farrokhzad manages to convert the mirror from a surface for registering incipient madness into a surface for prophesying liberation. Rising above the disturbing division between self and her image as well as self and the world outside, the poet aims at a more promising unity. With this fusion of multiplicity into a unity

there emerges a sense of rebirth. The confrontation with the perturbing multiplicity, with all its fractures, decompositions and bodily fragmentations, was a precursor to a birth. As Cixous puts it in her essay “Coming to Writing,” “Then, a gestation of self—in itself, atrocious. When the flesh tears, writhes, rips apart, decomposes, revives, recognizes itself as a newly born woman.”<sup>205</sup>

In this process of rebirth, the mirror turns into a primary tool for the realization and reconstruction of subjectivity. The mirror is no longer a passive surface of imitation, but an active tool of transformation. Rather than a surface that terrifies or disheartens, the mirror becomes a means of empowerment. At this point, the mirror is a liberated and liberating tool. The mirror has finally liberated itself from its culturally infused associations, and it becomes liberating by turning into a means of self-awareness. No more is it merely a feminine tool of vanity, solipsism, narcissism and of seduction and entrapment. It is within the mirror that a female subject enters into a strong relationship with her image; a space for ongoing dialectic reciprocity between self-image and the image presented to the outside world as well as an image she aspires for.

It is within this space that the subject and object, the beholder and beheld, reach out to each other and become united and the identity consolidates. Melchior-Bonnet asserts, “Instead of dooming man into immobility, the specular encounter multiplies his strength by inviting him to both cast himself upon the world and study himself within it.”<sup>206</sup> Therefore, the mirror has the capacity to become a powerful tool for gynocentric perception, as an alternative to the phallogocentric gaze. It is through this unification in the mirror that the female subject can resist the patriarchal system of enforcing oppositions. For a woman, her mirror can turn into a cardinal space where she can analyse, question and overcome the enforced dichotomies between the experiencing self and the reflected image on the one hand, and between the self-image and the contradictory images of womanhood her culture incessantly assaults her with on the other.

From her fourth collection, *Tavallod-ī dīgār* (*Another Birth*), onward, Farrokhzad was to become a “new woman,” having succeeded in constructing her authentic subjectivity, through visual and mental reflection, as an independent female will and independent female voice.<sup>207</sup> Profound self-involvements and the consciousness of corporeal being are at the very heart of the feminist call, a call that appeals to the heroic act of reconstituting the psychology of the mirror experience. It appeals to the reconstruction of feminine narcissistic subjectivity within the boundaries of a self-conception

closely associated with a woman's reflected image. And as Cooley claims, "The finest achievement of the new woman has been personal liberty. This is the foundation of civilization."<sup>208</sup>

Farrokhzad's last collection of poems, *Īmān biyāvarīm be āgāz-e faṣl-e sard ...* (*Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ...*), published posthumously in 1974, contains only seven poems. The mirror image appears in two of them: the title poem "*Īmān biyāvarīm be āgāz-e faṣl-e sard ...*" ("Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ...") and "*Panḡare*" ("Window"). The poet of "Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ..." inaugurates her rather long poem with the words, "And this is me," presenting herself in the first person. Milani aptly describes the poem as an "autobiographical road map."<sup>209</sup> The poem is a portrayal of a lonely woman's melancholic musings, desperately struggling to reconcile her mutable selves with the world outside—her *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*. These lines are presented through a series of introspections, retrospections and anticipations. The mirror image appears three times in this poem. The whole poem can be read as an open declaration of her having reached maturity; of her attaining an understanding of the world within and the world without with all their intrinsic paradoxes; an understanding of "the earth's sullied existence," and of her self; of her "impotence" as "a woman alone" at the beginning of a cold season.

And this is me  
A woman alone  
On the threshold of a cold season  
At the beginning of realizing the earth's  
sullied existence  
And the simple blue despair of the sky  
And the impotence of these cemented  
hands<sup>210</sup>

و این منم  
زنی تنها  
در آستانه فصلی سرد  
در ابتدای درک هستی آلوده زمین  
و یأس ساده و غمناک آسمان  
و ناتوانی این دستهای سیمانی

By the very first line "And this is me," Farrokhzad is assuming a subject position and an individual agency. The line is a forthright statement of a self-assertive subjectivity, of an individuality established. This unique, free-standing "I" (*man*)—Farrokhzad herself—is anchored in her historical-cultural context, which, she claims, she is beginning to understand. It should be noted here in parentheses that the Persian phrase *zan-i tanhā* is ambiguous. It can be considered as a state of being and translated as "a woman alone," emphasizing her heroic, unprecedented and unaccompanied posi-



tion as a free and outspoken woman poet standing against the backdrop of Iranian patriarchal culture and the dominantly masculine Persian literary tradition, a woman who has found herself, her true voice and her vocation. The phrase can also be regarded as a state of mind and translated as “a lonely woman.” Farrokhzad fails to bear any resemblance to Iranian society’s cultural images of womanhood, and therefore is stigmatized and punished. She feels lonely, rejected and alien in her world.

