Mirrors of Entrapment and Emancipation
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Notes

Introduction


2 Marie-Madeleine Martinet in her *Le Miroir de l'esprit dans le théâtre élisabéthain* discusses how the terms “mirror,” “glass” and “looking glass” have not always been used equivalently. In the Renaissance, the term “mirror” was used to convey a more metaphorical and symbolic meaning, while “glass” was used to convey a purely material sense. This distinction gradually vanishes, and today these terms can be used interchangeably. See: Arnaud Maillet, *The Claude Glass: Use and Meaning of the Black Mirror in Western Art*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 31.


6 Ibid., 100.


8 Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror*, 100.

9 Aptly, the French word for a boudoir mirror or the cheval glass is *psy-ché*.


12 Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 74.


15 By English literature, I mean the literature written world-wide in the English language.

**Chapter One**


2 The ancient Greek aphorism “Know yourself!” was inscribed along with “Nothing to excess!” in the pronaos of Apollo’s temple at Delphi. These two aphorisms are believed by many scholars of antiquity to summarize the whole of Greek thought and culture.

3 Ovid [Melville], *Metamorphoses*, 62: 357.


5 Ibid., 62: 382–384.


7 Ibid., 63: 418.

8 Ibid., 64: 432.
Though the closer translation from Ovid’s Latin “Iste ego sum” would be “I am that,” giving neutrality to the image, Melville has chosen to translate it as “I am he.” Ibid., 64: 463. By choosing the neutral inhuman “that” for his mirror image, the image’s difference in the material, its insubstantiality versus the substantiality of the subject in front of it, as well as a sense of alienation towards the image as the Other has been discerned. For a discussion of the “untranslatability” of the “Iste ego sum” into English see: A.D. Nuttall, “Ovid’s Narcissus and Shakespeare’s Richard II: the Reflected Self,” Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century, ed. Charles Martindale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143–144.


Nuttall, “Ovid’s Narcissus,” 142.

Ovid [Melville], Metamorphoses, 65: 474.


Ibid., 19 and 23 [my emphasis]. Aporia, a recurrent term in the works of Jacques Derrida and Deconstructuralists, is derived from classical rhetoric, meaning “perplexity,” “doubt” and “difficulty.” Aporia refers to moments in a text when the knowledge enters a crisis, the meaning becomes ambiguous or contradictory and the reader faces a dilemma.


Kristeva, Tales of Love, 30.

For a succinct study of this switch in the concept of narcissism from a male trait to a feminine vice and the rigidification of heterosexual norms see: Meyers, Gender in the Mirror, 100–106.


"ال عنتر نعمة عرف ربه." This saying has been frequently referred to in the Sufi literature. For a discussion of the saying see: Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, The Alchemy of Happiness, trans. Claud Field (Charleston, South Carolina: Forgotten Books, 2008), 11–28.

While some sources say that she was raped by him, others hold that she dallied with Poseidon of her own volition.


Some feminists, particularly in film theories, have argued that the gaze is ultimately always masculine while the image remains feminine. Elizabeth Grosz exhorts us not to mistake the look—“a perceptual mode”—with the “gaze”—“a mode of desire”: “When they [some feminists] state baldly that “vision” is male, the look is masculine, or the visual is a phallocentric mode of perception, these feminists confuse a perceptual facility open to both sexes … with sexually coded positions of desire within visual (or any other perceptual) functions … vision is not, cannot be, masculine … rather, certain ways of using vision (for example, to objectify) may confirm and help produce patriarchal power relations.” Elizabeth Grosz, “Voyeurism, Exhibitionism, the Gaze,” Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary, ed. Elizabeth Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 449.

Meyers, Gender in the Mirror, 115.

Havelock Ellis, “Auto-eroticism: A Psychological Study,” Alienist and Neurologist, 19 (1898), cited in Robert Raskin and Howard Terry, “A Principal-Components Analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Fur-


Ibid., 75.

Ibid., 88–89.

Ibid., 91.


“Binary opposition,” a pair of terms coined by structuralism, explains the entity of a centre and existence of an opposing centre. It is systematically criticized by Jacques Derrida in his deconstructive studies. His argument is to reveal and hence reverse the hierarchical, and not symmetrical, nature of the binary oppositions. The emphasis is on the superior position of an
entity while the others become inferior. Derrida argues, “Very schematically: an opposition of metaphysical concepts (e.g., speech/writing, presence/absence, etc.) is never the confrontation of two terms, but a hierarchy and the order of a subordination. Deconstruction cannot be restricted to immediately pass to a neutralization: it must, through a double gesture, a double science, a double writing—put into practice a reversal of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system.” Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 21. In this regard femininity and masculinity are considered to be homogenous and fixed binary opposites.


58 In his essay “On Narcissism,” Freud argues, “We are bound to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed.” 76–77.


60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 75.


Ibid.

Grosz, “Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity,” 74.


Grosz, “Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity,” 73.

Lacanian Other, always with a capital O, is closer to Freud's Ideal. The capital O marks the absoluteness of its otherness. The Lacanian Other is not a person. It is a locus for the emanation of language and its meanings. “Misidentified with God, the Other is incarnated in human experience in the figure of the Symbolic Father—the authority that real fathers invoke to institute the law.” Grosz, “Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity,” 73. On the other hand, Object is the Lacanian equivalent of the other, with small o.


Ibid., 78.


Ibid., 77; Lacan calls it a captation because the image actually “captures” or “seizes” the psyche and turns into a significant formative agent of the psyche as well as a function in the formation of the psychosis.

Ibid., 91. In his rejection of Cartesian Cogito philosophy, Lacan was extensively influenced by Alexandre Kojève, the Russian-born Marxist and Hegelian political philosopher. Kojève suggests that in order to become
modern in the thirties, one should move beyond the Cartesian philosophy of “I think” to that of the Freudian and Hegelian philosophy of “I desire.” This move is marked by a schism, a split between the I of thought and desire, which he calls a true I (je), and that of the ego (moi), which is regarded as a site of error, illusion and “mere representations.” Roudinesco, “The Mirror Stage,” 28.

It should be noted here that Freud’s desire is Wunsch, which is different from Hegel’s Begierde. Roudinesco’s short discussion of their differences is summed up in the following: “Begierde is the desire through which the relation of consciousness to the self is expressed: the issue is to acknowledge the other or otherness insofar as consciousness finds itself in this very movement. The other is the object of desire that the consciousness desires in a negative mirror-relationship that allows it to recognize itself in it. Wunsch, or desire in the Freudian sense, is more simply an inclination, an aspiration, the fulfillment of an unconscious wish.” Ibid.

87 Lacan, “The Mirror Stage,” 78. The term imago alludes to a Judeo-Christian doctrine in which humans are being made in the image of God—in the Imago Dei (See: Genesis 1: 26, 27). Augustine suggests that humans must strive to restore the divine image in their selves. Therefore, Lacan’s mirror stage can be understood as an ironic version of this theology, that is we are the creation of our own image.
88 Meyers, Gender in the Mirror, 25.
89 The perceptual distortion of body image or body-size/weight, in aggravated cases, may lead to anorexia nervosa, where the subject suffers from an eating disorder. There is a vast amount of literature on anorexia nervosa referring to this body-image distortion. Inter alia see: D.M. Garner and P.E. Garfinkel, “Body Image in Anorexia Nervosa: Measurement, Theory and Clinical Implications,” International Journal of Psychiatry in


For a study of the centrality of vision as the basis of human knowledge see: Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Seeing through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

Luce Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985). This work, first published in 1974, led to her expulsion from Lacan’s “école freudienne.” The text provides a deconstructive reading of patriarchal discourse. It reverses the historical order by taking a speculum-like structure, starting with Freud and ending with Plato.


Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, 116.


100 It is no coincidence that the full-length mirror, mounted on a movable frame, which became popular in the early nineteenth century, is in French called a psyché.


102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.


106 Ibid., 85.

107 Ibid., 83 [Italics in the original].


118 Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 139.
124 La Belle, *Herself Beheld*, 80 [Italics mine].
129 Luce Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other,” trans. Hélène

Ibid., 63.

Ibid., 61.

Ibid.


This clairvoyant mirror falls within the broader category of magic mirrors which have been recurrent topos in many literatures of the world. These clairvoyant surfaces were often revered for their endowment with magical and mantic powers, for their “powers of temporal and spatial clairvoyance.” Theodore Ziolkowski, *Disenchanted Images: A Literary Iconology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 160. Ziolkowski, based on folklorists’ categorization, divides magic mirrors into two different categories of cognizant (wissend) and causative (wirkend). See: Ibid., 162–168.


Ibid., 519.


Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other,” 61.

Ibid., 64.

Ibid., 67. For more on the mother’s mirroring function see: Donald Woods Winnicott’s chapter on “Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development,” in his *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 149–159. Here, Winnicott explains how the individual embarks on the first experience of human relatedness through the mirror experience. He begins his chapter with these words: “In individual emotional development the


"جواندارا، این شعرها را که چون آینه دان، آخر دان که آینه را صورت نپیست در خود، اما هر که در او نگه می کنند صورت خود تواند دید، همچنین می دان که شعر را در خود هژی معنی نپیست، اما هر که در آن تنها دیدن که روکار او بود و کمال کار اوست. و اگر کوی شعر را معنی آنست که قابل شوخی که و دیگران معنی دیگر وضع می کند از خود، این هم چنان است که کمی گوید، صورت آینه صورت روز صیقل است که اول آن صورت نخود و این معنی را حقیق و غموضی هستت که اگر در شرک آویزم از مقصود باز مام."

Arthur Schopenhauer says: “Books are like a mirror. If an ass looks in, you can’t expect an angel to look out.” And Oscar Wilde in his Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray writes, “It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.” (Clayton, Delaware: Prestwick House, 2007), 11.


144 Ibid., 148–149.

145 “Poetry is Not a Luxury” is the title of an article by Audre Lorde first published in Chrysalis: A Magazine of Female Culture, no. 3 (1977); reprinted in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches (Trumansburg, New York: Crossing Press, 1984). In this article, Lorde explains: “For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival
and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.” Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 37.


147 La Belle, *Herself Beheld*, 180 [Information within the brackets mine].

148 The idea of “reflection” of the poet in poetry can be traced back to the Romantic definition of poetry. For an elaborate study refer to: Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*.


152 Ibid., 27.

153 Certainly, there exist some autobiographical writings by female authors that do not repudiate or even question patriarchal laws and their inherent phallocentrism; for example, autobiographies written by women who have made careers out of their unquestioning social femininity, such as movie stars. They are often happy with their success built on the cultural definitions of womanhood and beauty.


156 Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror*, i.


159 Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 880.


**Chapter Two**

1 Šams ed-Dīn Mo˙hammad ˙Hāfe˙z, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfe˙z-e Šīrāzī*, eds. Mo˙hammad Qazvīnī and Qāsem Ġanī (Tehran: Anjoman-e ḥošnevisān-e Irān, 1368/1989), 86. The translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

2 Rowson explains šāhed-bāzī in the following words: “From a relatively early period—probably the mid-ninth century—some Muslim mystics claimed to see in the beauty of adolescent boy a ‘testimony’ to the beauty and goodness of God, and initiated the practice of gazing at such a boy as a form of spiritual exercise. The boy was thus known in Sufi parlance as a ‘witness’ (šāhed).” Everett K. Rowson, “Homosexuality in the Medieval Islamic World: Literary Celebrations vs. Legal Condemnation.” Paper presented at the conference “Gender and Altery in Near Eastern Societies” (Princeton University, 6 April 1995), 24; Quoted in Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and*


5 For more see: Janet Afary, Sexual Politics in Modern Iran (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Najmabadi, Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards.


7 Robbins, Literary Feminisms, 122–123.

8 Forough Farrokhzad, Mağmūa ašār-e Forough Farrokhzad, ed. Behnâm Bāvandpūr (Essen: Nima Verlag, 2002).

9 Spencer, “Mirrors and Masks,” 72.

10 Ibid., 70.

11 As Millani argues, Farrokhzad’s whole canon of work can fit into the genre of Bildungsroman, though a female one and in verse: “… the first Bildungsroman written by and about a woman in Iran. Although a genre of novel, and although its tradition is almost exclusively associated with male characters, the category Bildungsroman best defines Forugh’s ceaseless developmental journey. Her five collections of poetry, viewed as a whole, constitute nothing less than a tale of self-discovery and growth.” Farzaneh Millani, “Forough Farrokhzād,” Persian Literature, ed. Ehsan Yar-
shater (New York: The Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988), 368. See also: Milani, *Veils and Words*, 136–137. Here, Milani discusses how Farrokhzad’s poetic oeuvre “best embodies Farrokhzad’s emergence from cultural conditioning and her struggle to come to self-realization, warranting its adaptation to her journey and to her awakening.” (136) Milani further states that these poems are “the chronicle of an evolving consciousness, the testament of growing awareness.” (136–137)


Ibid., 153.

The complete versions of the poems together with their translations can be found in the Appendix.

Forugh Farrokhzad, *Mağmū’a āsār-e Forugh Farrokhzad*, ed. Behnām Bāvandpūr (Essen: Nima Verlag, 2002), 1: 69. All the references are to this book. The translations are mine. For the Persian orthography of the poems, I have also followed this book.

Ibid.


The Persian word *ḥīre* can also be translated as “bewildering at” (bewildering at my wet eyes).

Farrokhzad, *Mağmū’a āsār*, 1: 70.

This is reminiscent of a very popular classical Persian poem of Arabic origin, Neẓāmī Ganḵavī’s *Layli o Maḵnūn*. Maḵnūn, literally “the insane or the obsessed,” becomes a poet-singer after losing his beloved Layli and becoming insane. The motif of creativity and madness out of lost love has become a tradition in Persian literature and Farrokhzad in this poem draws upon the same tradition. See: As‘ad E. Khairallah, *Love, Madness, and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Maḵnūn Legend* (Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980); Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness


27 Persian literary tradition holds that sorme (collyrium or antimony) is originally a person who was pounded in the mortar of love until he lost his original stony nature. It is believed that it enhances beauty as well as improving eyesight. Annemarie Schimmel, As through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 122.

28 Gallop, The Daughter’s Seduction, 115.

29 Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other,” 65.

30 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsâr, 1: 70.

31 Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir Without the Other,” 66.


33 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsâr, 1: 70.

34 Ibid., 1: 75.

35 Melchior-Bonnet, The Mirror, 233.

36 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsâr, 1: 75.

37 Ibid.

38 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 2005), 35.

39 As in English literature, the theme of “speaking mirror” is abundant in Persian literature. The ability to speak and to provide the beholder with an answer is regarded as one of the powers of the mirror. For an example see: Nasrollah Pourjavady, Zabân-e hâl dar ārâfân o adabîyât-e pârûsî (Tehran: Entešârât-e Hermes, 1385/2006–2007), 158, 650–651. Here, Pourjavady cites an example of a mirror and a comb getting into the debate over the nature of true love.

