INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIAL CONFORMITY IN THE POETRY OF FURUGH FARRUKHZAD

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ABSTRACT

Individualism and Social Conformity in the Poetry of Furūgh Farrukhzād

This thesis attempts to examine the socio-political and cultural conflicts of Iranian society of the 1950's and 1960's, as reflected in the poetry of one of the leading Iranian women poets of the century, Furūgh Farrukhzād. The main focus of the study is the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, and its impact on the life of one woman who, in her restless search for an authentic self, becomes representative of Iranian women and of the nation as a whole. The thesis discusses the impact of modernization in terms of three inter-related levels of fragmentation: a fragmented world-view at the level of thought and literature; a fragmented notion of femininity at the social and religious level; and the impact of this fragmentation on the personality of the poet. The final chapter explores the poet's attempt to transcend the fragmentation to a new level of self-integration and personal identity.

RÉSUMÉ

Individualisme et Conformité Sociale dans la Poésie de Furūgh Farrukhzād

Cette thèse essaie d'examiner les conflits socio-politiques et culturels dans la société iranienne pendant les années cinquante et soixante, tels qu'ils sont réfléchis dans la poésie d'un des plus grands poètes iraniens du siecle, Furūgh Farrukhzād. Le but principal de l'étude est la dichotomie entre la tradition et la modernité, et son impact sur la vie d'une femme qui, dans la recherche de son "moi" authentique, devient la symbole de la femme iranienne et de la nation dan sa totalité. La thèse aborde la fragmentation de l'impact de la modernisation divisée en trois niveaux: une perspective globale fragmentée au niveau de la pensée et de la littérature; une notion fragmentée de la feminité au niveau social et réligieux; et l'impact de cette fragmentation sur la personalité de ce poète. Le dernier chapitre analyse la tentative du poète d'aller au-delà de cette fragmentation, pour atteindre un nouveau niveau d'auto-intégration et d'identité personnelle.

CONTENTS

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Note on Transliteration: The transliteration of Arabic and Persian words follows the system adopted by the Library of Congress.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to examine some of the major themes in the poetry of one of the leading Iranian poets of the twentieth century, namely Furūgh Farrukhzād. It also seeks to place her poetry within its socio-political, religious and cultural context, and to explore the relationship between her art and her environment.

Furūgh Farrukhzād deserves special attention as a poet, partly because she was one of the foremost women poets of her generation during the 1950's and 1960's, one of the most critical periods of modern Iranian history. As such her poetry illustrates some of the social, cultural and religious tensions and contradictions that arose in the years immediately prior to the 'Islamic Revolution' of 1979.

One of the most distinguishing features of Furūgh Farrukhzād's poetry (as well as of the response it provoked) is that it mirrors the conflict between tradition and modernity in Muslim society, particularly as it affects intellectual women in Iran. The pronounced presence of feminine sexuality in her poetry provoked much controversy amongst critics and clerics in Iran. Thus, Furūgh Farrukhzād's poetry may be seen as a testimony to the problems and dilemmas of Iranian women at a time of deep cultural and political crisis.

Furūgh was born in Tehran in 1935 in a middle-class Iranian family. She left school at an early age and was married for a brief period at the age of sixteen. During her short life she published four volumes of poetry which represent a progressive growth of awareness of herself and of her society.

In her first two volumes of poetry, The Captive and The Wall, Furūgh conveyed the despair and hopelessness felt by a woman, whose potential for creative self-expression and personal growth is severely inhibited by the restrictive conventions of a traditional society. The mood of despair turns into protest in the poems of The Revolt (also translated as Rebellion), which challenge the social repression of women and protest against the human condition. Religious and social protest are inevitably fused together in Furūgh's poetry, since the traditional male-dominated society in Iran is also religiously sanctioned. Finally, in Another Birth, which is considered to be her best work, Furūgh came to some kind of understanding of, and reconciliation with, her self and her situation in society.

The thesis examines three inter-related levels of fragmentation in the Iranian society of the fifties and the sixties. Chapter One examines fragmentation at the level of thought and literature, with particular reference to the conflicts and contradictions between tradition and modernity in Iranian society. An attempt is also made to trace the development of literature as a vehicle of socio-political protest and to examine the ambivalent attitudes of the intellectuals and

writers towards the traditional and the modern.

The second chapter deals with the fragmented notion of femininity in Iranian society, and the contradictory but co-existing value systems pertaining to women's role and position in society. The third chapter proceeds to examine the fragmentation at the individual level, that is the impact of the various socio-political tensions in the life of the poet as expressed in her poetry, and a crisis of identity which assumes the shape of a conflict between social conformity and individual freedom and growth.

Chapter Four examines in some detail selected poems and verses from Another Birth as well as the volume of posthumous poems entitled Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season. These poems show Furūgh achieving a maturity of poetic style and technique, together with a broadening of her interests to include issues of social and political significance. In her later poems, Furūgh attempted to arrive at some kind of self-integration through her creative writing, which she perceived as identical with the rhythm of birth and regeneration in nature.

It is clear from Furūgh's biographical details that her own 'rebirth' was multi-dimensional, exposing her to many new activities and people. After the publication of The Revolt, Furūgh worked for the weekly journal Firdawsī, and also had the opportunity to go for extended visits to Germany and Italy. Thereafter, she became involved in the cinema and theatre, as further outlets for her creative talents.

Ibrāhim Gulistān, a well-known film director and short-story writer, is known to have encouraged Furūgh to persevere in all aspects of her creative work. Furūgh and Ibrāhim became close friends and the dedication of Another Birth to him is a measure of his inspirational impact on her life and poetry.

In 1959, Furūgh visited England briefly to study film-making. In 1963, a film which she had produced entitled 'The House is Black' concerning a leper colony in Tabriz, won the best documentary film award at the Uberhausen Festival in Germany. Whilst making this film, she is also reported to have adopted a boy from the leper colony. Furūgh herself featured in two short films made of her life, one for the UNESCO and another by the Italian film director Bernardo Bertolucci. It was in February 1967 when Furūgh was at the prime of her life and career, working on translations and theatrical productions, that she died in a car crash at the age of thirty-two.

Furūgh's poetry as a whole symbolizes a restless search for authenticity and integrity, a search in which she herself becomes a symbol of a whole nation in search of an identity. On a broader level, her poetry assumes a universal significance in that it represents a woman's desperate search for existential 'space' in a male-dominated world - space to live her life in freedom and dignity, and space for self-expression, creativity and personal growth often denied to women. This thesis is a study of one woman's struggle to claim this space for herself through the medium of poetry.

CHAPTER ONE

MODERNITY AS A FUNDAMENTAL BREACH

The total institutional, organizational and structural changes which the Iranian society underwent during the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may be considered to be an external expression of what Daryush Shayegan calls a "fundamental epistemological breach."[1]

Islam as a whole had suffered a fundamental epistemological breach in the course of the all pervasive Westernizing influence whch resulted from an exposure to, and an inevitable acceptance of, Western socio-political thought and technology. Contemporary Western thought is characterized by its attempts to be "objective" and "scientific", which is further based on the principle of acquired knowledge - the notion that knowledge is not given as such, not religiously ordained as such, but has to be sought and acquired. Shayegan maintains that in the West, this break was made around the sixteenth century with Descartes who asserted "I think therefore I am" - thus basing the very proof of his own existence on his own individual thought.

In Islam, as in other religious traditions, knowledge is given from above in the form of revelation and inspiration. Furthermore, in Shī^{c}ī Islam, the Imām

is the unquestioned and ultimate authority on all knowledge, and obedience to the rule of the Imām in all matters, is therefore a prime obligation in the Shī^{c}ī faith.

In the absence of the Imām in Isna^{c}ashirī or Twelver Shī^{c}ism, which has been the predominant form of Shī^{c}ism in Iran since the establishment of the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century, the function of interpreting the law (ijtihād) devolved upon the next in the hierarchy of knowledge after the Imām, namely, the ^{c}ulamā', the learned men of religious law. By virtue of their authority as interpreters of religious law, the ^{c}ulamā' further became the key to right conduct. The main source of emulation (marja^{c}-i taqlīd) was usually the grand mujtahid of the age who combined in his person a mixture of erudition, justice and piety.

After the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, Shī^{c}ism witnessed the rise of the Akhbārī-Usūlī conflict. The Akhbārīs declared the sufficiency of sacred texts in the interpretation of religious law, whereas the Usūlīs maintained the need for mujtahids with the power of excercising independent judgement in matters of religious law. The triumph of the Usūlī school enabled the marja^{c}-i taqlīd to exert significant social and political power, since obedience to the ^{c}ulamā' meant an indirect obedience to the commands of the Imām.[2]

For Iran and for Islam as a whole, it was difficult to appropriate the epistemological framework on which

Western technology and social thought are based, because the majority of the population firmly held to the traditional notion of a divinely-ordained social order. On the other hand, modernization, in the sense of Western patterns of thought and social life, is based on individual effort and initiative in the first place and not on an a priori, divinely-dictated decree. It is this dichotomy that perhaps explains why modernization assumed an authoritarian form under the Pahlavi dictatorship and subsequently failed.

The fundamental breach inevitably expressed itself in the thought and literature of the period, and this may be considered to be an expression of the breach at a deeper, psychological level. Iranian literature underwent a profound breach in style and content and portrayed this breach in terms of its effect on the day-to-day lives of human beings. The feeling of alienation and paralysis of the Iranian intellectuals of the 1950s and the 1960s may be considered to be symtomatic of this breach.

The Breach in Poetry

Poetry has always occupied an unusual and a special place in Iranian culture. Besides religion, poetry is one of the major elements which bind the present day Iranian to his or her cultural past.

The period from about the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries saw the emergence of a national Iranian literature in the Persian language. Some of the greatest poetry of Iran and of Islamic civilization

was produced in this period by poets such as Khayyām, ʿAttār, Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ and Jāmī. Most of this poetry is characterized by a mystical vision of the poets expressed in language and style that was highly innovative, imaginative and lyrical. From about the beginning of the sixteenth century, however, Persian literature was marked by a period of decline which lasted for about three centuries. The poetry of this period was characterized by excessive use of ornamentation and rhetorical devices. Peter Chelkowski attributes this static condition of poetry to "the creative concept of Islam" which, according to him, is governed by a homeostatic priciple, that is, an appreciation of a perfect paradigm of the past and the accompanying refusal to innovate.[3] M.A. Jazayerey claims that "long before 1800, poetry had become so enshrined in traditions that change was for all practical purposes out of question."[4]

In the early nineteenth century, Iran became involved in European power politics and, together with that involvement, came "the initiation of an era of modernization, the major feature of which was an increasing assimilation - real or fancied, deep or superficial, voluntary or forced - of European, and later American modes of life and values."[5]

Concomittant with influences of modernization were developments in modern Persian literature. Its inception and appearance coincided with increasing imperialist designs of Russia and Britain on Iran and the intensity of competition between the two powers for spheres of influence. It also coincided with the opposition of the Iranian people to Iran's

autocratic monarchy and its collaboration with foreign powers, and their desire to free themselves from these oppressive forces as well as from the social backwardness of the country.