The poet is reaching an understanding of herself as well as the world around her. Farrokhzad has been able to step beyond the echo-reflection of others and is now at the threshold of thought-reflection. By “on the threshold of a cold season,” the speaker means that she is sensing the approach of her old age, and its accompanying degeneration, as she later in the same poem says: “This is the onset of ruination.”<sup>211</sup> Throughout the poem, the passage of time is emphasized over and over again in an obsessive manner. The sentence “time passed” (*zamān gozašt*) is repeated five times in the poem; though, paradoxically, time appears to be stagnant: every time the clock chimes it is four o’clock. Time is exhausted and tuberculous (*zamān-e ḥaste-ye maslūl*) and heavily weighed down (*zamān če vazn-ī dārad*).<sup>212</sup> Now the persona knows the secret of the seasons and understands the language of the moments. The saviour (*neḡāt-dahande*), who later, in the poem “*Panḡare*” (“Window”), is identified by the poet as the image in the mirror, is hibernating in his grave. In the second stanza, the speaker claims:

Time passed	زمان گذشت
Time passed and the clock chimed four times	زمان گذشت و ساعت چهار بار نواخت چهار بار نواخت
It chimed four times	امروز روز اول دی ماه است
Today is the winter solstice	من راز فصلها را می دانم
I know the secret of the seasons	و حرف لحظه ها را می فهمم
And comprehend the language of the moments	نجات دهنده در گور خفته است و خاک، خاک پذیرنده
The saviour is hibernating in the grave	اشارتی ست به آرامش
And the earth, the hospitable earth Betokens serenity	
Time passed and the clock chimed four times <sup>213</sup>	زمان گذشت و ساعت چهار بار نواخت

In the fourth stanza, the speaker senses a change coming over her. She depicts it with the image of a wind blowing in the alley. She is reflecting on “the flowers’ mating,” on the feeble “buds with their slender anemic stalks,” on “this exhausted tuberculous time” and on “a man passing by.” In the fifth stanza, Farrokhzad turns to the mirror as a space for temporality; a surface for the registration of time and the poignant approach of old age and degeneration, as well as a site for the memory:

On the threshold of a cold season	در آستانه فصلی سرد
In the mourning congregation of mirrors	در محفل عزای آینه ها
And in the dirgeful assembly of pale experiences	و اجتماع سوگوار تجربه های پریده رنگ و این غروب بارور شده از دانش سکوت
And this sunset impregnated with the knowledge of silence <sup>214</sup>	

Ageing is metaphorized into the “cold season” and the speaker is standing on its “threshold.” In her sad acknowledgement of ageing and the approach of death, Farrokhzad projects, and thereby objectifies, her sadness onto the mirrors. It is not she who is sad, it is the mirrors. *Azā* in Persian means mourning ceremonies held for a dead person. The mirrors are holding mourning ceremonies for the coming of her old age and her death; thereby turning into mantic surfaces. The mirrors are mourning bygone youth and experiences. Farrokhzad has lost her illusions by experiencing life, and now those experiences have turned pale with the passage of time; these experiences are now things of the past. Through the use of a mirror, Farrokhzad objectifies herself and her despair. By this objectification she gains knowledge over both her despair and her true self. The mirror invites introspection; on its surface the invisible interiority of a subject reveals itself to her inquisitive gaze. In this sense, the metonymic mirror image is represented ironically. The mirror becomes a site of psychological interiority rather than a surface for visible appearances. Due to bitter disillusionments and the realization of degeneration it is mournful.

In the quest for the realization of her true female subjectivity Farrokhzad has been evolving patiently, solemnly and confused. Here, the speaker poses a rhetorical question, implying that no one can ever stop someone proceeding in that manner. Farrokhzad is indeed rebuking her culture, her society’s continual efforts to stop her from proceeding:

چگونه می شود به آنکسی که می رود اینسان  
 صبور،  
 سنگین،  
 سرگردان،  
 فرمان ایست داد  
 چگونه می شود به مرد گفت که او زنده نیست، او هیچوقت زنده نبوده ست

How can one command someone proceeding so  
 Patiently,  
 Solemnly,  
 Aimlessly,  
 To halt  
 How can one tell the man that he is not alive, that he has never been  
 alive<sup>215</sup>

Addressing those efforts to intercept her, Farrokhzad makes clear the impossibility of her being pushed into the periphery of stagnation and passivity, often held for women. In this poem, too, Farrokhzad turns to the image of crows as the harbingers of death and degeneration. The crows are flying in circles over the “ancient gardens of boredom.”