40 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsâr, 1: 76.

41 Ibid.

42 Ġâm-e ġam, and all its other equivalents, ġâm-e ġamšîd, ġâm-e keyhosro, ġâm-e gahân namâ, ġâm-e gahân bîn, ġâm-e ālam bîn, ġâm-e gahân ārâ, ā‘îne-ye soleymân (Solomon’s mirror), ā‘îne-ye eskan-dar (sekandar or sekandari) have a magical or surreal aura around them. Over time they have acquired rich metaphorical connotations, all orbiting round the centre of reflection, mental or visual. Ġâm in Persian means a cup but it also denotes “clean” and “pure.” Furthermore, ġam also means a

Some Persian sources recount that Alexander installed a huge mirror on a tower to destroy a sea serpent. Like Basilisk, the legendary king of serpents, the sight of this serpent was deadly to any mortal onlooker and the serpent would also die should it see its own reflection. See: Schimmel, A Two-Colored Brocade, 115. In this version of the story, one can see the vast overlap with the key elements of the Greek mythological story of Medusa, such as the deadly look and the mirror as a lethal and liberating instrument. For a study of the “mirror-magic” see: Géza Róheim, Spiegelzauber (Leipzig-Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag: 1919).

It is worth noting here that the vast medieval encyclopaedias that set out to catalogue all knowledge were often called specula. For the study of speculum or mirror as titles see: Ritamary Bradley, “Backgrounds of the Title Speculum in Medieval Literature,” Speculum 29 (1954), 100–115; see also Herbert Grabels, The Mutable Glass: Mirror-Imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

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45 One of such popular mirror motifs is the burning mirror, which has had a great fascination for Persian poets. In Persian it is called harrāqa or ā’īne-ye sūzān. It is a concave mirror that concentrates the rays of the sun and with enough intensity to set anything burnable in its focal point on fire. It is sometimes referred to as “Alexander’s mirror.” See: Ḥoseyn Ma’sūmī Hamadānī, “Ā’īne-ye sūzān-e aflātūn,” Našr-e dāneš, year: 7, no. I (Spring 1379/2000): 3–15. Moḥammad Moʿīn, in his article “Alexander’s Mirror,” collected some of the old Arabic and Persian texts recounting the story of Alexander’s mirror and how it was ruined. These works reaching back to the tenth century, and some of them fitting in the genre of travelogue, appear to be more fictive, mixing various myths into the accounts of what they actually visited. Moḥammad Moʿīn, “Ā’īne-ye sekandar,” Mağmūʿa maqālāt-e doktor Moḥammad-e Moʿīn, ed. Mahdoḥt Moʿīn, vol. II (Tehran: Entešārāt-e Moʿīn, 1367/1988–1989): 465–494. Also See: Mūsavī, “Ā’īne dar šāhkār-hā-ye adabi,” 35–37 and 42–53.

46 Farrokhzad, Mağmūʿa āsār, 1: 146.

47 Ibid., 147.

48 Ibid.

49 In the poem “Afšāne-ye talḥ” (“Bitter Myth”), Farrokhzad openly acknowledges this cultural conceptualization of woman in order to vehemently reject it:

به اَی هر جا رفت، در گوشش سرودند
که یک زن را بهر عشانتر آفریدند

She was told nothing but the lust
She was regarded as nothing but the manifestations of appearances
Wherever she went, it was sung in her ears
Woman is created for voluptuousness. Farrokhzad, 1: 52

By astutely entitling her poem “Bitter Myth,” Farrokhzad discloses her full awareness to the unreality of the image of womanhood which her phallocentric culture provides.

The round shape of the mirror in old times is asserted by Melchior-Bonnet, “Nearly always rounded, these mirrors were either concave or convex.” Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror*, 10.


Ibid.

Ibid., 213.

Ibid., 214.

For the metaphor of the mirror of the heart in its non-mystical sense see: Mūsavī, “Āʿīne dar šahkār-hā-ye adabi,” 77.

Farrokhzad, *Maǧmūʿa āšār*, 1: 135. “the smile of wine cup” alludes to Ḥāfeẓ’s couplet in which he uses “wine’s smile”: عکس روى تو چو در آینه چام افتاد/ عبارت از خنده می در طبع چام افتاد “When Thy image was reflected on the mirror of cup/The ‘āref from the smile of the wine fell into vain desires.” Āʿīne-ye ǧām, here simply translated into “the mirror of cup,” associates itself with the recurrent Persian motif of ǧām-e ǧām. The verse implies that the image in the cup deludes the mystic into a vain and impossible desire, confusing the image with the prior reality, the signified with the signifier, and the manifestation with God. The word ʰām, literally meaning “raw” and “baseless,” also designates “novice” or “inexperienced” in the language of Sufi poetry, thereby hinting at the inexperienced mystic who may mistake the images with the reality of God. Ḥāfeẓ, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ-e Šīrāzī*, eds. Moḥammad Qazvīnī and Qāsem Ġanī, 86. [Translation mine]

The mythological Antigone, Shakespeare’s Ophelia, Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, and Mary Wollstonecraft’s Maria are among many other love-mad female literary figures in the western literary tradition. For more on love-mad women see: Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*; Helen Small, *Love’s Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity 1800–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).


Farrokhzad explicitly refers to the “psychological interiority” of the mirror in a collaborative poem with Yadollah Ro’yāī (born in 1932), another Persian poet. The poem, composed in 1966, is entitled “Deltangi” (“Depression”). In the collection, the parts composed by Farrokhzad are printed in bold letters. Here Farrokhzad perspicaciously presents the psychology of mirroring:
The depiction of this fracture is incredibly excruciating
The depiction of this fracture, O kind one
O the kindest one
Will upset the equilibrium of the mirror.
Invite me to the garden of my childhood!

Farrokhzad, *Maḏmū’a āṣār*, 1: 377

“*Tašvīr*,” here translated as depiction, also means image in Persian. By anthropomorphizing the mirror, onto which the persona projects her inner fragmentation, it has also been given a psychological interiority. The persona nostalgically seeks refuge in the psychological security of her paradise-like childhood years.

The term “speculation” is linked to “speculum.” Through the medium of speculum, one can meditate on the case of an effect reflected on a surface. See: Melchior-Bonnet, 113–114.

In her poems, Farrokhzad does not reject her physicality, despite the long tradition of body-rejection, particularly female body-rejection, in Persian literature. One of the many poems by Farrokhzad that explicitly reveal her anti-transcendental views is “*Rūy-e ḥāk*” (“Upon the Earth”), 1: 249–250. In this poem, Farrokhzad declares that she has never wished to change her place on earth for that of the stars, the chosen, or even the angels. She claims that she is nothing but an echo, an aural reflection of an echo—an image of an image in the Lacanic sense. The window is significant in this poem (and is studied more elaborately later in this work). For the full text of the poem and its translation refer to the Appendix.


The parable of the mirror of the heart has also been recurrently referred to by many mystical philosophers in their explanation and criticism of the famous ecstatic utterances (ṣaṭḥiyyāt) of some mystics. Among these ecstatic utterances are: Ḥosayn ebn-e Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj’s (executed in 922) declaration of “I am the Truth,” and Bāyazid Baṣṭāmī’s (d. ca. 874) declaration “Glory be to me! How great is my majesty!” and “I am He!” See: Nasrollah Pourjavady, Eṣrāq o ʿerfān: maqāle-hā o naqd-hā (Tehran: Našr-e dānešgāhī, 1380/2001–2002), 25–28 and 105–110.