The need to reactivate poetry with a power of resistance was expressed in the following criticism of traditional poetry by Mirzā Agā Khān Qirmānī (1853-1896):

> We must see what fruit the plant which our poets have planted in the garden of poesy has borne, and what result it has produced; where they have exaggerated, the result has been to implant lies in man's simple nature; where they have eulogized and flattered, the effect has been the encouragement of vazirs and kings to various kinds of depravity and vilification; where they sing of mysticism and Sufism, no fruit has been produced other than laziness and animal torpor, and the engendering of beggars, wandering dervishes, and shameless reprobates; where they have concocted lyrics about roses and nightingales, the product has only been the deterioration of the morals of the young.[6]

Modern Persian literature can be roughly divided into four periods conforming with socio-political developments and the political consciousness of the people:[7]

a) the pre-revolutionary period (1890-1905);
b) the period of the Constitutional Revolution to the ascension of Reza Shah (1905-1921);
c) the period of Reza Shah's dictatorship (1921-1941);
d) the period of Mohammed Reza Shah (1941-1979).

The literature of the Constitutional period coincides with the awareness of the idea of freedom in the European sense of a statutory government and a social order based on equality.[8] The content of the constitutional poetry, moreover, "leaves the court and moves to the street and bazaar; it is full of blood and thunder, the heat of life and ideals; it is poetry which is life."[9]

Ehsan Yar-Shater describes the changing content of modern Persian poetry in this period as follows:

> Toward the turn of the century, the movement for social and political construction gained momentum. In time this led to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, and the establishment of a parliamentary regime. Erosion of the solid walls of autocratic rule betokened the decay of the centuries-old foundations of classical poetry. Traditional poetry was supported and encouraged primarily by the court and aristocracy. Its language, therefore, had developed into a courtly idiom in which there was no room for colloquialism, much less slang. With the success of the Constitutional Revolution, poetry both adjusted to and encouraged a new phenomenon: the emergence of the common man as a significant political force. The audience of the poet was changing character; it was no longer merely the elite of society, but a larger segment steadily expanding with the spread of literacy and political awareness. 10

Another major factor that brought about a revolution in style and content of Persian poetry and Persian literature more generally was the wide number of translations from European literature as attested to by Mansour Shaki:

> Apart from the tradition set up on the literary legacy of Qa'em Maqam of Farahan, the Persian stylistic revolution is rooted directly in the translations of European literature. Various European classical, romantic and realistic works rendered into Persian caught the Iranian public by surprise.[11]

Shafī'ī Kadkanī maintains that "the poetry of the Constitutional period changed the content and emotional range of Persian poetry to such an extent that in a sense all its connection with the past was cut off." He identifies some themes which he claims entered Persian poetry for the first time as imports from the West:[12]

1) "homeland" (vatan)
2) freedom and law
3) new culture and modern education
4) praise of modern science
5) the question of women and sexual equality
6) criticism of traditional morals
7) campaign against religious superstition (and sometimes against religion itself)

The Constitutional period witnessed many "waves" in poetry, which corresponded to various attitudes within the society at large towards the problem of tradition and modernity as a whole. Many poets conserved the old forms of poetry despite having new content; alternatively, the traditional content was expressed in new forms.[13]

The break in terms of the form of modern Persian poetry, however, was not total, in the sense that it did not arrive at complete change until the 1940s - once more due to social and political factors. The period of Reza Shah's government was not conducive to literary creativity because of its heavy censorship and

autocratic style of government. Kadkanī distinguishes two groups of poets during this period - those who had nothing to do with politics and those who wanted to preserve their contacts with politics.[14] In terms of poetic technique, supporters of reform as well as tradition could be found within both groups.

One interesting aspect of Persian poetry is that it has tended to offer itself as a 'space', a mechanism of retreat from the over-socialized self. This space has been used through history in an active as well as a passive sense. On the one hand, poetry provided a space where individuality could be asserted by means of various symbolic techniques and the social order could be symbolically reversed.[15] On the other hand, court poetry and poetry which was oblivious to the socio-political order could be considered passive. These two dimensions of retreat into poetry - in order to assert oneself against the existing order and in order to affirm the existing order by flattery and eulogy or tacitly by observing indifference - are explained by M. Azarm in terms of the "poetry of resistance and the poetry of submission."[16] Yar-Shater identifies the two waves as "committed and non-committed poetry."[17]

After the fall of Reza Shah's dictatorship in 1941, Iran experienced the birth of a new political and literary era. Many independent political parties came into being, including Socialist and Marxist parties, and their views found way into artistic expression. The final break with formal poetic conventions was also made during this period, and it came from

Nīmā Yūshīj considered by many as the founder of modern Persian poetry. The break was all-embracing in terms of language, imagery, rhythm, prosody and other techniques of poetry.[18] Nīmā is said to have been inspired by Western poets, particularly the French Romanticists.

Following the C.I.A. engineered coup d'etat of 1953, Kadkanī claims that the poetry concerned with social questions, that is to say the "poetry of resistance" or "committed poetry" won the day.[19] However, there were some non-political poets who were considered important and significant in their own way. A good example is Suhrāb-i Sapihrī who was considered to be a "neo-Sufi."

Two moods tended to dominate the poetry of the day - "the hopeful" and "the desperate".[20] During the reign of terror by the Savak, the secret police of Mohammed Reza Shah, the desperate mood seems to have prevailed, at least until the end of the 1960s, as described by Kadkanī in the following words:

> . . . the social branch of poetry laid aside its blood and thunder because of the censor. Poets took refuge in the images of solitude, the winehouse, the thoughts of death, the twilight of opium and imagination. Praise of death, a silent and terrified revolt against 'Night' - 'Polar Night' - coursed through the veins of Persian poetry. . . The poems written during those years speak of 'dread', 'winter', 'wall'.21

Due to the heavy censorship, poetry inclined towards a kind of social symbolism.[22] The desperate mood involved giving vent to protest and anger born of frustrated hopes and ideological defeats. The social

symbolism of the poetry of the sixties was to some extent an allegorical form of social commitment. To this group of poets belonged Furūgh Farrukhzād, whose poetry is characterized by the expression of a personal nature of feminine sexuality by a female poet, singnifying thereby an important element of the breach in the traditional content of Persian poetry. For Furūgh, as well as for other Iranian women poets before her, poetry offered a space for resistance against patriarchal social norms and for individual assertion. This perhaps explains what Farzaneh Milani considers to be a strong presence of women in the poetic tradition.[23]

Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak describes the changes that swept through Persian poetry in the 1940s to 1960s as follows:

> Modern Persian poetry differs in numerous and profound ways from the classical canon. In modern poetry, for example, the serene, leisurely quality of classical literature is conspicuously absent. Nature, for instance, is represented in many of the poems in this anthology by a leafless grove, a tempestuous sky, or a roaring river, rather than a garden where fauna and flora eternally abide, and where nightingales forever sing songs of love to hopelessly unyielding flowers. A tulip is associated not with a cup of ruby wine, but with the red blood of a martyr; and the moon, in its peaceful swamlike glide across the sky, is likelier to symbolize the utter indifference of a godless nature to human suffering than the the crystal bowl in which the lover can behold the semblance of his divine beloved. Above all, the urban landscape is no longer considered the province of prose alone. Its animality, corruption, and violence are recurrent themes of modern poetry. 24

He goes on to state further:

> We can dwell indefinitely on the differences between the modern and the classical without exhausting the subject, but perhaps the most marked characteristic of the modern Persian poet is his awareness of the changes that have occurred. He often reflects in his poetry a primordial sense of wonder at the discovery of a vast new field which he can tend, till, or even trample. He finds himself faced with a new awareness of life and reality, problems and possibilities. Where his forefathers felt themselves slaves to - or custodians of - time-worn, hoary convention, he feels himself a lawgiver. 25

It is clear that the breach in poetry corresponded to the fundamental epistemological breach. The space which poetry stood for was traditionally provided for. However, the function that this space appropriated was radically different and the content which filled the space was altered too. Traditionally, individual assertion was permitted in poetry because the space it provided was a sanctuary for introspection and contemplation, but now the sanctuary was desacralized. It exposed a profound disenchantment with traditional political and religious values and poetry became a vehicle for the search of a new kind of identity. It is thus that, according to Ahmad Shāmlū, one of the leading Iranian poets of the century, poetry became a national weapon[26] against the Pahlavi regime and the Shī^{c}ī clergy.[27]

According to Yar-Shater, the multi-dimensional, cross-cultural currents of about half a century have produced the modern literary idiom. Fifty years, however, is a very short time in the life-history of an ancient

culture. Yar-Shater gives a general outline of the elements which went into the creation of the modern literary idiom.