The wind blows in the alley  
 The lonely crows of seclusion  
 Whirl around in the ancient gardens of  
 boredom  
 And the ladder  
 Was of such a low height<sup>216</sup>

در کوچه باد می آید  
 کلاغهای منفرد انزوا  
 در باغهای پیر کسالت می چرخند  
 و نردبام  
 چه ارتفاع حقیری دارد

The wind prophesies a change—the arrival of old age. By the lines “And the ladder/Was of such a low height,” Farrokhzad expresses her shocked disillusionment. Her society has taken advantage of her childish innocence and deceived her. The persona claims now that she has lost all that innocence, now that she has picked and tasted the apple, she will not crush it under her foot:

They carried off the entire credulity  
 of a heart  
 To the palace of fairytales  
 And now

آنها تمام ساده لوحی یک قلب را  
 با خود به قصر قصه ها بردند  
 و اکنون دیگر  
 دیگر چگونه یک نفر به رقص برخواهد خاست

How can one rise to dance ever  
again

And pour her childhood tresses  
Into the flowing streams

And trample the apple  
She has eventually picked and  
smelled?<sup>217</sup>

و گیسوان کودکی اش  
در آبهای جاری خواهد ریخت  
و سیب را که سرانجام چیده است و بوییده است  
در زیر پا لگد خواهد کرد؟

Though the speaking subject and the one spoken about are ostensibly identical, referring to Farrokhzad herself, there is a gap of time and a difference. The spoken about subject who used to be a credulous, innocent child (heart is employed here as a metonymy for the person), has now grown into an experienced, and thereby disillusioned, subject. She has crossed the boundaries her culture has set for her by picking and smelling the forbidden apple. Farrokhzad is here alluding to the biblical story of Adam and Eve. She is altered by a forbidden knowledge. The questions Farrokhzad is asking here are all rhetorical; signifying that both she and the reader are well aware that she will no longer be beguiled into innocent illusions by those tales. In the following stanzas, the speaker continues prophesying dark days, disillusionments and ruination:

ای یار، ای یگانه ترین یار  
چه ابره‌های سیاهی در انتظار روز میهانی خورشیدند

انگار در مسیری از تجسم پرواز بود، که یکروز آن پرنده نمایان شد  
انگار از خطوط سبز تخیل بودند  
آن برگهای تازه، که در شهوت نسیم نفس می زدند  
انگار

آن شعلهٔ بنفش که در ذهن پاک پنجره‌ها می سوخت  
چیزی بجز تصور معصومی از چراغ نبود

O friend, O most unique friend  
Such black clouds await the sun's festival day

It was as if in the course of imagining the flight,  
that one day that bird appeared  
As if those fresh leaves  
panting in the lust of breeze  
Were of verdant lines of delusion

As if

That violet flame burning in the chaste mind of windows

Was nothing but the innocent illusion of the lamp<sup>218</sup>

The window here functions like a mirror; through it reality loses its substance and becomes an illusion. As discussed earlier, the colour green for Farrokhzad evokes nature, imagination and illusion.<sup>219</sup> The boundaries between reality and the imagination seem to have dissolved. The reality (of burning violet flame) is de-substantiated in the virtuality of delusive imagination (illusion of the lamp), and vice versa. The illusion (of the flight) seems to have gained form and substance (of a bird) on the path of imagination. This marks the poet's oscillation between the two worlds of reality and imagination and her failure to draw a clear demarcation line between them due to her psycho-emotional status.

In her journey of self-evolution, Farrokhzad as a *sujet en procès* has had to pass through tumultuous self-doubts and painful fragmentations of the self. She now believes that she has reached a unified understanding of her ego:

I have piloted this wandering island  
Through the tumults of the ocean,  
Through the eruption of the  
volcano,  
And disintegration was the secret of  
that unified existence  
From whose most humble particles  
a sun was born<sup>220</sup>

من این جزیره سرگردان را  
از انقلاب اقیانوس  
و انفجار کوه گذر داده ام  
و تکه تکه شدن، راز آن وجود متحدی بود  
که از حقیرترین ذره هایش آفتاب به دنیا آمد

All those exasperating multiplicities, fragmentations, bewilderments and eruptions were a precursor to the birth of a radiant unity. This journey towards the unity of the selves is once more emphasized a few stanzas later, where Farrokhzad rhetorically asks: "Who is this, this person on eternity's road/Moving towards the moment of unity?"<sup>221</sup> The persona has been struggling to resolve the paradoxes of her subjectivity; the paradoxes of the "I" within and the "I" without. These lines bring to mind Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, which holds that the "orthopaedic" view of the body, the body unified and in its *gestalt* conceived initially in front of the mirror only follows the prior fragmentary body view, body in bits and pieces.<sup>222</sup>

The poem “Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ...” explicitly asserts the existence of incongruity between the poet’s *Innenwelt* and her *Umwelt*. The speaker affirms that there is always a disturbing discontinuity—a lacuna or a gap—between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, between the self and the reflected image, as presented through the window. This irreducible gap marks the distance between the seen, the object and the specular self on the one hand, and the see-er, the subject and the experiencing self on the other: “Between the window and the seeing/There always lies a distance.”<sup>223</sup>