Ziolkowski argues that this metaphoric thought “descends from Plato and the Bible by way of Christian Platonism. This syncretic analogy, which was first publicized by Augustine and his commentators, is based principally on two passages in the New Testament” [1Corinthians 13: 12 and James 1: 23–24]. Ziolkowski, Disenchanted Images, 152. Melchior-Bonnet discusses the origin and the development of this metaphoric thought, “The mirror became part of the religious vocabulary of the Middle Ages, which developed its symbolic meanings from scriptural writings, Neoplatonic texts, and the patristic tradition (the writings of the church fathers).” Melchior-Bonnet, The Mirror, 108. Also See: Hans Leisegang, “Die Erkenntnis Gottes im Spiegel der Seele und der Natur,” Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung, vol. 4 (1950), 163–183.

For a succinct study of this mirror metaphor in the works of Avicenna and Sohrawardi see: Pourjavady, Eṣrāq o ʿerfān, 25–28. For mirror metaphor in the works of Abū Ḥāmed Ghazzalī’s see: Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Studies in Al-Ghazzali (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), 314–320. Lazarus-Yafeh in her thematic study of Ghazzalī’s Arabic works devotes a section to “The Parable of the Mirror.” Here, she has compiled the passages in which the parable of the mirror in the different Arabic works of Ghazzalī appears.

first emerged in the works of Descartes and then was further developed by the following generations of the Western philosophers. The relationship between the mirror and the reality it reflected was comprehended in the form of “speculation.”

Burckhardt, “Die Symbolik des Spiegels,” 13 [Translation mine]. Compare with the original: “Wenn das Herz zum reinen Spiegel geworden ist, so spiegelt sich in ihm ein seit die Welt, so wie sie wirklich ist, nämlich ohne die Verzerrungen, die das leidenschaftliche Denken verschuldet. Anderseits spiegelt das Herz die göttliche Wahrheit mehr oder weniger unmittelbar, das heißt zunächst in der Gestalt von Sinnbildern (īšārāt), dann in der Gestalt der geistigen Eigenschaften (sfūt) oder Wesenheiten (‘ayān), die den Sinnbildern zugrunde liegen, und schließlich als göttliche Wirklichkeit (ḥaqīqa).”

The following well-known prophet sayings (ahādīṣ) may arguably be interpreted as God’s self-love: “كُنتُ كَرَأ مَخْفِيًا، فَأَحْبَبْتُ أنَّ أَعْفَ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ لِكَي أَعْفَ (I was a hidden treasure and I longed to be known. So I created the creation so that I may be known) and “إِنَّ اللَّهُ جُمِيلٌ وَيُحِبُّ الْجَالِلِ” (God is beautiful and loves beauty).


Bīdel Dehlavi’s poetry, famous for its stylistic opacity and obfuscatory ambiguities, is a plethora of mirror imagery. Šafī’-Kadkanī aptly titles his anthology of Bīdel’s poems “The Poet of the Mirrors.” At the end of this book, he provides us with an understandably far from comprehensive glossary of the poet’s mirror associations and interpretation. See: Mohammad-Režā Šafī’-Kadkanī, Šā’er-e ā’īne-hā: barresi-ye sabk-e hendī o se’r-e Bīdel (Tehran: Mo’asese-ye entešārāt-e āgāh, 1371/1992–1993). For the study of Bīdel’s mirror imagery also see: Daniela Meneghini, “A new approach to


Ibid., 180.

Ibid.

Ibid., 181.

Ibid., 182.

Ibid.

Ibid., 185.

Ibid., 182.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 183.

In a later poem, “ʿEṣyān-e ḥodā” (“Divine Rebellion”), the I-narrator (Farrokhzad herself) even seeks refuge in the sexual union with Satan (206).

Farrokhzad, *Maḡmūʿa āsār*, 1: 184. On the traditionally recurrent analogy between feminine beauty and the moon in Persian literature, Milani explains, “The age-old, stereotyped comparison of a woman’s beauty to the moon is more than a merely physical analogy for these books. Emotionally, too, the ideal woman, like the moon, revolves around a sun in her life and takes her definition from him. The image of the ideal woman—moon-faced, emotionally moonlike, distant, virginal, silent, living in a world of muted distinctiveness and desire—haunted these autobiographers, as it did the society at large.” Farzaneh Milani, “Veiled Voices: Women’s Autobiographies in Iran,” *Women’s Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*, ed. Afsaneh Najmabadi (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 15.

See pages 76 and 330, notes 42 and 43.


Ḥāfeẓ, *Divān-e Ḥāfeẓ-e Širāzī*, eds. Mohammad Qazvini and Qāsem Ġanī, 86. For more explanation of the lines see page 332, note 58.


Employing the idea of God-Satan reciprocal mirroring, Abūbakr Vāseṭī, a Sufi master in the tenth century, is reported to have attributed the following statement to Satan addressing God:

"They made a mirror out of my image and located it in front of you and made a mirror out of your image and located it in front of me. I look at you and cry at myself and you look at me and laugh at yourself."

Ṣayḥ Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār


This third person gender-free ū—within the broader gender neutrality of Persian language—is a source of great ambiguity and controversy in Persian literature. It has often been employed by poets shrewdly as a veiling tactic to shroud the sex of their beloved—he, she, or even God—in a cloak of disguise, thereby adding to the figurative richness of their language. Their texts have also given rise to a series of irresolvable contradictory interpretations. They could be read as: mystical or non-mystical, heterosexual or homosexual, and simultaneously all could be valid. The same could be valid in the readings of Farrokhzad. But read in the light of biographical information, I have assumed the masculinity of ū and translated accordingly.


See: Mūsavī, “ʿĀine dar șâhkâr-hâ-ye adabī,” 162. It is worth noting that in English the noun mirror derives from the classical Latin root *mīrārī*. Sharing the same root as miracle, *mīrārī* means “to wonder at, to admire.”


Ibid., 110.

Ibid. 

For some examples of *ney* (reed) in Persian literature and their interpretations see: Pourjavady, *Zabān-e ḥāl*, 823–870. Nicholson chooses the word reed-flute as the English equivalent of Persian *ney* and marks its association “with the religious services of the Mevlevi Order, in which music and dancing are prominent features. Rūmî uses it as a symbol for the soul emptied of self and filled with the Divine spirit. This blessed soul, during its life on earth, remembers the union with God which it enjoyed in eternity and longs ardently for deliverance from the world where it is a stranger and exile.” [Ğalāloddīn] Rumi, *A Rumi Anthology, Rumi: Poet and Mystic Tales of Mystic Meaning*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 31, note 1.

In the poem “*Donyā-ye sāye-hā*” (“The World of Shadows”), Farrokhzad draws upon the shadow—another form of human double—as the version of self repressed back into the unconsciousness—a Jungian shadow. Here, the speaker wonders if she is a shadow of her own shadow; the replica, the image assimilated:

At night on the damp road
Oft have I asked myself
“Does life assume colours within our shadows?
Or are we ourselves the shadows of our shadows?”

Farrokhzad, *Mağmūʿa āšār*, 1: 169

Ibid.

Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 78 [Italics in the original].


Ibid.

Ibid., 131.

Ibid.


Ibid., 224–225.


Ibid., 225.