> To build up a new, familiar poetic language takes time and talent. Its taste and direction depend largely on the prevailing mood of the time, the sentiments of various poetic groups, and the idiosyncracies of dominant poets. Deep social and technological changes wrought in Persian society since the turn of the century, nostalgic memories of a glorious period in Persian history, the residue of the high hopes for a just social system raised by the Constitutional Revolution, the political upheavals ushered in by the Allied occupation of Iran in 1941, greater contact with the West, strong but often frustrated patriotic sentiments, the spread of radical views and a fresh yearning for social and political re-structuring, clashes of conservative and leftist opinions, the subsequent polarization of political views, the growing conflict between Persian nationalistic and religious allegiance, a conflict of a different nature between Persian nationalism and international Communism, and, finally, the utter defeat of the radical Left - all these constituted the climate of the 1940s and early 1950s, out of which the idiom of modern Persian poetry evolved. 28

The Alienated Writer

During the period of the Pahlavi dynasty, because of the heavy censorship of the press and the media, the intellectuals turned to literary expression as an indirect means of criticising the government

and society. Literature provided room for a great deal of subtlety and ambiguity, through which committed intellectuals could articulate their individual protest. Imaginative literature became a substitute for dangerous and ineffective overt political activity.[29] V.B.Klyashtorina calls this form of literary expression "ideological aesthetic."[30]

The First Congress of Iranian Writers at the University of Tehran in 1946 marked the first statement of self-consciousness and purpose by modernist Iranian writers as a professional group committed to an anti-monarchist social movement.[31] By the late 1960s, many modernist writers had formally united in the Organization of Writers of Iran to combat the censorship of the Pahlavi regime and fight for freedom of thought, expression and the press.[32] Modernist writers seemed to be among the identifiable groups at the fore of the opposition to the Pahlavi regime upto 1978.[33]

In terms of social content, Michael Hillman identifies six pertinent themes in the literature of this period:

1) opposition to the Pahlavi government;
2) rejection of aspects of Shi'i institutions and practices;
3) concern with alleged economic and social backwardness in Iran;
4) criticism of Westernization and depiction of tensions arising from confrontation with the West;
5) expression of a sense of culture-specific alienation or loss of Iranian roots;
6) communication of a strong sense of cultural nationalism.[34]

In trying to come to terms with the contemporary situation, some writers blamed Arabs for Iran's predicament. They regarded Islam as an imposition from an alien force, which had weakened Iranian culture and had therefore rendered it susceptible to the West. A restoration of pure, pre-Islamic Iranian heritage was called for by some of the writers. The Pahlavi regime was identified with Western imperialism. The dynasty had claimed to espouse the cause of reform and the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution. Although the avowed purpose of the regime was to adopt a program to modernize Iran in order to be able to give it international stature, the actual measures carried out by the Pahlavis fell far short of satisfying the aspirations that contact with the prosperous West had aroused. The educated intellectual middle class was disillusioned to see only a limited prospect of success for its high aspirations. The Pahlavi regime with its terror and clampdown on any form of opposition, engendered amongst the intellectuals a mood of demoralization and desperation.

Thus, the writers, that is to say the intellectuals as a whole, were seized with a dilemma. According to them, both Islam and the royalist tradition were responsible for the continued social and political ills of Iran. They could neither totally negate tradition as that would amount to negating all factors of self-identity, nor could they affirm tradition totally. Similarly, they could neither totally affirm nor reject modernity. It seems that this dilemma was

an outcome of the dual love-hate relation with both tradition and modernity. Different writers looked for different elements in the tradition with which to identify.[35] Some tried to seperate the elements of Iraniannness from Islam, others considered Islam a part of the Iranian identity, and yet others wavered between socialism and Islam. It is thus that some writers and poets, including Farrukhzād, strongly felt that they belonged to a "lost generation" - lost because in their commonly shared love of the country and the land, they could not dispense with the tradition completely, for in doing so they would be unable to address the majority still strongly tied to tradition. And despite their opposition to the Pahlavi regime, they shared some "modernist" Pahlavi aspirations too.

Some of the values and attitudes which many writers shared amongst themselves as well as with the Pahlavi government were an ideology of material progress, modernization (though without becoming Western), the significance of pre-Islamic Iranian culture, equal rights for women, and a reduction in the influence of the clergy and certain Islamic practices. Although the writers waged a verbal war against "weststruckness," they themselves were very Western-oriented in terms of their forms of art and their own self-image. Many had been educated in the West, spoke European languages and had translated Western literature into Persian.[36]

The "lost generation" had internalized the fundamental breach. Many of the writers were brought up in traditional families or in a traditional environment, and were at the same time the group most exposed to

Western thought. The lost generation thus suffered from what may be called double alienation. The writers could not reach the majority of the masses who were illiterate and traditional. The literate writers wrote in a modern medium, whereas the potential mass audience was familiar with traditional forms. The modernist poets felt that traditional poetry contained a mystical morality which had sedative and poisonous effects.[37] Despite the use of colloquialisms, they failed to reach the masses at large thus becoming cynical and pessimistic. Although the course the Islamic Revolution took under Āyatullāh Khumaynī may testify to the failure of the writers as a political group, that should not overshadow the importance of the social message of the writers. A-Karimi Hakkak comments on the alienation of the poets from the masses:

> The image of contemporary society reveals no less glaring a contrast between the attitude of the poet in classical and in modern Persian poetry. The classical poet, however condescending he might appear toward the society at large, is always in the congenial company of a few kindred spirits; the modern poet, unable to ignore his ties with the masses, often views himself as the prophet of doom. In such poems as Shamlu's "Tablet," Akhavan's "Inscription," or Kho'i's "Limbo," we come face to face with a "crowd" hopelessly incapable of comprehending the poet-prophet's humane message, or a "bunch" literally and metaphorically bound to an absurd situation by an absurd chain, or a "mob" eternally incapable of being either good or evil. Amid such chaos and inaction, lovers and heroes can no longer distinguish themselves by their supreme physical features, but by daring deeds that are often in diametrical opposition to the actions of their classical counterparts. 38

The alienation of the writers of the fifties and sixties is characterized by their lack of unity and their inability to assert a new socio-cultural value system. Millward identifies gharbzadegan and sunnatparastan as two ends of a spectrum of responses from Iranian thinkers:

> In the face of the onslaught of diverse and often unfamiliar forces a wide range of responses and reactions may be noted. At one end of the spectrum there are those - the so-called gharbzadegan - who maintain that if Iran is going to take over any of the fundamental structures of Western society, it should go all the way and adopt its value system as well. At the other pole are the sunnatparastan - the more conservative and reactionary elements of the society who say that whatever is foreign is bad and should be resisted implacably. Somewhere between these two extremes comes a typical moderate Iranian reaction which tends to accept the inevitability of the acquisition of new forms and structures, new techniques and systems, but to this acceptance a significant rider is added: "We will borrow the external forms, but we will keep our own values, our own heritage and traditions and infuse the new external structure with our own unique character and identity." 39

It is the middle of the spectrum which typifies the epistemological breach and the "double illusion". The sunnatparastan also fell into the same trap since modernizing influences are to a great extent inevitable, but the gharbzadegan were never accepted. Those who could be assertive were in the middle of the spectrum, but in their assertion they tended to be vague and got caught in their own contradictions, for example, Jalāl Āl-i Ahmad, the leading intellectual of the sixties, was himself conscious of fragmentation as a characteristic of his society.[40] He was conscious of

the inability of the intellectuals to arrive at a coherent view and a consensus, both as individuals and as a group. During his own lifetime, Āl-i Ahmad identified with different leftist political groups until he finally accepted Islam as part of the Iranian national identity. He recommended reform in Islam, but he was unable to give any specific or concrete recommendations.

Alienation led to restlessness and no matter how vague and ineffective the outcome of the search, a search it was. Some writers turned to Islam and recommended reform, others turned to socialist and Marxist ideas, and yet others rejected both. In the seventies, Marxist and Islamic attitudes were combined and crystallized in an ideologized form of Islam by thinkers such as ᶜAlī Sharīᶜatī. Daryush Shayegan prefers to call Sharīᶜatī's version of Islam "a double illusion".[41] According to him, thinkers like Sharīᶜatī who claimed to understand both Islam and the West, in effect understood neither one nor the other. Such fragmentation in thought is very aptly described by Shayegan's reference to T.S.Eliot's metaphor of images in a broken mirror.

Furūgh's Poetry - a Mirror of Fragmentation

The various levels of fragmentation and disintegration - on the individual, social and political levels - are well represented in the poetry of Furūgh Farrukhzād, particularly in her later poetry. Whereas in her earlier poems, Furūgh expresses the personal dilemma of a woman torn between the conflicting norms of tradition and modernity, in her later poetry, her individual

concerns merge with the wider issues and problems of society. It is interesting to note that in the following poem, Furūgh uses the metaphor of images in an inverted mirror to express the fragmented mood of the age:

EARTHLY VERSES

Then
the sun grew cold
and blessing fled the earth

Grasses dried in the fields
fish dried in the seas
and the earth no longer took unto itself
the dead

Night was continually rising and surging
in all the pallid windows
like an uncertain notion
and the roads lost their continuance
in darkness

No one thought of love anymore
No one thought of triumph anymore
No one
thought of anything anymore

In the caverns of loneliness
futility was born
The blood smelled of bhang and opium
Pregnant women
gave birth to headless babes
and the cradles in shame
took refuge in the graves

What dark and bitter days!
Bread had conquered
the wondrous power of prophecy
The hungry, destitute prophets
fled from the sites of divine tryst
and the lost lambs no longer heard
the sound of the shepherd's "Hey, hey!"
in the bewilderment of the fields

It seemed in the eyes of mirrors
that images, colors, and motions
were reflected upside down,
and above the heads of lowborn clowns
and harlots' shameless faces
a sacred glowing halo burned
like a parasol aflame

The swamps of alcohol
with their acrid poison fumes
sucked the intelligensia's motionless mass
down into their depths,
and pernicious mice in the old cupboards
gnawed on the gilded pages
of books

The sun was dead
The sun was dead, and tomorrow
held a lost and muted meaning
in the eyes of every child
In composition books they traced
the strangeness of this old word
with a large black blot

People,
the fallen band of people,
disheartened, beaten and dumb,
bore from exile to exile
the unblest burden of their bodies,
while in their hands there swelled
the painful lust for crime

Sometimes a spark, a trifling spark,
would shatter suddenly from within
this silent, soulless league
Men, rushing upon one another,
would rend each other's throats
with knives
and sleep with pre-pubescent girls
in beds of blood

They had drowned in their own fearfulness,
and the dreaded sense of having sinned
had paralyzed
their blind and senseless souls

Always, in rites of execution,
when the gallows rope would squeeze from the sockets
a condemned man's convulsing eyes,
they would retreat into themselves
and their old and tired nerves would twinge
with some voluptuous image

But along the edges of the squares
you would always see these little criminals
standing and staring
and staring
at the steady flow of the fountains

* *

Perhaps still
behind those crushed eyes, in their frozen depths,
something half-living and confused
remained
which in the struggle of its last dying breath
wanted to believe in the purity of the water's song

Perhaps, but what infinite emptiness!
The sun was dead,
and no one knew
that the name of the grief-stricken dove
that had flown from the hearts, was "faith"

* *

Ah, voice of the prisoner,
will the plaint of your despair
never burrow a way to light
through any of this despised night?
Ah, voice of the prisoner
O, final voice of all . . .[42]

In this poem, Farrukhzād assumes a prophetic voice and uses apocalyptic imagery to paint a picture of moral and social disintegration. The inverted order of the universe is conveyed by means of inverting the metaphors in the seventh verse, which refers to the phenomenon of the double illusion:

It seemed in the eyes of mirrors
that images, colors and motions
were reflected upside down

The image in the mirror is not the reality - it is just a mirage - this being one level of illusion; the other level of illusion arises when the image itself, which

is a shadow of the real thing, is further reflected upside down.