Some stanzas later, the reader is confronted with the second mirror image. Here, the persona sketches her momentary inner sense of self-unification, a sort of return to her authentic subjectivity. She repeatedly puts her previous selves on harsh trial, blaming them for not looking. The rhetorical question “Why did I not look?” is posed three times in the poem. Then the persona claims that she can now see her real, unified self within the mirror. The mirror, which used to give rise to alienation, split multiplicity and disturbing otherness, is now paradoxically rendered into a space where fragmentations and the multiplicity of the self are merged and become united. The mirror becomes a medium of self-discovery and self-realization; a powerful tool for constructing her sense of female self. For Shengold, the mirror represents the psychic mind of the beholder:

The mirror, metaphor for the mind, is particularly suited to portray vertical splits in the mind: ego against superego; self against introject; self representation against object representation; good against bad self- and object representations. ... All of these splits can appear at the mirror ... The mirror can also be used to try to repair or undo splits—to restore symbiosis or to hold together a disintegrating psyche.<sup>224</sup>

This is particularly valid due to the mirror’s ambivalent and oxymoronic nature. The mirror insinuates a disturbing splitness and an ominous duality while paradoxically it is the very same site where this duality can be resolved—at least temporarily—and the person can be comforted with a sense of peaceful union.

چرا نگاه نکردم؟  
انکار مادرم گریسته بود آن شب  
آن شب که من به درد رسیدم و نطفه شکل گرفت  
آن شب که من عروس خوشه های آفاتی شدم

آن شب که اصفهان پر از طنین کاشی آبی بود،  
 و آن کسی که نیمه من بود، به درون نطفه من بازگشته بود  
 و من در آینه می دیدمش،  
 که مثل آینه پاکیزه بود و روشن بود  
 و ناگهان صدایم کرد  
 و من عروس خوشه های افاقی شدم ...

Why did I not look?

As if my mother had wept that night

The night I arrived to pain and the seed was conceived

The night I became the bride of acacia clusters

The night Isfahan abounded with the echoes of blue tiles,

And the one who was my half, had returned within my seed

And I could see her/him in the mirror,

Who was clean and bright like the mirror

And suddenly s/he called me

And I became the bride of acacia clusters ...<sup>225</sup>

The previous self is put on trial by the present self for her failure to see; for not being aware. Farrokhzad in these lines is referring to her experience of wedding, coupling and getting pregnant. The mother, as the one with whom the ego-boundaries merge, the one who has common access to the subliminal and pre-verbal knowledge, the one whose life story the daughter is going to reproduce, is invoked here. Her mother seems to have wept the night when the persona married and the seed of her child was conceived. The mother could see that her daughter, an extension of herself, was repeating the same story and destiny.

Regarding this mutual mourning in the self-effacement of the mother and daughter, Irigaray, addressing her mother, expounds, "Each of us lacks her own image; her own face, the animation of her own body is missing. And the one mourns the other. My paralysis signifying your abduction in the mirror."<sup>226</sup> Now the persona can see herself in the mirror: unified, pure and brilliant. Clarity, purity and brilliance are considered inherent features of the mirror. As Melchior-Bonnet mentions, "From without substance, subtle and impalpable, the mirror image manifests a diaphanous purity."<sup>227</sup> Farrokhzad claims that her other half is now returned into her seed, and she can see it in the mirror. The line "And the one who was my half, had returned within my seed" may also refer to the reproduction of her husband by conceiving an embryo of her son within her seed. In this sense, she is watching her son

within the mirror of her mind/imagination. Her offspring becomes a mirror image of herself who is, like the mirror, clean and brilliant. The mother's weeping is further emphasized by repeating it in a discrete line:

انگار مادرم گریسته بود آن شب  
 چه روشنایی بی‌هوده ای در این دریچهٔ مسدود سر کشید  
 چرا نگاه نکردم؟  
 تمام لحظه های سعادت می دانستند  
 که دستهای تو ویران خواهد شد  
 و من نگاه نکردم  
 تا آن زمان که پنجرهٔ ساعت  
 گشوده شد و آن قناری غمگین چهار بار نواخت  
 چهار بار نواخت  
 و من به آن زن کوچک برخوردم  
 که چشمهایش، مانند لانه های خالی سمرغان بودند  
 و آنچنان که در تحرک راهپایش می رفت  
 گویی بکارت رؤیای پرشکوه مرا  
 با خود به سوی بستر شب می برد

As if my mother had wept that night

What a futile brilliance glared in this blocked shutter  
 Why did I not look?  
 All the moments of bliss were aware  
 That your hands would be ruined  
 And I did not look  
 Not until the time when the clock's shutters flew open  
 And that sad canary chimed four times  
 Chimed four times  
 And I ran into that little woman  
 Whose eyes were like simurghs' empty nests  
 And walking in the motion of her thighs  
 As if carrying the virginity of my glorious dream  
 Into the bed of night<sup>228</sup>