In classical Persian literature, the most popular story in which the mirror as a feminine catoptric device of deception has been invoked is the story of Yūsof and Zoliḥā. Originally a Qur’ānic story, it was adopted by some classical poets. In this story, the close intimacy of women with their mirrors and the deceptive nature of the mirror have been drawn upon to entrap the subject within the self and within the physical world of appearances. The mirror is turned into a feminine weapon of the *femme fatale* and has been recurrently associated with sin, and for that reason with Eve, the original sinner and seducer. For the mirror as a powerful tool of deception and temptation to sin in the story of Yūsof and Zoliḥā see: Firdausī of Tūs, *Yūsuf

Melchior-Bonnet in her book The Mirror writes, “[The mirror] became the extravagant tool of women’s coquetry and even an instrument of pleasure that certain Roman citizens, like Hostius Quadra, liked to surround themselves with to multiply and increase their lover’s sexual attributes.” (p. 107)

In the poem “Gereh” (“The Knot”) (pp. 220–222), Farrokhzad highlights the distorted and asymmetrical character of the mirror image by metaphorizing the mirror to a fog: “تَنْزِيدُهُ بِمَآ أَيُّهِ/تصوِّرُ ما شَكْسَتْهُ وَ بِآ́هَکِ.” “Slipped into the fog of the mirror/our images crooked and out of harmony.” The poem depicts the persona’s confused and disharmonic relation to her subjectivity, extended to her beloved and the world around her by resorting to a mirror.


See: Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsār, 1: 289–290.

For more on the mirror and eye see pp. 79–81.

Radio interview with Ḥasan Honarmandī, Tehran 1341/1962–1963; published in Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsār, 2: 26. Compare with the original:

آَکْرِ شَا دِقْتُ كَرّهُ مَيْ بَاَشِيدَ مَيْ بِبَيْنَۡ تَوَى زَمَانٍ دَارِمَ زَنْدَکَ ۡمَيْ كِئَمَ كَهَّ ذَمَ مَفَاهِمَ وْ مَقَیضَهَا دَارِنَد مَعَاَهَا خَوَدْشَانٍ رَآَ ذَدَسْ مَيْ دَهَنَذَ وَ دَارِنَدْ، نَفَى خَوَاهُ بَکُومَ بِیَا اَرْزُشَ، دِرَ حَالَ مَزِیْلَ شَنَدَهْسَنَدَ.

Interview with Sirûs Ẓâhbâz and Ġolâm-Ḥosseyn Šâ’edî, Spring 1343/1964; reprinted in Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsār, 2: 40. Compare with the original:

“دَنْیای بَیوًّن . . . آَنْقَدَ وَارَوْنَهِ اَسْتَه كَهَ نَنَ خَوَاهُمْ بَاوْرَشُ كَمَ.”

Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a āsār, 1: 293.
145 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 295, 299 and 300.
147 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 295.
148 It is noteworthy here that myriad meanings can be attached to the word ḥaqq, making the sentence “ḥaqq bâ kâsi-st ke mîbînad” ambiguous. Ḥaqq not only means “right” and “just,” but can also stand for “the Truth (= God),” particularly in the Sufi context. Therefore, the sentence can also be rendered as: “The Truth is with the one who sees,” making “ḥaqq” the subject of the sentence. However, considering that Farrokhzad was an anti-transcendental poet, this is unlikely to have been her intention.
149 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 295–296.
150 La Belle, Herself Beheld, 119.
151 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 296.
153 Ibid., 9.
154 See pp. 73 and 144.
155 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 296.
156 Shengold, “The Metaphor of the Mirror,” 100.
157 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 296–297.
158 Ibid., 297.
159 See: Ibid., 297–298.
160 Ibid., 298.
162 Milani, Veils and Words, 151.
163 See: Schimmel, As Through a Veil, 76.
164 Categorizing this poem as a symbolic one, Šamīsā indicates that here “the mirror is a symbol for mind and memories,” while “the shutter can be a symbol for seeing, communication and understanding.” These interpretations, though valid and illuminating for the reader, fail to expose the complexities of the poem. Sirūs Šamīsā, Râhnamâ-ye adabîyât-e mo’âšer: šarîh o taḥlîl-ê gozîde-ye še’êr-e fârsî (Tehran: Entešârât-e mîtrâ, 2004), 291.
165 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a ašâr, 1: 229.

امشب خیلی دیوانه هستم ... بهار روا چرا هیچ چیز حیران نی دکد ... کاش می توانتست مثل آدم های دیگر خودم را در ابتدال زندگی کم کم ... خیلی نی رها هستم امروز خودم را در آن آنه تماشا کردم. حالا کم کار نهاده و خودم و خودش یا هزار شکل دیروست می کرد و به هر دل خوش بود. این چشم های مرضی، این صورت شکسته و لاغر و این خط های نابنگام زیر جشن ها و بیشانی مال من است؟

... پرویز جان استقامات کرد کار آسانی نبست. نا امیدی مثل موریانه روح مرا گرد می کند نه با این اعصاب مرضی نی دام ساختگی چه می شود ... آگر از انجا برم دیوانه می شوم ... خودم خوب حس می کنم که روز به روز یبشت بلبلی می روی کاهی اوقات مثل این است که در خودم فرو می رود. وقتی دارم توی خیابان راه می روم مثل این است که بعد گرد می شود و از اطراف فربه می رود. اما خوب می دام که دیگر نه توام خودم را کول برم روح من در جمی سرگردانی می سوزد و من با نامیده به خاکستر آن خبره می شوم.


Ibid., 300.

In Persian *dar-ī-če* literally means a small door. *Dar* means door and *-če* (like the suffix *-let* in English language) is a diminutive suffix. Here the words shutter and window are used as equivalents for *dar-ī-če*. See: Farrokhzad, *Mağmūʿa āsār*, 1: 295 and 299. On the use of *panγare* (window), it is pertinent to note that the word originally meant a lattice or cage; in that sense, although it seems far from Farrokhzad’s intention, *panγare* can also signify the poet’s feelings of confinement and entrapment. See: Dehhooda, s.v. ”*panγare*,” *Loğatnāme*, vol. 4, pp. 5743–5744.

Interview with Sīrūs ˙Tāhbāz and Gölām-Hosseyn Sā’edi, Spring 1343/1964; reprinted in Farrokhzad, *Mağmūʿa āsār*, 2: 40 [_translation mine_]. Compare with the original:

همه چیز وارونه شده بود. حتی خودم وارونه شده بودم. از ناس خودم بدم می آمد و تجبب می کرد. این شعر نتیجه همین دقتی است. بعد از این شعر توانستم کی خودم را درست کم در من فکرها و عقیده های دست بردم و روی بعضی حالاتی خودم خاتم کردم. اما دنبال بیرون هنوز همان شکل است. اتفریق وارونه است که نی خواهم آورده کم. من روی زبان این شعر هم کار کردم. در واقع اولین آرامشی بوده در زمینه به کاربردن زبان گفتگو.
Amin Banani and Jascha Kessler translated *vahm* as “terror”. “Green Terror” Gramercy Review, *A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Fiction*, vol. 2 (1978), 53; Hasam Javadi and Susan Sallée into “illusion”. *Another Birth and Other Poems*, 83; and David Martin into “Fantasy”. *A Rebirth*, 66. All these meanings are contained within the Persian world *vahm*.


Milani, *Veils and Words*, 69.


Ibid., 302.

Ibid.

Ibid., 302–303.

Milani, *Veils and Words*, 66.