Through the inversion of the metaphor the natural order is shattered, and the universe of the poem is in upheaval. This fragmentation and collapse of the natural order may be considered to be a symbol representing the impact of Westernization, the impact of the fundamental breach:

> and the earth no longer took unto itself
> the dead
>
> and the cradles in shame
> took refuge in the graves

The most important and recurrent inverted metaphor in the poem is that of the death of the sun. The eternal source of life and hope - the sun, a symbol of the the divine in the poetry of Rūmī - has died.[43] The sun is a recurrent metaphor in her volume of poems Another Birth, its absence signifying night and death, and its presence signifying day and life. Three other poems in the same volume are entitled, 'The Sun Shines,' 'In an Eternity of a Setting Sun,' and 'I Will Greet the Sun Again.' The poem, 'In an Eternity of a Setting Sun' may be compared to 'Earthly Verses,' in terms of its pessimistic tone and nihilistic connotations. In 'Earthly Verses,' Furūgh evokes a gloomy and despairing landscape full of death, decay and darkness, anarchy, blood and violence.

The eternal night of the poem is characterized by the "loss of roads in darkness", the inability to see any solution in the absence of light. And this leads to a paralysis of thought, which is the dilemma of the intellectual - "no one thought of anything anymore."

The inactive intellectuals, full of empty talk and no action, have drowned in decaying stagnation - "swamps of alcohol" - and books are nothing more than food for mice. If thought is gripped by paralysis and is in a state of decay and inertia, religion fares no better. The prophets are driven out and the need for the "indispensable morsel" has overcome the ideals of religion:

> Bread had conquered
> the wondrous power of prophecy . . .
>
> and above the heads of lowborn clowns
> and harlots' shameless faces
> a sacred glowing halo burned . . .

The verses on violence and terror are probably a reference to the general perversion of society and may also be considered to refer to the terror and violence of the Savak, especially if the last but one verse is taken into consideration:

> Perhaps, but what infinite emptiness!
> The sun was dead,
> and no one knew
> that the name of the grief-stricken dove
> that had flown from the hearts, was "faith"

The dove or pigeon is universally a symbol of freedom. In the absence of the sun, the grief-stricken freedom "faith" - meaning conviction or belief - has flown; in other words, the freedom to have any kind of conviction or belief no longer exists, an obvious reference to the heavy censorship and incarceration of writers. In the climate of despair and hopelessness that pervades the poem, no one has faith in anything anymore; human beings lack faith in each other and

are full of mistrust, they "rush upon one another" and "rend each other's throats."

James Bill gives a good instance of the intelligentsia's mistrust of each other in his account of the informal nature of politics in Iran:

> In 1961, for example, eight middle-class Iranian friends and scholars met and formed a dawrah to discuss sociopolitical issues. They agreed upon certain areas of concern and mimeographed a confidential one-page statement presenting their mutual opposition to corruption, injustice, and oppression. Each member took a copy and the rest were locked away. Five months later, the Chief of the Secret Police called in one of the men and confronted him with a copy of the statement. It was one of the original eight copies. The dawrah broke up immediately. 44

That the intellectuals distrusted the Pahlavi regime is apparent from the strength and conviction with which the Savak was accused with the deaths of Samad Bihrangī, Āl-i Aḥmad and Sharīʿatī. Brad Hanson interprets this as an indication of the rampant pessimism, cynicism, doubt and anti-Pahlavi feelings on the part of many among the Iranian intelligentsia.[45]

Earlier on in the poem, Furugh expresses concern about the impact of this decaying and hopeless environment on the next generation. There was no longer the prospect of a future, for the children know neither day nor light, but only the darkness:

> The sun was dead,
> The sun was dead, and tomorrow
> held a lost and muted meaning
> in the eyes of every child.

The younger generation knows the sun only as a "black blot":

> In the composition books they traced
> the strangeness of this old word
> with a large black blot

The idea of the sun has undergone a total mutation in the minds of the younger generation. The "black blot" is not just a double illusion but an infinite illusion.

The only flicker of hope in the poem is represented by another life-giving symbol before it is snuffed out by the verse following it. In the absence of the ability to see, the sound of the "water's song" provides a glimmer of hope. However, the ability to believe even in the "purity of water's song" does not exist. Perhaps there is also an element of hope in the final verse of the poem, where Furūgh invokes the "voice of the prisoner", that is the voice of protest and the voice desiring freedom.

Another one of Furūgh's poems, 'My Heart Grieves for the Garden' can be compared to 'Earthly Verses' in terms of the portrayal of decadence, corruption and devastation, though it lacks the cataclysmic impact of 'Earthly Verses':

MY HEART GRIEVES FOR THE GARDEN

No one is thinking of the flowers
No one is thinking of the fish
No one wants to believe
that the garden is dying
that the heart of the garden has swollen under the sun
that the mind of the garden is slowly, slowly
draining of green memories
and the garden's feeling
is some abstract thing
rotting in the solitude of the garden.

* *

The garden of our house is alone
The garden of our house
yawns in expectation
of rain from an unknown cloud
The pond of our house is empty
The small, inexperienced stars
fall from the heights of trees to the earth
And through the pale windows of the fishes' abode
the sound of coughing comes at night
The garden of our house is alone.

* *

Father says:
"It's past my time
It's past my time
I've carried my load
and done my job"
And in his room, from dawn to dusk,
he reads either the Shah-nameh
or Nasekh al-Tawarikh
Father says to mother:
"Cursed be all the fish and birds!
When I'm dead
what difference will it make
whether or not there is a garden?
My pension is enough for me."

* *

Mother - her whole life
is a prayer rug spread
on the threshold of the fear of hell
Always at the bottom of things
she seeks the trace of some transgression
and thinks the garden has been defiled
by the heresy of sin
Mother is a natural sinner
She prays all day
and blesses the flowers
and blesses the fish
and blesses herself
Mother is awaiting a second coming
and the grace that will come down.

* *

My brother calls the garden a graveyard
He laughs at the chaos of the weeds
and counts the corpses of the fish
that turn to putrid particles
beneath the water's sick skin
My brother is addicted to philosophy
He sees the garden's cure
to lie in its destruction
He gets drunk,
pounds his fist on wall and door,
and tries to say he is weary,
filled with pain and despair
He carries his disappointment with him
to the streets and to the bazaar
like his ID card, his appointment book,
like his lighter, his hankerchief or his pen
And his disappointment
is so small
that every night it is lost
amidst the tavern throng.

* *

And my sister who was a friend to flowers
and would carry, when mother used to beat her,
the simple words of her inner heart
to their kind and quiet gathering,
and would sometimes invite the families of fish
to the party of sunshine and sweets . . .
Her house is on the other side of town
And inside her artificial house
with her artificial goldfish
in the shelter of the love of her artificial husband
beneath the branches of her artificial apple trees
she sings her artificial songs
and produces natural babies
She -
whenever she comes to see us
and the poverty of the garden defiles
the corners of her hem
she takes a bath of eau-de-cologne
She
whenever she comes to see us
is pregnant.

* *

The garden of our house is alone
The garden of our house is alone
All day long, from behind the door
comes the sound of shattering and explosion
Instead of flowers our neighbours plant
machine guns and mortars in their yards
Our neighbours cover their tiled pools
and the tiled pools have become
hidden caches of gunpowder
without wishing it themselves,
and the children on our street
fill their satchels
with tiny bombs
The garden of our house is giddy

* *

I -
I fear the time
that has lost its heart
I fear the thought of the idleness of all these hands
I fear the embodied estrangement of all these faces
I, like a school girl
who loves her geometry lessons madly,
am alone,
and I think the garden can be taken to the hospital
I think . . .
I think . . .
I think . . .
And the heart of the garden has swollen under the sun
and the mind of the garden is slowly, slowly
draining of green memories. 46

The garden, another symbol of life, growth, joy and greenery is dying a solitary death. It is surrounded by the indifference and incapacity of the family to whom it belongs to do anything about it The garden itself is gradually forgetting what it feels to be alive.

The garden in this poem is undoubtedly the country, the nation of Iran, falling apart. The allusion to the "falling stars" is considered to be a probable reference to young revolutionaries meeting their death.[47]

The different members of the family represent the different classes of Iranian society. The father and mother stand for the older generation. The father is the retired bureaucrat (perhaps corrupt), interested only in his own pension. It is not to his advantage to put in any effort in the garden when he may not live to see its fruit. He is satisfied by taking refuge in the past glories of the nation rather than addressing himself to its current and urgent problems.

The mother represents the womenfolk and perhaps the clergy, for both share a passive attitude towards the problem by explaining away the calamity in religious terms, in terms of sin and the wrath of God for which repentance must be offered. The mother and the clergy both accept a passive solution to the problem - of "awaiting the second coming," the Messiah, the twelfth Imam - a given solution from above, characterizing the lack of individual initiative and independent effort. The indictment of both the mother and the father is full of irony.

The brother and the sister are the younger upcoming generation. The brother, who represents the intelligentsia, is sceptical and can do no more than philosophize and drown his sorrow in drink. The alienated intellectual seeks his solution in empty talk over a cup of wine. He is demoralized and depoliticized. His sister, the younger woman, is too busy with the sole female preoccupation of having babies to think of anything else - motherhood, is the first virtue of women in an Islamic social order.

She is also preoccupied with her own artificial life-style and wealth. The females in the poem are passive, and the activism of the male is muted. Everyone in the poem has his or her own personal form of escapism, signifying corruption or lack of social conscience.

The garden is a symbol of"things falling apart." There is no more room for anything to grow in the garden, except for guns and mortars, and the seeds of a revolution to come.

In this poem, Furūgh expresses a deep sense of fear and foreboding for her country, which she cannot share with others. The dominant themes in Furūgh's poetry seem to be the absence of the sun, the ceasing of natural growth, and the overwhelming presence of death and darkness. However, she does not lose sight of the strength of the opposite forces. The symbol of life and growth in her poems are often related to another major theme in her poetry - namely, sexuality. The following chapters will deal with the fragmented notion of femininity and the meaning of sexuality in Furūgh's poetry.

Footnotes

1. The views of Shayegan are cited from his book, Qu'est-ce qu'une Revolution Religieuse? (Paris : Les Presses D'aujourd'hui, 1982).

2. For a detailed account of the development of clergy-state relations, see Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1980).

3. Peter Chelkowski, "The Literary Genres in Modern Iran," in Iran under the Pahlavis, ed. George Lenczowski (California : Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p.336.

4. Mohammed Ali Jazayerey,"Recent Persian Literature: Observations on Themes and Tendencies (1950s-1970s)," in Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature, ed. Thomas M.Ricks (Washington : Three Continents Press, 1984), p.72.