The persona vehemently reproaches herself for not seeing on a continual basis. Here, once again Farrokhzad oscillates between the mirror and the window as the means of relatedness to the self. After seeing her mirror image,



spotless and brilliant, in the previous stanza, now she is shocked at the futility of its brilliance gleaming through the shutter. While, in the previous stanza, the persona claimed a purity and brilliance revealed to her through the mirror, now in this stanza, she is disillusioned by the futility and fugacity of its brilliance flaring in the window. All the moments of her happiness have carried an awareness of the destruction, ruination and death awaiting her, but she has not looked. The synecdochic employment of hands, referring to herself in her totality, was Farrokhzad's favourite poetic device. Her hands frequently assume independent reality and embody her desires.<sup>229</sup>

In an epiphanic realization promoted by the clock's chiming, the persona can see the destructiveness of time. She encounters herself in a sort of mirror situation where the simultaneous convocation of subject and object, the see-er and the seen, is made possible. She defines herself by objectifying it as a small woman with empty eyes, proceeding while carrying the virginity of her glorious dream into the bed of night. In Persian mythology, the simurgh (*sīmorǧ*) is a fabulous, monstrous and rational bird of benevolence. It is frequently drawn upon in classic Persian poetry to convey meanings symbolically and metaphorically. The existence of this bird in the world of reality is associated with ambiguity and its nest is considered empty and unknown.<sup>230</sup> Therefore, through this imaginative simile (*tašbīh-e vahmī*), comparing something to an entity which does not exist in reality, Farrokhzad depicts the eyes of the woman she confronts—herself—as dark, obscure and spiritless. It is a portrayal of a female self cloaked in darkness and apprehension, a woman as a “dark continent,” a “nothing to see” as Irigaray describes it: “As obscure, as black, perhaps, as the dark continent of femininity?”<sup>231</sup>

In this stanza, Farrokhzad engineers a feminine sexual metaphor through which she conveys her disillusionments brought on by destructive time. The unreality and transience of light, brilliance, purity, virginity, illusion and dream are juxtaposed with the harsh reality and longevity of darkness, night, loss of virginity and disillusionment. Farrokhzad shifts from the first person “I” to the second person “you” and then to the third person “she,” in the form of “that little woman,” within the same stanza, all referring to herself. This oscillation, as discussed earlier, demonstrates the radical multiplicity in her sense of self. The lines also imply the disillusionments brought upon woman by the institution of marriage; as she expresses it overtly some stanzas later: “Who is this person who wears love's crown upon her head/And has rotted amidst her wedding gown.”<sup>232</sup> The rhetorical question refers to herself, as if she is watching herself in the mirror or

watching an image of herself frozen into a photograph. Some stanzas later, the third mirror image appears:

چه مهربان بودی ای یار، ای یگانه ترین یار  
 چه مهربان بودی وقتی دروغ می گفتمی  
 چه مهربان بودی وقتی که پلکهای آینه ها را می بست  
 و چلچراغها را  
 از ساقه های سیمی می چیدی  
 و در سیاهی ظالم مرا به سوی چراگاه عشق می بردی  
 تا آن بخار گیج که دنباله حریق عطش بود بر چمن خواب می نشست

How kind you were, O friend, O most unique friend  
 How kind you were when you lied  
 How kind you were when you closed the mirror's eyelids  
 And plucked the lights of the chandelier  
 Off wire stems  
 And in the tyrannical darkness you took me to love's pasture  
 Until that giddy steam, which was the extension of thirst's fire,  
 settles on the meadow of sleep<sup>233</sup>

The mirror image in this stanza is highly ambiguous. It can refer to the windows, to the eyes or even literally to the mirrors. By closing the eyelids of the mirrors, the poet may be referring to the lover's drawing the curtains, darkening the room and obstructing her outlet to the world outside. In preparing the scene for love-making, the lover tells lies to her, draws the curtains and turns off the lights. The persona believes that he was being so remarkably kind in doing all these; by taking her mind off the disturbing brilliance of the realities of herself and her world. Here once again Farrokhzad oscillates between the mirror and window, referring to both as the same medium for relatedness and for reality.

By mirrors the poet may also be referring to the eyes. By closing her eyes, she becomes momentarily oblivious to her turbulent state of being. The extreme kindness of the lover in stopping her from seeing and in lying to her, is paradoxically juxtaposed amid the brutality of her self-censuring for not seeing; a self-censuring which has been going on incessantly all through the poem. Moreover, it may literally refer to the mirror. The lover appears kind by stopping the merciless veracity of the mirror. Covering the mirrors may also hint at thwarting the societal gaze. The poem "Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ...," like her mirror-window,

turns into a courtroom where Farrokhzad continuously puts her selves on harsh trial. The text provides her with a space for self-objectification and self-representation which gives her consciousness of the reality of her being. The mirror and the text for Farrokhzad function as a medium for self-realization, a prerequisite for the establishment of an emancipatory narcissistic relation to one's subjectivity and to one's world.