Farrokhzad, *Mağmû’a āsār*, 1: 303. For the explanation of the *āb-e ģādū* translated as “talismanic water” by Javadi and Sallée, they have provided thus: “When a man took a second wife, it was important to the first wife that she safeguard her hold upon the man’s affections, and to do so she would employ various superstitious devices. One such device was to sprinkle specially prepared water over the nuptial bed of the new bride, a custom to which Forugh refers in this line.” Farrokhzad, *Another Birth and Other Poems*, 87.

See: Deh hodā, s.v. “*tašrrof*,” *Loğatnâme*, vol. 5, pp. 6770–6771.

Note that if the term is read as *šekāk*, though not in common usage, it means “the houses in one row.” However, this reading of the word would not fit with the meter of the poem. See: Deh hodā, s.v. “*šekāk*,” *Loğatnâme*, vol. 9, p. 14356.

“The Road Not Taken” a poem by Robert Frost.


Ibid.


Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 75.


Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 189 [Italics in the original].


195 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 195 [Italics in the original].
196 Ibid.
197 Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other,” 63.
198 Birkle, *Women’s Stories of the Looking Glass*, 16.
200 Ibid., 195 [Italics in the original].
204 See: Farrokhzad’s poem “Meeting at Night”, *Mağmū’a aṣār*, 1: 296.
205 Hélène Cixous, “Coming to Writing” and Other Essays, ed. Deborah Jenson (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 36.
207 The phrase “new woman” was popularized by Sarah Grand (1854–1943), an Irish-born feminist writer. The “new woman,” as a modern feminist ideal of the liberated woman, emerged at the end of the nineteenth century.
210 Farrokhzad, *Mağmū’a aṣār*, 1: 337.
211 Ibid., 340.
212 Ibid., 338 and 340.
213 Ibid., 337–338. The Persian month *Dey* is the first month of winter, corresponding to December–January.
214 Ibid., 338.
215 Ibid., 339.
217 Ibid., 339.
218 Ibid., 339–340.
219 See pp. 73 and 115.
220 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a aṣâr, 1: 341.
221 Ibid., 345.
223 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a aṣâr, 1: 341.
225 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a aṣâr, 1: 342.
226 Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other,” 66.
227 Melchor-Bonnet, The Mirror, 102. For mirror as a symbol of purity in Persian literature see: Mûsavî, “Ā’îne dar şâhkâr-hâ-ye adabi,” 55 and 77. “Speculum sine macula” is one of the popular attributes of the Virgin Mary, signifying her immaculate purity. Hans Biedermann explains, “the mirror is also associated with VIRGIN MARY, because she gives us God’s image and reflection, Jesus Christ, without the mirror (Mary herself) being changed or broken in the process”. Dictionary of Symbolism, trans. James Hulbert (New York: Facts On File, 1992), 223.
228 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a aṣâr, 1: 342.
231 Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, 19 and 47.
232 Farrokhzad, Mağmû’a aṣâr, 1: 345.
233 Ibid., 344.
234 Ibid., 355.
235 In the poem “ʿArūsak-e kûkî” (“The Clockwork Doll”), Farrokhzad has metaphorized women of her society to dolls to highlight their passive, mechanical position. Ibid., 274–276. Cf. Sylvia Plath’s poem “The Munich Mannequins”.
236 Ibid., 356.
237 Ibid., 356–357.
238 The traditional, particularly medieval, concept of the mirror held that its surface should reflect nothing but the divine Truth, i.e., the image of God.
If the mirror failed to reiterate the image of God, it was generally vilified by theologians and moralists as the wellspring of human desire, vanity and demonic presences. On the other hand, in arguing the mirror’s instructing capacities, some refer to Socrates’ mirror. According to Diogenes, Socrates “recommended to the young the constant use of the mirror, to the end that handsome men might acquire a corresponding behaviour, and ugly men conceal their defects by education.” Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, trans. Robert Drew Hicks (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann, 1950), vol. I, 165.

Šamīsā suggests that the mirror in the poem “Window” stands for the self, heart, mind and the interior (Šamīsā, Rāḥmanā-ye adabiyyāt-e mo‘āser, 335). In this sense, Farrokhzad seems to be drawing upon the popularly recurrent motif in Persian classic literature: the mirror as a symbol standing for the heart, soul and interior, as discussed earlier. Therefore, the oxymoronic nature of the mirror, revealing to the person in front of it exactly what it cannot in fact reflect, is utilized.

Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” 236.

Farrokhzad, Maḏmū‘a āṣār, 1: 338 (“The saviour is hibernating in the grave”).

Ibid., 357.

Ibid.


Interview with Sīrūs Ṭāhbāz and Gōlām-Ḥosseyn Sāḵāderī, Spring 1343/1964; reprinted in Farrokhzad, Maḏmū‘a āṣār, 2: 35.

Ibid., 36 [Translation mine]. Cf. with the original:

Ibid., 51–52 [Translation mine]. Cf. with the original:
Notes to page 156–162 | 337

249 Forough Farrokhzad’s Interview with Šadr od-Dīn Elāhī (5 Esfand 1345/24 February 1967); reprinted in Farrokhzad, Mağmū’a āšār, 2: 70. Cf. with the original:

"برای اینکه احتیاج دارم. شعر برای من به شکل یک احتیاج مطرح است. احتیاج بالاتر از رنگ خوردن و خوایدن، چیزی شبیه ناشق کشیدن.

250 Milani, Veils and Words, xv.
251 Ibid., 6.

Chapter Three


5 Ibid, 286–287.

6 Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity, 143–144. For a more detailed study of the topoi of femmes fatales see: Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe (eds.), The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave


9 Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror*, i.


11 Ibid., 32.


15 Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, 137.


17 Ibid., 33.


19 Ibid., 51.


22 That is why it is considered inappropriate for nuns to carry mirrors or to look at them. In countries like Iran, which have based their education system on religious and traditional teachings, the mirror is among those items most strongly forbidden for young girls to carry with them in school, because it is seen as facilitating vanity and self-idolatry. Furthermore, the mirror has the power to grant individuality, a distinctive self-image, which is feared most in female subjects and consistently repressed in fundamental religious contexts.


25 Ibid., 129.
28 Ibid., 91.
30 Ibid.
38 In the 1963 poem “Totem,” Plath depicts the spiritual barrenness of the self with resort to the same symbolic elements of the mirror and the weaving spider:

> There is no terminus, only suitcases

Out of which the same self unfolds like a suit
Bald and shiny, with pockets of wishes,

Notions and tickets, short circuits and folding mirrors.
I am mad, calls the spider, weaving itself many arms.

*Plath, The Collected Poems*, 264–265

40 For instance see the poem “Three Women” in which Plath invariably refers to pregnancy through the metaphor of a hill (Ibid., 176, 180, 183 and 186).


50 Ibid.


52 Ibid.


55 Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, with Fragment of an Autobiography of Mrs. Hutchinson*, ed. James Sutherland (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 10. The book was first published in 1806. Hutchinson applies the mirror metaphor for her husband, too. But interestingly this time he is “the mirror that reflected the creator’s excellence.” (Ibid., 2). Hutchinson is an illuminating example of the firm puritan ideological faith in the subjection of men to God and women to the God in their men (“He for God only, she for God in him”). (Ibid., xviii).

56 Ibid., 32–33.


59 Goethe’s letter dated 8 January 1781 is as follows: “Schweer enthalt ich mich noch einmal in meinen liebsten Spiegel zu sehen, die schöne Dämmerung lockt mich aus der Stube. Wenn Sie nur auch sähen wie lieblich es iezt um mich herum ist. Gute Nacht meine beste. Ich habe keine zusammen-

See: Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity, 127.

Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, 35–36.

For a detailed study of Virginia Woolf’s mirror metaphors see: Squier, “Mirroring and Mothering,” 272–288. The analogy of the mirror and woman’s face has also been the cornerstone of Winnicott’s study of the psychology of individual development which sees “the mother’s face” as “the precursor of the mirror.” Winnicott, “Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development,” 149. In both the child and adult experiences, the woman’s face provides mirroring essential for the psychological sustenance.

Irigaray, “And the One Doesn’t Stir without the Other,” 66.

Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, 22 and 335 [Italics in the original].

Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 62. By “the Other,” Daly was specifically referring to Jews, women and Vietnamese.

Butscher, Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness, 330.

Ibid., 330.


For the various meanings and usages of the Persian word parde see: Dehhooda, s.v. “parde,” Loğatnâme, vol. 4, pp. 5484–5492.

Milani explains, “Like Parde-ye Bekârat [the hymen or, more literary, the virginity curtain] that stands for and becomes an instrument of regulation of women’s sexuality, the veil reasserts men’s control over the gateway to women’s bodies.” Milani, Veils and Words, 23.

In Persian musicology, parde pertains to stringed instruments. For more on parde in musicology see: Taqi Bineš and Hūman Asadi, “Parde,” The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, ed. Kāzem Mūsavī Boğnūrdī (Tehran: The Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, 2005), vol. XIII, 591–592. The multiple meanings of the word parde invited much punning and ambiguity. The Persian poet, Rūmī (d. 1273) at the beginning of his Mathnavi, referring to the reed, says: “پرده هایش پرده‌های ما در دید...”: His pardes (reed’s melodies) tore apart our pardes (this-worldly veils coming between him and his lord). (Mathnavi, I, line 11).


Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic, 468–469.

Ibid., 472.

For instance, Abū Ḥāmed Ghazālī, the renowned Muslim philosopher (1050–1111) in his Iḥyāʾ ʿolūm al-dīn claims that “the look is fornication of the eye.” See: Fatima Mernissi, Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 141.

For an elaborate study of the veil’s function in text see: Patricia Oster, Der Schleier im Text: Funktionsgeschichte eines Bildes für die neuzeitliche Erfahrung des Imaginären (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002).

See: Kendall, Sylvia Plath, 68 and 166.


Kroll, Chapters in a Mythology, 164. Neżāmī Ganğavī (d. between 1210 and 1215), the famous Persian classic poet, mimicking the dominant cultural belief on the nature of the women and punning on the Persian word rāst, denoting right, truth, rightness, good and just, writes, “زن از یکی در چپ گودنده“ ("Woman, it is said, rose from the left side/Never did rightness come out of the left”). The same pun is evoked by Nūr ed-Dīn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492) to reiterate the same meaning, “زن از یکی در چپ شد آفریده/گو از چپ راستی هرگز ندیده“ ("Woman, it is said, rose from the left side/Never did rightness come out of the left").


Plath employs the association of the cat and woman in some of her poems. See the poems: “Aerialist,” “A Sorcerer Bids Farewell to Seem,” “Ella Mason and Her Eleven Cats,” “Face Lift,” “Insomniac,” “The Other,” “The Jailer,” “Lesbos” and “Lady Lazarus.”

Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic, 471.


Ibid., 259.

Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, 47 [Italics in the original].

Kroll, Chapters in a Mythology, 163. For more about the centrality of the image of the Moon in Plath’s poems refer to this book.

Irigaray, The Sex Which Is Not One, 28 [Italics in the origin].


Ibid.


See: Plath, *The Collected Poems*, 244–247. It is important to note that Plath completed her poem “Lady Lazarus” within the same day she wrote “Purdah”.


O’Hara, “Plath’s Comedy,” 86.


Butscher, Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness, 204.


Plath, The Collected Poems, 70.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.


Christodoulides, Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, 154.

Plath’s vehement resentment of her mother’s powerful grip over her is also the subject of her 1962 poem, “Medusa.” Here Plath depicts her mother in terms of a Medusan figure, linking her name Aurelia to aurela, the jellyfish medusa. At the end of the poem, she assertively rejects any sort of relationship between herself and her mother: “There is nothing between us.” Plath, The Collected Poems, 226.

Christodoulides, Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, 158.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Butscher, Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness, 13.


Ovid, Metamorphoses, 15: 234; Shakespeare, sonnet XIX.

Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 195.


140 Ibid.


148 Ibid., 174.

149 Ibid., 127.


152 Kroll, *Chapters in a Mythology*, 282, n. 56.


154 Ibid., 174.

155 Ibid.

156 Ibid., 156.


159 Ibid., 64.

160 Timmerman cites the following two passages from Jung’s *The Archetypes*
and the Collective Unconscious as the possible source of Plath’s poem: “True, whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face.” Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 20. And the second passage: “Whoever looks into the water sees his own image, but behind it living creatures soon loom up; fishes, presumably, harmless dwellers of the deep—harmless, if only the lake were not haunted. They are water-beings of a peculiar sort. Sometimes a nixie gets into the fisherman’s net, a female, half-human fish. Nixies are entrancing creatures .... The nixie is an even more instinctive version of a magical feminine being whom I call the anima. She can also be a siren, *melusina* (mermaid), wood-nymph, Grace, or Erlking’s daughter, or a lamia or succubus, who infatuates young men and sucks the life out of them.” Ibid., 24–25. See: Timmerman, “Plath’s ‘Mirror’,” 64.

161 Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, 106.
163 Freedman, “The Monster in Plath’s ‘Mirror’,” 166.
164 For an example see: Vickers, “‘The Blazon of Sweet Beauty’s Best,’” 95–115.
168 Ibid.
In her 1960 poem “You’re,” Plath portrays the child through a series of similes and metaphors, including “vague as fog.” Addressing the child, Plath concludes the poem with a mirror image: “A clean slate, with your own face on.” Plath, *The Collected Poems*, 141. Here, the child is metaphorized into the mirror. This clean reflecting surface has no trace of the mother or anything from the world outside whatsoever. All it can reflect is the face of the child itself, stressing solipsism of the baby or enfant. In her 1962 poem “For a Fatherless Son,” addressed to her then eight-month-old son Nicholas, Plath conveys the imbrication of mother-child identity. She describes the dumb stupidity of her baby in terms of a “blind mirror” on whose surface only the solacing image of the mother is reflected:

But right now you are dumb.
And I love your stupidity,
The blind mirror of it. I look in
And find no face but my own, and you think that's funny.

*Ibid.*, 205

Plath addressed her 1963 Poem “Child” to her daughter Frieda Rebecca, who would soon be three, describing her “clear eye” in terms of empty space which the mother wishes to fill with “color and ducks, the zoo of the new,” with “April snowdrop” (alluding to her birth month), and with “Indian pipe.” Ultimately, Plath metaphorizes her daughter’s “clear eye” into a “Pool in which images should be grand and classical.” (*Ibid.*, 265)

In ancient classical thought, the essential four constitutive elements of life are earth, water, air and fire. To them Aristotle adds a fifth element or quintessence (after “quint” meaning “fifth”), the aether. The atmospheric elements are: temperature, humidity, precipitation, winds, pressure and clouds.