5. Ibid., p.71.

6. Quoted by Shafī^{c}ī Kadkanī, "Persian Literature (Belles-Lettres) from the time of Jāmī to the Present Day," in History of Persian Literature from the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day, ed. George Morrison (Leiden : E.J.Brill, 1981), p.176.

7. Mansour Shaki, "An Introduction to Modern Persian Literature 1890s-1940s," in Critical Perspectives . . . , p.27.

8. Shafī^{c}ī Kadkanī, "Persian Literature . . .," p.175.

9. Ibid., p.177.

10. Ehsan Yar-Shater, "The Modern Literary Idiom (1920s-1960s)," in Critical Perspectives . . . , p.44.

11. Mansour Shaki, "An Introduction. . . . ," p.34.

12. S.Kadkanī, "Persian Literature. . . ," p.178.

13. M.Shaki, "An Intordcution. . . ," p.34.

14. S.Kadkanī, "Persian Literature. . . ," p.188.

15. Ṣūfī poetry was to some extent a means of annihilating the oversocialized self. Ṣūfism achieved this annihilation of the oversocialized self through the use of the technique of a coup d'etat in language. There is the famous Ṣūfī parable of the king and the darvīsh where the former asks latter to ask of him a favour and the latter maintains that he does not ask favours of slaves. The darvīsh maintains that he has two slaves who are the king's masters - greed and expectation. By effective use of the metaphor, the darvīsh and the king not only exchange places, signifying a reversal of social roles, but the king undergoes a double demotion by becoming a slave of a slave. Or to quote another example, Rūmī says, "I am not drunk by the wine, the wine is drunk by me." The Ṣūfī uses metaphor to disrupt normal patterns of thought and to re-orient the soul towards itself, thus emphasizing self-actualization.

16. M.Azarm, "Poetry of Resistance, Poetry of Submission(1960s)," in Critical Perspectives. . . ," pp.236-239.

17. E. Yar-Shater, "The Modern Literary. . . ," p.49.

18. S.Kadkanī, "Persian Literature. . . ," p.190.

19. Ibid., p.196.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid,

23. Farzaneh Milani says in her article, "Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective," in Bride of Acacias: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (New York: Caravan Books, 1982), p.141:

> "A list of the great figures in Iranian history, drawn up in 1972 by the Cultural Council of the Iranian Ministry of Arts and Culture, includes only four women. All poets, Rabe'a, Mahasti, Mehr al-Nesa, and Parvin E'tessami, they stand among 300 kings, generals, statesmen, thinkers, scientists, poets, writers, artists, calligraphers, and musicians. A woman considering this resume of the history of greatness feels utterly left out. Such a distorted abstract of society fails to suggest the role women have played in Iranian history, even within the narrow boundaries confining them, and raises a question about one assumption of those who prepared it - what makes a person valueable to society? Incidentally, it reveals the strong presence of women in poetry in Iran."

24. Ahmad-Karimi Hakkak, An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry (Boulder : West View Press, 1978), pp.3-4.

25. Ibid., p.5.

26. Ahmad Shamlu, "Modern Persian Poetry: The National Weapon in Iran (1950s-1970s)," in Critical Perspectives . . . .

27. Michael Hillman maintains that modern Iranian writers have had a very limited audience and their impact as a whole in the opposition to the Pahlavi regime was minimal and negligible. See his two essays, "Revolution, Islam and Contemporary Persian Literature," in Iran : Essays on a Revolution in the Making, ed. A.Jabbari and Olson (Kentucky : Mazda Publishers, 1981), pp.121-142, and "The Modernist Trend in Persian Literature and its Social Impact," in Iranian Studies 15 (1982) : 7-29.

28. Ehsan Yar-Shater, "The Modern Literary . . .," p.49.

29. Michael Hillman, "Revolution, Islam and. . .," p.133.

30. V.B.Klyashtorina, "Mayakovsky and the 'New Poetry' of Iran in the Works of Ahmad Shamlu (1940s-1970s)," in Critical Perspectives. . . , pp.418-422.

31. M.Hillman, "Revolution, Islam and . . . ," p.122.

32. M.Hillman, "The Modernist Trend . . . ," p.8.

33. Ibid., p.9.

34. Ibid., p.11.

35. The fact that all the Iranian writers are deeply attached to the region and the land of their birth would have implied that they would be united under the banner of political nationalism for various reasons. Hillman delineates three such reasons. Firstly, the writers who have been the basic core of the Iranian intelligentsia in the current century and who have constituted one group of Iranians intimately acquainted with the West and Western ideas, including political nationalism, should presumably be the vanguard of nationalist expression in Iran. Secondly, due to its engage character, mirroring contemporary social and cultural currents and issues in Iran, modern Persian literature would be expected to represent nationalistic trends. Thirdly, the very inception of modern Persian literature was tied to the idea of nationhood because writers felt it their responsibility to speak to all the people. See M.Hillman, "The Modernist Trend. . . ," pp.18-19.

However, the disunity amongst the writers and intellectuals is apparent. On the issue of Iranianness, in terms of nationalism, for example, Jalāl Āl-i Aḥmad stresses the Persian language, Persian culture and Shī'ism as essential ingredients; whereas Ṣādiq Chubak, Ṣamad Bihrangī and Ibrāhim Gulistān all reject religion out of hand. Many others would hardly share Aḥmad's view about the ingredients.

36. M.Hillman, "The Modernist Trend. . . ," p.19.

37. E.Yar-Shater, "Persian Letters in the Last Fifty Years," in Critical Perspectives . . . , p.455.

38. Ahmad-Karimi Hakkak, An Anthology . . . , p.4.

39. William G.M.Millward, "Traditional Values and Social Change in Iran," in Iranian Studies, Winter 1971, 2-35.

40. See, "General Characteristics of Contemporary Literature," in Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad, ed. M.Hillman (Kentucky: Mazda Publishers, 1982) p.92:

> "The first characteristic that generally meets the eye in contemporary Persian literature, whether in poetry or in prose is factionalism of all sorts. Factionalism between the classical and the modern, the old and the young, among generations, among classes, between optimism and pessimism, and among conflicting inclinations and disparate views. In any case, the factions in Persian literature are clearly defined. It's also true that for sometime now those factions have clashed in the world of politics, that is, everything about them has become blended together."

41. Shayegan considers Sharīᶜatī's interpretation of Islam to be a "mutation" whereby the traditional content is mismatched with a modern form of ideology. For example, the thesis and antithesis of Marxist dialectics become in Sharīᶜatī, the dialectic of Abel and Cain (true religion versus idolatory) representing, the idealization of one's own group and a diabolization of the outgroup.

42. Hasan Javadi and Susan Sallee(tr.), Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad (California : Albany Press, 1982), pp.44-47.

43. Farrukhzād's proclamation of the death of the sun, inevitably reminds the reader of Nieztche's proclamation of the death of God in Thus Spoke Zarathustra where Nieztche also assumes a prophetic tone.

44. James Bill, The Politics of Iran: Groups, Classes and Modernization (Columbus : Charles E.Merill, 1972), pp.47-48.

45. Brad Hanson, "The 'Westoxication' of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, Al-e Ahmad and Shariati," in International Journal of Middle East Studies 15 (1983) : 1-23.

46. H.Javadi and S.Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.79-82.

47. Ibid., p.133.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FRAGMENTED NOTION OF FEMININITY

Although Furūgh Farrukhzād claimed that the details of her biography were trivial and unimportant, literary critics feel that her four volumes of poetry - The Captive (1955), The Wall (1956), Rebellion (1957), Another Birth (1963) - and her posthumous poems represent, as the four titles indicate, a journey of self-exploration, as well as emotional, psychological and intellectual growth signifying a fusion of her life with her art. Massud Farzan compares her with Rūmī in terms of this fusion of her life and art:

> She was (very much like the poet-mystic Rumi whose Mathnawi poems she admired) one of these self-integrating individuals in whom life and art coalesce - the development of one parallels that of the other, the life-style becomes the style of the work of art, and finally art ceases to be a "work to be done."1

The unity of life and art in Farrukhzād gives her poetry an element of honesty, sincerity and sometimes shocking frankness. But the most distinctive characteristic of her poetry is that, by virtue of the fact that she experienced life not just as an intellectual and a poet but also as a woman, an active feminine element is interjected in her poetry, in comparison with the static and abstract presence of the feminine which is a product of the masculine

imagination in Persian poetry.[2] Reza Baraheni maintains that the significance of Farrukhzād's poetry lies in the fact that she was the first to introduce the feminine element in Persian poetry, especially in terms of the feminine celebration of human love.[3]

The integration of life and art in Farrukhzād represents and expresses a very important sociological phenomenon. In addition to representing the double alienation of the new middle class Iranian intellectual, her poetry typifies the double domination of an Iranian intellectual woman as well as a Muslim intellectual woman. On the one hand, as an intellectual, she has to set her own independent standards of judgement and, on the other hand, as a Muslim, she has to subscribe to a divinely-ordained social order in which the female is subordinated to the male.

One significant aspect of Farrukhzād's biography is that her brief life-span coincided with some of the most controversial changes instituted by the Pahlavi regime pertaining to the status of women. It was in the first year of her birth that Reza Shah instituted the Unveiling Act of 1936, which was part of his modernization programme. The publication of Another Birth, Furūgh's fourth volume of poems, which she herself considered to be the real beginning of her poetry, coincided with another significant change instituted by the Pahlavi regime - namely, the Female Suffrage Act of 1963. And finally, the Family Protection Law was enacted in 1967, the year of her death. Whereas many Iranian intellectuals and

feminists criticized the three legal reforms to promote the status of women as ineffective half-measures, the Shī'ite clergy expressed vehement opposition to the reforms.

The veil, the legitimate, traditional, physical border of women in society had been shattered, yet society remained rigidly patriarchal and religiously traditional. The lives of women became riddled with contradictions between the traditional and the modern. During Reza Shah's time, for example, women could not leave their houses without the veil but could not wear it at work. Although the physical veil had been dropped by legislation, the psychological and social veil of captivity continued as before.

Farrukhzād's journey of self-discovery may be considered to be an attempt at psychological unveiling and discarding of the fragmented notion of traditional femininity with all its contradictions. Concomittant with her search for the self within is the wider search without for a new social consciousness. The poetry of Farrukhzād is a record of the various stages and inner struggles of this journey.

Thus, in The Captive, Farrukhzād expresses the feeling of being imprisoned in a world of tradition and dogma; in The Wall, she encounters impediments in human relations which are defined by society, sees no solution, comes face to face with alienation and a mutilated self. In Rebellion, she poses philosophical questions concerning free-will, predestination and meaning in life, and turns against tradition and

religion. In Another Birth, she finally comes to terms with herself and with life.