In the poem "*Panğare*" ("Window"), Farrokhzad maintains that a single window (and nothing more) is sufficient for her as an opening for seeing and hearing:

یک پنجره برای دیدن  
 یک پنجره برای شنیدن  
 یک پنجره که مثل حلقهٔ چاهی  
 در انتهای خود به قلب زمین می رسد  
 و باز می شود به سوی وسعت این مهربانی مکرر آبی رنگ  
 یک پنجره که دستهای کوچک تهایی را  
 از بخشش شبانهٔ عطر ستاره های کریم  
 سرشار می کند  
 و می شود از آنجا  
 خورشید را به غربت گل‌های شمعدانی همجان کرد  
 یک پنجره برای من کافی ست

One window for seeing  
 One window for hearing  
 One window that like the shaft of a well  
 Reaches in its depths to the heart of the earth  
 And opens towards the expanse of this blue recurring kindness  
 One window overflowing  
 The little hands of solitude  
 With the nocturnal generosity of the bountiful stars' perfume  
 And thence one can invite the sun  
 To the exile of geraniums  
 One window is enough for me<sup>234</sup>

What the speaking persona needs to relate her to the world, to the earth, to the sky, to the night and to the day is a window and nothing more. In the second stanza, the persona provides the reader with her origin and background. She comes from a place where the people are no longer humans, but dolls, and where the trees are not real, but made of paper:

من از دیار عروسکها می آیم  
 از زیر سایه های درختان کاغذی  
 در باغ یک کتاب مصور  
 از فصلهای خشک تجربه های عقیم دوستی و عشق  
 در کوچه های خاکی معصومیت  
 از سالهای رشد حروف پریده رنگ الفبا  
 در پشت میزهای مدرسه مسلول  
 از لحظه ای که بچه ها توانستند  
 بر روی تخته حرف "سنگ" را بنویسند  
 و سارهای سراسیمه از درخت کهنسال پر زدند

I come from the land of dolls  
 From beneath the shadows of paper trees  
 In the garden of a picture book  
 From the arid seasons of the barren experiences of friendship and love  
 In the dusty alleys of innocence  
 From the growing years of the pallid letters of the alphabet  
 Behind the desks of tubercular school  
 From the moment the children could write  
 The word "stone" on the board  
 And the startled starlings flew off the ancient tree<sup>235</sup>

The persona comes from a fake and artificial land with a dehumanized population. She has gone through failed attempts at friendship and love. She has left behind her childhood together with its associated innocence and naïveté. In the next two stanzas, Farrokhzad proceeds by portraying her society's tyrannical oppression towards her through graphic, dramatic and forceful images. Growing out of all those painful ordeals, when her life has turned into naught but a fleeting time, she realizes that she must "love madly."<sup>236</sup>

In the fifth stanza, Farrokhzad turns to the mirror and the window as two interchangeable entities with a similar function. Once again, she emphasizes that a single window (and nothing more) is sufficient for her as an opening to understanding and awareness:

One window is enough for me,  
 One window into the moment  
 of consciousness, seeing, and  
 silence

یک پنجره برای من کافی است  
 یک پنجره به لحظه آگاهی و نگاه و سکوت  
 اکنون نهال گردو  
 آنقدر قد کشیده که دیوار را برای برگهای جوانش

Now the walnut sapling has  
 grown tall enough  
 To define  
 The meaning of wall to its young  
 leaves  
 Ask the mirror  
 The name of your saviour  
 Isn't the earth trembling beneath  
 your feet  
 Lonelier than you?<sup>237</sup>

معنی کند  
 از آینه پرس  
 نام نجات دهنده ات را  
 آیا زمین که زیر پای تو می لرزد  
 تنها تر از تو نیست؟

For Farrokhzad, the mirror in these lines has reversed its function from her initial conceptualization of it. It is no longer a tool of captivity or entrapment, not even a space of disturbing multiplicity. On the contrary, it becomes a means of liberation. It is now a vehicle of the truth, though not in the mystical sense. The mirror has turned into a vehicle of self-realization and self-construction, inviting the onlooker, as the Delphic principle does, to “Know Thyself.”<sup>238</sup> The mirror facilitates the formation of self. It appears to have the mantic power of divination. It is now supposed to have the knowledge and the power to reply and to direct the onlooker to salvation. The poet oscillates between the window and the mirror as the means through which consciousness, awareness and knowledge (*āgāhī*), seeing (*negāh*) and the serenity of silence (*sokūt*) are granted.

In these lines, Farrokhzad is making a direct appeal to the reader in general. She claims metaphorically that she has now mentally and psychologically matured enough to interpret the meaning of the wall as a symbol for suffocating confinement and oppressive entrapment for her young readers. Farrokhzad has been able to grow beyond all those imposed limitations and forced captivities and psychologically disentangle herself. Thereby, the surface of the mirror becomes the agency for the relocation of power. The power, initially located on the surface of the mirror, is relocated within the self through the process of reflection, perception and introjection of the image appearing on its surface. The mirror becomes an agency of empowerment and emancipation. Through it one can gain control of the image, and thereby, control of that power.<sup>239</sup> Moreover, the surface of the mirror is liberating because the confrontation with the uncanny double on it, as Freud suggests, lifts the curtain:

all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volitions which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will.<sup>240</sup>