185 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
189 Sally Bayley, “Sylvia Plath and the Costume of Femininity,” Eye Rhyme, 248, note 84. In a letter to her mother, dated 12 October 1962, Plath writes: “I miss brains, hate this cow life, am dying to surround myself with intelligent, good people.” Here, the cow not only refers to rural, “brainless” Devon, but also to her domestic life limited to housewifery and motherhood. Plath, Letters Home, 466.
193 The depictions of the winged man represent him with a ring around his waist and holding another one in his hand. Its precise meaning remains controversial. His face turning to one side represents the winged man’s turning away from evil towards good. The winged man has two wings at each side and each wing has three rows of feathers, depicting the tripartite principle at the heart of Zoroastrianism: the good reflection, the good words and the good deed. At the same time, the wings represent the winged man’s will to fly, to exalt. For more see: Mary Boyce, “Fravaši,” Encyclopædia Iranica, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. X (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2001) 195–199.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid., 258–259.
197 Kendall, Sylvia Plath, 124.
198 After reading an article in The Nation entitled “Juggernaut, the Warfare State”, Plath writes in a letter to her mother, dated 15 December 1961, “I began to wonder if there was any point in trying to bring up children in such a mad, self-destructive world. The sad thing is that the power for destruction is real and universal.” Plath, Letters Home, 438.
The New Testament recounts that at Jesus’ baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon him “like a dove” (Matt. 3. 16).

La Belle, *Herself Beheld*, 125.


Ibid., 23.

Ibid., 3.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 95.

Ibid.


Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 212.


Ibid.

Ibid., 96.

Ibid., 1.

Ibid., 96.


Spivak, “Echo,” 27.


Ibid.


Ibid., 202.

dem imaginieren Blick der anderen auf; das fremd anmutende Gesicht und der Betrachter bilden ein gespaltenes Ganzes. Gesicht wie Rede erscheinen als Zonen der Vermittlung zwischen privatem Selbstvorbehalt und öffentlicher Selbstentäußerung, das heißt als Räume einer doppelt kodierten Schrift, die auf die Sedimentierungen des Selbst als und im Spiegel der anderen verweist.

227 Plath, *The Bell Jar*, 98

228 Barrie M. Biven, *True Pretences: Psychodynamic Work with the Lost, the Angry and the Depressed* (Leicester: Matador, 2005), 96.


231 Ibid.

232 Ibid.

233 Ibid., 337–338.


237 Ibid., 138.


241 Ibid.


Ibid., 173–174. Christodoulides further elaborates, “clearly the poem follows the Kristevan pattern (*Revolution in Poetic Language*) and is now in the ‘thetic’ phase. In the signifying process this phase operates like the threshold that follows the mirror stage where the child recognizes itself as a separate object; in the poem the spring is the mirror where the speaking persona recognizes herself as other (‘It is not I’), and the mother’s green, clean doorstep that leads in and out is the threshold. The doorstep is an allusion to *effraction*, a breach, which Kristeva mentions in *Revolution*: entering a place, like breaching a law, and house-breaking are suggestive of the multiple strategies implicit in breaking through the thetic, a disruption most clearly marked in poetic language.” (Ibid., 247–249). “The persona seems to be hinting that she does not dare break into the mother’s house to go back to the semiotic fusion with her, as there is a ‘stream’, a buffer that divides them, the symbolic order which cannot give her, however, any ‘nourishment or cure’ either, even if she wishes to enter it. Finally, the prodigal child has revealed her predicament: neither the semiotic nor the symbolic: solace is nowhere [sic] to be found—neither with the mother nor the imaginary father.” (Ibid., 174).


Ibid., 250.


Ibid., 24.

Ibid., 25.

Ibid.

For a further study of skin imagery, skin metaphor or its substitutes in Plath’s works see: Biven, *True Pretences*, 70–97.


La Belle, *Herself Beheld*, 23. La Belle juxtaposes some interesting examples of the mirror experience by male authors to those of female ones to illuminate the huge discrepancies in their usage. Male authors and poets employ the mirror mainly for purely daily practical ends. Any act beyond
utilitarian practice by a male character or persona is generally considered a “lapse … in an essentially feminine activity.” The rhetoric turns out to be not merely descriptive, but also prescriptive, i.e., it specifies how a man or a woman should act in front of the mirror and react to the phenomena of mirroring. See: ibid., 20–24.


260 During one of his trips to London Ted Hughes leaves a note to Assia Wevill saying, “I have come to see you, despite all marriages.” Quoted in Middlebrook, *Her Husband*, 167.


264 See: Christodoulides, *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*, 201–204.


269 Ibid., 202.


274 Ovid [Melville], *Metamorphoses*, 65: 474.


277 Ibid.


279 Ibid.


283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.

285 Ibid., 18.

286 Ibid., 107.

287 Ibid., 108.


**Conclusion**

1 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 195.

**Appendix**


2 Allusion to the Qurʾān: “As to the Շամուդ, We gave them Guidance, but they preferred blindness (of heart) to Guidance: so the stunning Punishment of humiliation seized them, because of what they had earned.” (41: 17).

3 Allusion to the Qurʾānic verses: “Is that the better entertainment or the Tree of Zaqqūm? For We have truly made it (as) a trial for the wrong-doers. For it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-Fire: The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils: Truly they will eat thereof and fill their bellies therewith.” (37: 62–66). And “‘Ye will surely taste of the Tree of Zaqqūm. Then will ye fill your insides therewith, And drink Boiling Water on top of it.” (56: 52–54). Ḥāmīm is also mentioned in the Qurʾān in: “Nothing cool shall they taste therein, nor any drink, Save a boiling fluid and a fluid, dark, murky, intensely cold. A fitting recompense (for them)”. (78: 24–26).

4 Qurʾānic allusion: “(They will be) in the midst of a Fierce Blast of Fire and in Boiling Water” (56: 42). Samūm literally means hot wind and also miasma.

5 Allusion to the Qurʾān: “In front of such a one is Hell, and he is given, for drink, boiling fetid water.” (14: 16).

6 Allusion to the Qurʾān: “But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light, Will have his home in a (bottomless) Pit. And what will explain to thee what this is? (It is) a Fire Blazing fiercely!” (101: 8–11).

7 Qurʾānic allusion: “To them will be passed round, dishes and goblets of gold: there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that their eyes
could delight in: and ye shall abide therein (for eye).” (43: 71). And “(Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruits; and Grace from their Lord. (Can those in such Bliss) be compared to such as shall dwell for ever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels (to pieces)?” (47: 15).

8 Qur'ānic allusion: “So; and We shall join them to [houris] fair women with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes.” (44: 54).


10 Qur'ānic allusion: “The Companions of the Right Hand,—what will be the Companions of the Right Hand? (They will be) among Lote-trees without thorns, In shade long-extended.” (56: 27–30).

11 Allusion to Ḥāfeẓ’s couplet:

"پدرم روضة رضوان بندو گندم بفروخت/ناخلف باشم آکر من به جوی فروش"  
("My father sold the garden of paradise for two grains of wheat/I shall be unworthy of him if I wouldn't sell it for a barleycorn.") In Persian “a grain of barley” is a metaphor for a very little, trifling amount. See: Dehḵodā, s.v. “gó,” Loḡatnāme, vol. 5, pp. 7885–7886.


13 Qur'ānic allusion: “Whom Allah doth guide, he is on the right path: whom He rejects from His guidance,—such are the persons who perish.” (7: 178).

14 In this line, Farrokhzad uses the word ḥār (thorn); however, the homophone ḥwār (debased) would also make sense in this context.

15 Āyeh or āyat in Persian means sign, miracle, proof as well as verses of the Qur’ān.