Farzaneh Milani comments as follows on the social significance of Farrukhzād's poetry:

> . . . her poetry reveals the problems, and the exacerbations of a modern Iranian woman with all her conflicts, nagging oscillations, and the agonies of contradiction. It enriches the world of Persian poetry with its depictions of the tension and frequent paralysis touching the lives of women artists and, perhaps, those of most women who seek self-expression and personal liberty. It explores the vulnerability of a woman who rejects unreflecting conformity with the past and yet suffers uncertainty about the future. Quite simply, it embraces the daily reality and consciousness of the emergent Persian woman. 4

The period of intense social change in Iran is reflected in the "revolutionary ~~change~~ in the verbal and emotional space requested by a woman."[5] Nowhere can the problem which the fundamental epistemological breach poses be more clear in its social implications than in the question of the status of women in Islam and in this case, in 20th century Iran. Farrukhzād's poetry may be considered to be one of the clearest manifestations of the psychological impact of the breach on the lives of women (and of men to a certain extent).

The Changing Social Structure of Iranian Society

As a result of the process of modernization, all social strata underwent changes and incorporated new elements within themselves. For instance, the landless rentier and foreign industrialists became part of the traditional ruling elite; the lower class consisting of peasants and nomads were being transformed into a new class of industrial workers.[6] Each social stratum saw the emergence of a new force in its midst, which often contradicted the traditional, thus splitting the society right through in terms of value orientation.

According to James Bill, the most important structural change in twentieth century Iran was the emergence and establishment of a new and rapidly growing middle class, which he calls the professional bureaucratic intelligentsia. This emerging class did not destroy the traditional middle classes but weakened and undercut the position of the bureaucrat and the cleric.[7] The Constitutional period also saw the emergence of secular reformers who were the forebearers of the new middle class.

There were basically three elements in the centuries'-old traditional Iranian middle class, consisting of the bureaucrats, the bourgeoisie and the clerics. The bureaucratic element was responsible for running the state apparatus; the bourgeois element consisted of merchants, traders and businessmen, that is to say the bāzār; whereas the clerics were in charge of the traditional educational system of which religion formed a significant part. By virtue of

their role as mujtahids, the clerics had considerable control and direct influence over the masses and were indirectly in touch with the ruling elite.[8]

The high ᶜulamā' began to assert their independence from the state during the Qajar period. In response to the weakness and corruption of the dynasty, the increasing state-debts it had incurred and the far-reaching economic concessions granted to foreign powers, the ᶜulamā' asserted themselves as opposers of alien influence encroaching upon Islam. In addition to considering themselves to be the indispensable interpreters of religious law, the ᶜulamā' represented class interests because of their close ties with merchants and landowners. The ᶜulamā' participated in the Constitutional Revolution in alliance with the merchants. Both groups felt that their respective interests were under threat. James Bill prefers to call the Constitutional period a "movement" rather than a "revolution" and maintains that one reason why the movement did not become a revolution was that "the traditional middle classes fled the scene once they saw their goals satisfied and their upper class detractors shackled."[9]

That the clergy excercised a great deal of influence in the Constitutional period is obvious from the nature of the Constitution that emerged. The first Article of the Constitution of 1906 stipulated Imamī Shīᶜism as the state religion.[10] In addition, a board of five members was appointed from amongst the leading ᶜulamā' to review the parliamentary legislation in accordance with the religious

precepts. The parliament was also granted the right to take decisions in relation to the foreign-economic concessions. And all Iranians were proclaimed equal before the law.[11]

That the professed ideals of democracy and equality espoused by the Constitutional movement were incompatible with Iranian Shī'ism is obvious from the stand taken by the Constitution towards the emerging question of the status of women. Those women who participated significantly in the Constitutional Revolution against the monarchy, in support of and with the encouragement of the clergy, felt betrayed when their requests for suffrage, education and desegragation were not met by the Constitution despite the promise of equal rights to all citizens of Iran.[12] J.R.Touba comments on the irony of the situation:

> The irony of this movement, which was supposed to insure rights to all citizens of the country, was that it served to legally stifle woman's further participation in political affairs. For example, the Electoral Law, Article 10, specifically stated; "Those deprived of the right to vote shall consist of all females, minors, and those under guardians; fraudulent bankrupts, beggars, and those who earn their living in a disreputable way; murderers, thieves and other criminals punished under Islamic law."[13]

Further, the question of women could not be raised in the Majlis since the discussion of such issues was considered contrary to the etiquette of the new parliament by the clergy.[14] It is interesting to

note that during the 1880s and 1890s, the majority of those who championed women's rights to education and declared themselves against polygamy were not Muslims.[15]

It is one of the paradoxes of modern Iranian history that the demands which were raised by women in an anti-monarchist movement during the Qajar period, were subsequently implemented by a powerful and strong monarch, namely Reza Shah.[16]

The burning ambition of Reza Shah was to modernize and Westernize Iran, a process which called for the secularization of the education system and the legal system. Reforms in both these areas amounted to enhancing the power of the state which took over the functions of both systems, and at the same time curtailing the power of the ʿulamāʾ.

Part of the reform of the education system involved compulsory education for both girls and boys, and the sending of students abroad. Roger Savory identifies two particularly important effects that Reza Shah's education policy had on Iranian society:-

> . . . first, since educational instruction had hitherto been virtually the monopoly of the religious classes, the secularization of education necessarily dealt a severe blow to the power of the ulama; second, the conceding of the principle that education should not be confined to boys was the first step toward the social emancipation of woman.[17]

The secularization of the shar^{c} courts dispossessed the ^{c}ulamā' of their right to handle the registration of documents and property, a task from which they had derived a substantial income. Judges were further required to have university degrees or pass special examinations.[18]

The secularization of education and the judiciary in effect involved the appropriation of the exclusive right to knowledge held by the ^{c}ulamā'. By way of the modernized education system, knowledge could be individually acquired but, as far as women were concerned, only with the grace of the king. However, by his autocratic method of government and decision-making, Reza Shah signified that he had appropriated the right to knowledge for himself. Those who were in favour of reform did not like his method of imposing change from above. Thus, there was a clear contradiction in his modernizing policies. Although the reforms did temporarily have the effect of absorbing into the system the opposition which mainly consisted of the supporters of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy, it left the clergy isolated.[19] In the long term, these reforms were to produce the growing numbers of the "professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia" who would demand the right to share in the decision making.

James Bill distinguishes the professional-bureaucratic intelligentsia by five characteristics, though not in the following order.[20] Firstly, the new

middle class was based on access to modern education. Though education had been available mostly to the children of the upper classes during the time of Reza Shah, during the time of Mohammed Reza Shah, it became increasingly accessible to the lower and middle classes who were subsequently absorbed into the intelligentsia. Secondly, the power of the new middle class was based on technical skill and know-how. Thirdly, through education the new class was exposed to foreign ideas and philosophies. Fourthly, the new middle class was characterized by the refusal to accept the traditional power relationships that dominated Iranian society. And fifthly, the new intelligentsia were free of any rigid religious dogmatism and blind worship of past history, to the extent that some even considered Islam as an alien intrusion forced upon Iranians by foreign invaders. This fifth characteristic is more of a generalization since there was no consensus amongst the intellectuals with regard to Islam as discussed in the previous chapter

It is ironic that it was from the ranks of the intelligentsia, the class spawned by the Pahlavi regime, that the opposition to Mohammed Reza Shah emerged in the forties and the fifties in the form of the Tudeh and the National Front.[21] They considered him to be a puppet of foreign governments and accused him of betraying the principles of constitutionalism and nationalism. The Shah also came under the attack of the clergy who became increasingly alarmed by the Shah's autocratic style

of government, the excesses of his secret service, the Savak, the corruption of the regime, and the Shah's growing political and economic dependence on the United States of America.

The first major attack of the ᶜulamā' on the Pahlavi regime came on the occasion of the White Revolution, the Shah's reform programme aimed at modernization at the level of the rural countryside. The ᶜulamā' were outraged by his land reform laws which would affect the vaqf lands that supported the running of mosques, traditional schools and salary stipends of the clergy; by the Suffrage Act allowing women to vote and the Family Protection Law designed to curb polygamy and to give women the right to initiate divorce, which the ᶜulamā' regarded as an encroachment upon sharīᶜah and Shīᶜī morality; and by the Literacy Corps designed to rival the traditional schools in the countryside which were dominated and controlled by the ᶜulamā'.

Once again, a monarch appearing an advocate of progressive reform demanded by the new middle class (the intelligentsia) had the effect of isolating the clergy. It was not long before the ᶜulamā' incited riots against the Shah in Qumm, Tehran and elsewhere; about twenty-seven ᶜulamā' were arrested and Āyatullāh Khumaynī, one of the leading members of the clerical opposition was exiled to Turkey.

The White Revolution played a decisive role in determining the future events in Iran and may also be considered a contributing factor to the Islamic Revolution of 1979.[22]

In addition to alienating the clergy, the reforms also alienated the intelligentsia. The land reform which was the cornerstone of the White Revolution did not turn out to be half as radical as it had initially appeared to the intelligentsia. It amounted to no more than half measures as did the Pahlavi reforms pertaining to women. In any case, what is important to note is that the White Revolution was instrumental in transforming the question of the status of women into a highly controversial and emotive issue in Iranian politics; it became part of the overall ideological conflict between politics and religion, state and clergy, conservative Muslim leaders and an aggressive modernizing state. Nahid Yeganeh explains it as follows:

> The absorption of the opposition into the system had the effect of isolating the clergy. The emphasis of the modernizing state was on secularization and hence on keeping clergy and the religious institutions under strict control. The political conflict therefore emerged and was fought in terms of Islam versus modernization. In fighting this war, the clergy found themselves more unified than ever. This was the beginning of a long-lasting deployment of power: the position of women being caught in the ongoing struggle for power between the the clergy and the secular state. [23]

As a result, the question of the status of women abounds in contradictions and paradoxes. This fact was dramatically demonstrated in the paradoxical mass participation of women in the Islamic Revolution in support of the clergy who always took the lead in opposing the few legal rights that the Shah had granted to the women in his reformist attempts to emancipate them.[24] Interesting as it is, this issue in its entirety is beyond the scope of this thesis, but will be touched upon where relevant and necessary. What follows is an analysis of the contradictions between the two ideals or conceptions of women prevalent during Farrukhzād's time - the clerical and the Pahlavi. Farrukhzād's life and poetry testify to Shahla Haeri's observation that the legal changes which the Pahlavis instituted in order to enhance the status of women did not necessarily lead to or facilitate social change, but instead they served to increase and excacerbate social contradictions and tensions.[25] That is not to say that the legal changes were not desirable but that they were inadequate to counter deeply rooted and tenacious social attitudes. Before examining the legal changes instituted by the Pahlavis, it is necessary to examine the traditional Shī^{c}ī conception of women which they were attempting to modify. In terms of Millward's spectrum of responses to modernization, the response of the clerics would fall under the label of "sunnatparastan".