By inviting the reader to turn to the mirror for an indication of one's saviour, the concept of saviour as the "other" is categorically rejected. The responsibility of self-liberation lying solely on the solitary individual is further emphasized by the rhetorical question on the loneliness of the earth. In the poem "Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season ...," discussed earlier, Farrokhzad openly asserted that the saviour is utterly dead.<sup>241</sup> Further on, in continuation of the same stanza, the poet thoroughly rejects the idea of religious deliverers of mankind. Contrarily, she holds the prophets and their holy books responsible for the havoc of our age:

The prophets brought with them into our century	پیغمبران، رسالت ویرانی را با خود به قرن ما آوردند
The mission of destruction	این انفجارهای پیایی
Are these constant explosions	و ابرهای مسموم،
And poisonous clouds,	آیا طنبن آیه های مقدس هستند؟
The echoes of Holy Scriptures?	ای دوست، ای برادر، ای همخون
O friend, O brother, O blood fellow	وقتی به ماه رسیدی
When you reach the moon	تاریخ قتل عام گلها را بنویس
Inscribe the date of the flowers' massacre <sup>242</sup>	

Farrokhzad proceeds by denigrating the doomed naïveté of dreams and illusions. Together with her youth, the old meanings are now dead for her. She feels that her time has passed. In the concluding stanzas, the persona invites the addressee to communicate with her. She is now in the shelter of the window; she can now relate to the sun:

Say something to me	حرفی به من بزن
I am in the window's shelter	من در پناه پنجره ام
I have relation with the sun <sup>243</sup>	با آفتاب رابطه دارم

Farrokhzad begins her poem "Window" by claiming that for the comprehension of the self and the world a window would suffice her. In the very same poem, the function of the window, as a medium for the realization of

the inner and outer worlds, is shifted to that of a mirror within which the saviour could be sought. The mirror and the window are now turned into tools of introspection and the knowledge of the “I” within and the “I” without, tools for monitoring the subject in its constant process of becomings. Through them, the subject may question her older selves, the present one or even envisage the future self. Therefore, the mirror can indeed become a source of liberation, of self-confidence and self-empowerment.

Farrokhzad has here completed her departure; a departure foreshadowed in her previous poems. Now she becomes able to acknowledge the significance of the mirror as a means of self development. This mirror is not her early mirror for seeing how she would appear to the other, mainly to a male gaze. No longer is it a space where her disturbing fragmentation and multiplicity of self surge, where it inflicts exceeding pain and angst. The mirror is now a space where the fragmentations are healed, the multiplicities are compromised and an authentic subjectivity is constructed. Now that she has reconciled (at least temporarily) the inner antithetical warring selves, her self-image with the images reiterated on her mirror, the poet exults in a sense of liberation, a sense of another birth. Squier asserts:

That rich accumulation of self-knowledge, that ability to respond to what is seen with the whole pressure of history and environment and conscious awareness which we call apperception, is the true gift of the satisfying mirror encounter.<sup>244</sup>

In her later poems, Farrokhzad introduces the mirror as a site of the individual's liberation. The specular reflection instigates mental reflection; in other words, the *speculum* vivifies speculation. Therefore, the mirror awakens the feeling of one's authentic selfhood. The mirror is now the place where all those disturbing feelings of uncanniness have dissolved into, turning it into a place where she feels most at home—her *querencia*. A convergence place of social adaptation and private introspection. It is the exact site where the person can take possession of her own face, as it is the very site the effacements or the wrong faces were continually enforced. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that an outright presentation of a figure of fixed, self-conscious subjectivity by means of a mirror, text or anything else would ultimately remain delusory.

### Self-Mirroring in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzad

Apart from the mirror, for Farrokhzad the only other alternative means of proving and sustaining her existence appears to be her writing. This is because, for any such artistic production there must be subjectivity, an agent active in the act of production. Thus, through a sustained act of creation and re-creation, the poet becomes able to reassure herself of her continual existence. For Farrokhzad, texts perform similar psychological functions to mirrors. They remain the two semiotic modes—catoptric and linguistic—for the objectification and consciousness of the self. A mirror is a semiotic medium. It is the cause of communication taking place between two entities. By objectifying herself either in the glass or on a piece of paper, Farrokhzad gains self-knowledge. She relies heavily on reflection—specular or mental—for her sense of being. Through mirroring and writing about the self, Farrokhzad incorporates the represented (specular and written subject) as signifiers and the representing (experiencing and writing subject) as signified, within her totalizing understanding of her subjectivity.