The Shī^{c}ī Ideal of Femininity

A mention has already been made of the role that the ^{c}ulama' play in the day-to-day lives of Iranian people. Their position as mujtahids and the doctrine of taqlīd give them immense power to determine the general value orientation and attitudes of the people. This was particularly the case in relation to public attitudes towards the status of women. This is examined by Adele K Ferdows and Amir H Ferdows who establish a close relationship between these attitudes and the writings of earlier Shī^{c}īte ^{c}ulamā' like Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d.1699), one of the leading Isna^{c}ashirī theologians of the Safavid period.[26]

The doctrine expounded by Majlisī is essentially his interpretation of the Hadith or purported sayings of Prophet Muhammad and the twelve Imāms. Although it is now recognized that most of these sayings are very likely fabrications or distortions of what the Prophet and Imāms may have said, the theological interpretation based upon them continues to be the standard form of Shī^{c}ism in Iran. It is interesting to note that Majlisī's doctrine is strongly upheld by Āyatullāh Khumaynī and other senior clergy, and his books have been recommended for Iranian youth by Khumaynī. Ferdows and Ferdows suggest that Khumaynī's attitudes towards women are similar to those of Majlisī, and so are the day-to-day practices, general attitudes and beliefs of the Iranian people.[27]

According to Majlisi's conception of femininity as delineated by Ferdows and Ferdows, a woman's status and worth is solely dependant on her biological functions of child-bearing, and submitting to the sexual demands of her husband. A woman is by nature over-sexed and her bestial nature is socially disruptive which, therefore, calls for strict regulation and control. A woman must at all costs be chaste and a virgin, she must be married off at the age of puberty, and must also be kept under strict control after marriage. By virtue of being a wife, she is obliged to obey her husband absolutely and completely, to the point of prostrating to him. A total submission, a willing and enthusiastic submission to a man's sexual desires and demands is called for. In other words, it is her religiously preordained duty to be a sex object. In contrast to the woman, the male is granted complete authority over women, as well as sexual promiscuity which is divinely sanctioned for him by the permission of polygamy, the institution of temporary marriage, and the right to repudiate marriage. Whereas women are warned against disobedience to their husbands, men are encouraged never to consult or obey their wives. It is needless to state that such a conception of femininity, divinely ordained and sanctioned, renders the notion of the equality of the sexes meaningless and absurd. Ferdows and Ferdows also maintain that these clergy oriented interpretations have kept women ignorant, subservient and exploited, and they remark upon the social implications of the Majlisian conception of woman as follows:

> This moral system penetrates the conscience of every woman, religious or not-so-religious, educated or illiterate. It is a vividly binding force that can effectively squash any attempt at sexual equality. The woman is to be protected, looked after and controlled. In this relationship she has few rights but many obligations towards her male kin. . . . The sense of guilt and low self-esteem which this tradition can engender is clear. The woman not only has the burden of living upto man's expectations but also has the added burden of justifying his questionable treatment of her. [28]

> Although many women may intellectually reject the letter of these rules and precepts, its emotional impact is so internalized that it cannot but affect their self-image. 29

The clerical conception of femininity in the sixties was embodied in a book entitled Women's Rights in Islam and the World by Yahya Nūrī, a Shī^{c}ī clergyman representing a fundamentalist position. Significantly, this book was published only a year after Iranian women were granted the right to vote which was also the year in which Farrukhzād's fourth volume of poems, Another Birth was published. Nūrī's version of femininity may be described as a subtle and rationalized version of the Majlisian view. His a priori acceptance of the Majlisian hypothesis of differences in male-female biological, functional and socio-political levels, is buttressed by references to the Qur'ān, although it would be wrong to conclude that Nūrī's version is, therefore, a Qur'ānic one.

According to Nūrī, women are naturally equipped with emotion which enables them to attend effectively to their family-oriented and domestic functions. Their lack of reason is proved by the comparatively smaller female anatomical stature - their smaller bodies, hearts and brains. Men, on the other hand, have a larger anatomical structure and are equipped with reason which prepares them for the broader social struggles. He further maintains that women find their satisfaction and happiness in subjugation to man's authority. Nūrī's ideal woman ought not to participate in politics; nor participate in the democratic process of electing or being elected. The real "right" of women, therefore, is that which corresponds to the female nature which, in Nūrī's opinion, is exactly what Islam has granted to women.

A brief mention must also be made of Murtazā Mutahharī, another clergyman, who belonged to a more moderate faction of the clergy and who was assassinated during the Islamic Revolution. His conception of femininity, which came ten years later than that of Nūrī, was more popular, accomodating and on the face of it more sophisticated, since he had further sharpened the tools of rationalization, but essentially it was the same. Mutahharī attempted to prove feminine emotionality by reference to its behavioural manifestations, and he thereby sanctioned the absence

of women from the jihād and from the judicial field. Mutahharī's conception was merely a refined form of the centuries' old idea of regulating feminine sexuality through the external means of desegregation of the sexes. Although he allowed women some measure of participation in public activity, he recommended the ḥijāb (veil) which in his opinion helps to confine sexual activity within the bounds of the personal and the private. He interpreted polygamy as a very broad-minded and progressive status and rejected the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, claiming that it is based on Western individualism, whereas Islam prefers to give priority to the society over the rights of individuals.[30] In the comparative anatomical theology of both the clerics - Nūrī and Mutahharī - an element of Freudian anatomical determinism is uncannily detectable.

The views of th Twelver Shī^{c}ī clergy about the "true" Muslim woman and her place in the social order are very similar to those that were held by the Sunnī theologians such as al-Ghazālī. The inherent contradictions in the Sunnī Muslim view of women and female sexuality are analysed by Fatima Mernissi in her book Beyond the Veil.[31] Considering that the Shī^{c}ī Majlisian views on women are very similar to the Sunnī views, Mernissi's analysis of the contradictions may by extension also be applied to views of Twelver Shī^{c}ism and, therefore, to the Muslim world as a whole.

Mernissi maintains that the male-female relation is a basic element of the Muslim social structure. According to her, different social orders tend to integrate the tension between religion and sexuality in different ways. In Islam, the woman is considered to be an embodiment of sexuality. She is an active sexual being and, therefore, a powerful and a dangerous one too. Man has no choice but to give in to her attraction. She is a disruptive being and is an embodiment of fitnah (chaos) and a symbol of social disorder. The institutions of polygamy, repudiation and segregation are a strategy to contain and neutralize her disruptive effects on the social order. Thus, Muslim ideology views men and women as enemies, tries to seperate the two and empowers men with the institutionalized means to oppress women.

Polygamy and repudiation (and in Shī'ism the institution of temporary marriage) indicate that the marital bond is fragile and is not meant to develop into friendship and love. The Muslim system is opposed to the heterosexual unit; it fears the growth of a full-fledged relation satisfying the sexual, emotional and intellectual needs of both the partners. Islam, according to Mernissi, considers such a heterosexual involvement a direct threat to man's unconditional allegiance to Allāh with all his energies, thoughts and feelings. Mernissi's interpretation appears to convey a co-relation between the male-female relation and the Allāh-man relation. The hierarchical social order which is a reflection of the hierarchical natural order demands

woman's allegiance to man with the same unconditional element that God demands of man. According to Mernissi, the contradiction inherent in the 'Muslim' theory of female sexuality is the absolute reversal of libidinous roles. Although women are regarded as active sexual beings, it is the men who are permitted promiscuity by divine right; and if polygamy were to be translated into numerical terms, a woman would appear to be restricted to a quarter of a man. Moreover, the morality imposed by the various institutions which control sexuality leads to the popular opinion that men have greater needs and capacity than women. It is thus that many Muslim women, including Mernissi, maintain that true equality of the sexes is incompatible with an Islamic social order and that if the goal of equality was to be attained, the social order would no longer be considered authentically Islamic.[32] This was also Farrukhzād's dilemma - to be critical of the Shī'ī notion of femininity was to be guilty of cultural betrayal.

Perhaps the specific social and historical environment in which Islam originated necessitated at its inception the subordination of the female interests to those of a patrilineal society. However, as Mernissi points out, the problem arises when such a family structure is considered eternal and unchanging by virtue of its being sanctioned by divine law. Whereas before the nineteenth century there appears to have been no fundamental contradiction between Muslim ideology and social reality, in the twentieth

century there has emerged an irreparable rupture between the two - the rupture which Shayegan has defined as an epistemological breach.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, some Muslim thinkers did realize and accept the necessity for de-segregation of the sexes as a pre-condition for the Muslim countries to rival effectively the Western secular technocratic states. Desegregation of the sexes was necessary in order to ensure the maximum participation of the population in the production process. These thinkers tried to prove that de-segregation of the sexes was not contrary to the dictates of the Qur'ān and not incompatible with Islam. The result was a 'modernist' interpretation of Islam, the main exponent of which, in the case of Iran, was, ᶜAlī Sharīᶜatī, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Sharīᶜatī was critical of the clergy whom he referred to as the "timeless ones", that is those living in a vacuum - oblivious to social reality and, therefore, responsible for the success of Western imperialism.[33] He viewed the clerical conception of women as fanatical suppression and the Pahlavi conception as materialistic slavery. His own alternative, symbolized by the Prophet's daughter Fāṭimah as an exemplary daughter, wife and mother, has been described by Azar Tabari as a vague and puritanical image of an ideal woman.[34] In the view of A.K.Ferdows, Sharīᶜatī raises the issue of women but fails to address it, thus leaving his model not very different in substance from that of the clergy.[35]

The Pahlavi Alternative

If the response of the clergy to Westernization was one of total rejection, the Pahlavi response may be described as assimilation. In encouraging secularist capitalism, the Pahlavis inevitably assimilated the contradictions inherent in the secular capitalist system. It is commom knowledge that although democratic capitalism theoretically offers the female sex equal opportunities, it also exploits female sexuality for commercial purposes. In adopting a form of state capitalism, the Pahlavis undoubtedly unleashed some of the latent contradictions in large-scale capitalism leading to a situation where contradictions of the new order were grafted on to the contradictions of the traditional culture.