For Farrokhzad texts and mirrors have parallel psychological functions. They provide her with objectification, thereby, the consciousness, of her subjectivity. In an interview, Farrokhzad made it clear that, for her, poetry is “a window.”<sup>245</sup> As discussed earlier, the mirror and window at times function similarly in her poetry. She often draws upon them interchangeably. In the same interview, Farrokhzad proceeds to say that poetry is an opening to her “existence,” something through which she can justify her being and discover her authentic self:

[Poetry] is a means for communicating with being, with existence in its wide sense. The advantage of it is that when one composes a poem one can claim “I exist” or “I existed.” Otherwise, how can one claim one’s own being? I do not search for anything in my poems. Rather, I discover “myself” in my own poems.<sup>246</sup>

Therefore, for Farrokhzad, poetry as a self-seeking space turns out to be a desideratum. In her poetry, she enters into a narcissistic dialogic relationship with her subjectivity. Poetry provides her with a heterotopic—at time utopic—space for the outpouring of her narcissistic self. Further on in the same interview, she explains her experience of composing poetry with an explicit reference to mirroring and self-reflection in a spring of water. The



metaphorical description of her composing experience bears strikingly similarities to the story of Narcissus; wandering lost in the forest and coming upon his image in a lake:

I set off wandering, like a child lost in the forest. I went everywhere and gazed at everything. Everything attracted me till I finally arrived at a spring of water and found myself in that spring; I myself, containing me myself and all my forest experiences. But the poems of this book are in fact my steps and my searches for reaching the spring. Now poetry is something crucial for me. It is a responsibility I feel towards my existence. It is a sort of reply, which I should give to my life. I respect poetry the way a religious man respects his religion.<sup>247</sup>

Self-realization for Farrokhzad is in close reciprocity to her self-narration. It is through her perennial involvement in the discovery, recovery and definition of the self that she concocts her self-portrait and contrives her self-narrative. Her text, like her mirror, provides her with a space—sometimes depressing, at other times utopic, sometimes captivating, at other times emancipatory—for the act of self-scrutiny both as the subject and the object; the writing subject and the written subject.

Non-productivity for the poet equates with non-existence. As Cixous explains, this close reciprocity of self-discovery with self-narration for the female poet is also because women write from where the unconscious is speaking: “because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: woman, or as Hoffmann would say, fairies.”<sup>248</sup> The inscription of subjectivity into her text signifies that Farrokhzad has already recognized a lack and felt the need to give a meaning to it. She feels this need to reflect and to (re)construct her subjectivity from an external position exactly like what happens in the mirror experience. Therefore, the subjectivity textualized becomes a source of emancipating empowerment.

For Farrokhzad, producing an artistic work, especially one of a highly personal and subjective nature, becomes like seeing one’s reflection in the mirror, an existential necessity—a self-affirming experience. In reply to the question “Why do you compose poetry?” raised during an interview, Farrokhzad affirms, “Because I need to. For me, poetry is a need; a need beyond the level of eating and sleeping, something like breathing.”<sup>249</sup> Within her text, she can enact her desires, fears, anxieties, her wants and her

pleasures from her marginalized position. There, she is given a space to express the experiences of disturbed subjectivity; a subjectivity which has been systematically repressed by her society. Milani observes that Iran, as a traditionally patriarchal society, keeps women out of the realm of visibility by forcing them inside its walls, veils and silencing. In such a context, writing remains a pernicious method of subversion, a method of “encounter[ing] exclusion—spatially or verbally.”<sup>250</sup> She argues:

Writing, with its potential for public communication, for entering into the world of others, could be considered no less a transgression than unveiling. In both, a woman expresses/exposes herself publically. Through both, an absence becomes a presence. Both are means of expression and communication: one gives her voice a body, the other gives her body a voice.<sup>251</sup>

Within Farrokhzad’s text, as within her mirror, an ongoing debate is staged between her authentic self and the recurrent cultural images of womanhood, on the one hand, and among her own multiple contradictory selves, on the other. It is only through inscribing her body and her subjectivity into the text that she can break into a presence and into visibility; to live on and feel alive. The objectified feelings on the paper become a source of knowledge and power for her.

Despite the rich cornucopia of mirror imagery in classical Persian literature, Forugh Farrokhzad proves that her grasp of the mirror phenomenon and its ambivalent functions was not confined to the model of her literary forefathers or her scant foremothers. Farrokhzad’s use of mirror imagery remains mainly feminine, in that she depends on it for the realization and definition of her true self and also for that of her worldview. In her developmental journey of a “subject in process,” she portrays her diverse and even contradictory personal experiences by means of the mirror. The highly ambivalent essence of the mirror elicits diverse and even paradoxical reactions from her poetic personas. In her earliest poetry, the mirror serves as a tool by which she prepares herself for the male gaze. Farrokhzad relies on this gaze and the male desire that drives it for a happy consciousness of her existence. The painful growth out of this stage is exposed by her problematic relationship with her mirror and mirroring. Ultimately, Farrokhzad comes to realize the constructive nature of the mirror at a stage where she is peacefully embracing her bygone “pale experiences” and approaching old age and death.

For Farrokhzad poetry, like her mirror, remains a site of subject formation. Poetry becomes a mirror on which she relies for realization of her self and for relating that self to the world around her. Farrokhzad inscribes the gendered history of her subjectivity within her mirror poetry; a history of a disturbed and insecure poet in her incessant adaptation of identities. Within her mirror text, Farrokhzad gives us a vivid picture of her continual struggle with the antithetical images of womanhood in an era of Iranian history which is marked by the confusion of transition from tradition to modernity.