Reza Shah's contribution towards the improvement of the status of Iranian women amounted to instituting laws in three major areas. Reza Shah had intended his reforms in favour of women to be direct agents of social change, but as Shahla Haeri points out, the traditional cultural patterns neutralized the state legitimations.[36] Reza Shah's major contribution was to open up the field of education, including university education to women. However, a shortage of female teachers and the general segregation of sexes in the schools hampered any significant progress in this area. The social taboos in relation to women's literacy discouraged the ready acceptance of sending girls to school. Alternatively, girls were sent to school but withdrawn after their primary education. This trend of insecurity which is

expressed in the hesitation to send girls to school for more than a certain number of years is not confined to Iran but is more-or-less universal in the Muslim world. Modern secularization seems to encourage the assertion of individuality. In a traditional setting where a woman's domain is not the public sphere, the assertion of feminine individuality is considered unacceptable, for it is a trait which would render them matrimonially non-marketable. All this is not to say that no Iranian women took advantage of the opportunity to acquire education.

Reza Shah has been criticized for making only very minor changes in marriage and divorce laws, the second area of change, which in effect amounted to no changes at all other than the preservation of the sharī'ah. Religious courts were abolished and replaced by civil law courts, and marriage contracts were required to be registered with the Ministry of Justice. But since there were many parts of the country without state registrars, the populace ended up relying once more on the clergy. A practice already endorsed in Islam was also legislated, enabling parties to marriage to insert in their contracts any conditions they desired. Polygamy was not abolished but the groom was required to inform the bride if he already had a wife. Reza Shah himself had more than one wife. Puberty was defined as the minimum age for marriage, but since the definition of puberty could be open to many

interpretations, this legislation did not prove adequate as a deterrent to childhood marriages.

The third and the most controversial reform was Reza Shah's Unveiling Act of 1936. By the means of this Act he outlawed the veil in toto with an accompanying insistence on the use of European garb and hats. Haeri sees the veil as an extension of the wall of the traditional house which seperates the two spheres, the bīrūnī (the outer), a place where the men could attend to public business and where women seldom ventured, and the andarūnih (the inner), being the family sphere and therefore the female domain.[37] The fact that sex segregation expresses itself in terms of such concrete features as the general architectural layout of the house is an indication of how deeply-rooted and interwoven it is in the culture. Both the wall and the veil legitimize the segregation of the sexes into spheres of family and society; the wall at home functioned as a barrier, carving out a male space in the female sphere, and the veil served to carve out a female space in a male sphere. Unveiling resulted in the sudden shattering of the physical male-female spaces and also in psychological disorientation, more so because unveiling was to be imposed by force. The structure of the family and deep-rooted social traditions could not be changed overnight by the means of an unveiling decree. Moreover, unveiling was not accompanied by political rights or socio-economic opportunities of any kind for the women.

Haeri observes that the social institutions sanctioned norms and patterns of behaviour that were often in contradiction to the unveiling laws. Without the support of traditional legitimacy, unveiled women were vulnerable to mistreatment and unfair judgement.[38]

The clerics were outraged by the Unveiling Act but the more radical opposition saw the decree as an act of dictatorship by the monarch. Many women suffered due to enforced unveiling, especially the elderly who became isolated at home. However, it is significant to note that the women's movement in Iran, which had actually consisted of a small minority, had opposed the veil.[39] Eliz Sanasarian, Haeri and others maintain that the Act ought to have made unveiling a voluntary matter rather than an enforced one, and it should have been accompanied or preceded by widespread campaigns geared towards inculcating an awareness of the inconvenience of the veil. Sanasarian sees the Unveiling Act as a flashy sign conveyed by Reza Shah to demonstrate to the world that Iran had become Westernized and developed.[40] Unveiling in itself could certainly not have engendered self-determination for women.

It was in the midst of these raging conflicts that Farrukhzād was born and grew up. Many years later Farrukhzād entitled her volumes of poetry in terms of 'captivity' and 'the wall', and undertook the journey towards 'another birth', which involved transcending the wall from the inner space (andarunih)

to the outer space (bīrūnī).

According to Eliz Sanasarian, there was a covert feminist movement in Iran during the 1920s and the 1930s, which basically consisted of upper-class women who had the leisure and the means to participate actively in organizing women's societies, publishing magazines and periodicals for women and promoting the cause of education for women.[41] These expressions of the nascent movement were bold steps in a country where traditional cultural taboos were attached to literacy amongst women. The clergy regarded literate women as a social threat. It was believed that if women were allowed to write they would send love letters to men and so disgrace their families. Sanasarian also observes that the publications of the early feminists expressed admiration for women in the Western countries, condemned men and the clergy, but were reluctant to criticize Islam.[42] It is interesting to note that about thirty years later, Farrukhzād began to write love poetry for all to read, and she was also to question the tenets of religion, as will be discussed in the course of the next chapter.

Although the day of the Unveiling Act was commemorated annually during the reign of Mohammed Reza Shah, the decree was no longer enforced, and the veiled and the unveiled co-existed. It was only after twenty-seven more years that the Iranian women were for the first time granted equal electoral rights, by the

Suffrage Act of 1963. This provoked the same reaction amongst the opposition as Reza Shah's legal measures directed towards women had earlier provoked. The clergy vehemently opposed female participation in the electoral process whereas the leftist opposition saw it as another one of the Shah's half-measures. Haeri points out the glaring contradictions which the Suffrage Act exposed. Firstly, she refers to other sources which demonstrate that suffrage does not in itself breed autonomy in women. Secondly and ironically, suffrage in Iran served to give some men two votes to cast on election day. Thirdly and most importantly, she has the following to say:

> . . . while women could legally excel and become ministers, senators, lawyers and so forth, they had no rights in matters that were directly related to their lives. They could be divorced unexpectedly, their children could be taken away, and their husbands could marry a second and a third wife. Women still had no legal or political rights within the household and were the second-class citizens within their own families. 43

In keeping with the Shah's pattern of politics, the women's groups became patronized and centralized under the Pahlavi regime. Sanasarian describes the new women's organizations as a mere window-dressing for the politics of the state.[44] The leadership of the organization emerged from the elitist clique surrounding the Shah and his family, further evoking skepticism from the more radical wings of the opposition which saw everything in the light of the

Shah's pro-American stance. Haeri holds that the Unveiling and the Suffrage Acts were incidental to the country's overall industrial and economic expansion.[45]

The first major step pertaining to change in family laws came in the same year as Farrukhzād's death. The Family Protection Law of 1967 did not attempt to eliminate the sharīcah laws on the family, but only clarified and modified them. Polygamy was not outlawed, but it was made conditional upon permission of the court; divorce provisions were improved, but women were not granted equal rights in divorce; the requirements of marriage age still remained low; the law permitting a husband to restrain his wife from taking up a 'dishonourable' job was retained, but the wife was given the same right with an added clause which in effect nullified the right - the judge could decide against her if he felt that the husband's income was indispensable to the well-being of the family. In addition there was the Passport Act which required wives to have the written consents of their husbands for the purpose of travelling abroad. Furthermore, in conformity with the sharīcah, a man was allowed to murder his wife if he found her in an extra-marital relation.

It seems that the changes instituted by the Pahlavis were on the whole, merely cosmetic and skin deep. According to Sanasarian, "adherence to religious laws and traditional stereotypes of women made a mockery of the legal reforms."[46] The Pahlavi attitude

towards women is best described in the Shah's own frequently quoted words:

> Reza Shah never advocated a complete break with the past, for always he assumed that our girls could find their best fulfillment in marriage and in the nurture of superior children. But he was convinced that a girl could be a better wife and mother, as well as a better citizen, if she received an education and perhaps worked outside the home long enough to gain a sense of civic functions and responsibilities.[47]

That the Shah never genuinely believed in granting equal rights to women is demonstrated by his attacks on the idea of women's emancipation. He also believed that ideally a man should be in charge of the family, and he almost approved the institution of temporary marriage as a form of financial security for women. The Shah saw the wider social function of women as an extension of their primary role as mothers and accordingly emphasized welfare activities by women.[48] The women's organizations under the Shah's regime adopted more or less the same tone. In an interview with Oriana Fallaci the Shah's attitude towards the question of women came out loud and clear:

> Nobody can influence me, nobody. Still less a woman. Women are important in a man's life only if they are beautiful and charming and keep their femininity . . . You're equal in the eyes of the law but not, excuse my saying so, in ability. . . You've never even produced a Michelangelo or a Bach. You've never produced a great chef . . . You've produced nothing great, nothing! 49

Haeri explains the shortcomings of the Pahlavi legal changes by reference to five inter-related and inter-dependent factors.[50] She significantly identifies the first and the most important factor as the incompatability of the changes with the sharīᶜah; the second factor is the political system of patriarchalism and the prevailing masculine attitude in society; thirdly, the widespread economic dependence of women and the lack of social security; fourthly, the lack of an effective judicial apparatus to back up the legal changes; and finally, the general illiteracy of women and the consequent inability to utilize the laws.

Thus, the ideal female space in the traditional framework became transformed into a prison where Farrukhzād felt that she was a 'captive.' Her femininity became a very immediate part of her reality, and she set out to realize it, with or without social consent. She could not identify with either the Shīᶜī or the Pahlavi models because both shared one common element in defining their stances - a lack of genuine concern for women and their inalienable human rights. Consequently, Farrukhzād searched for an identity that was highly individualized and intensely personal, in a space within herself. The following chapters attempt an examination of this search and this space.

Footnotes

1. Massud Farzan, "Forugh Farrokhzad, Modern Persian Poet," in Critical Perspectives. . . , p.433.

2. Farzaneh Milani, "Forugh Farrokhzad. . . , p.143.

3. Reza Baraheni, Talā dar Mis (Tehran : Zamān, 1968), p.410.

4. Farzaneh Milani, "Forugh Farrokhzad. . . , p.143.

5. See Farzaneh Milani, "Love and Sexuality in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzad: A Reconsideration," Iranian Studies 15 (1982) : 117-128.

6. James Bill, The Politics of Iran. . . , see pp.1-51.

7. Ibid., p.13.

8. Ibid., p.11.

9. Ibid., p.13.

10. Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics. . . , p.26.

11. George Lenczowski, "Political Process and Instit Institutions in Iran: the Second Pahlavi Kingship," in Iran under the Pahlavis. . . , p.435.

12. Mangol Bayat-Phillip, "Women and Revolution in Iran," in Women in the Muslim World, eds. eds. Lois Beck and Nikkie Keddie (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1978), p.299.

13. Jacqueline R.Touba, "The Relationship between Urbanization and the Changing Status of Women in Iran, 1956-1966," Iranian Studies 5/1, (1972) : 27.

14. Quoted from London Times, 22 August 1911, by Mangol Bayat-Phillip, in "Women and Re Revolution. . . ," p.301.

15. See Mangol Bayat-Phillip, "Women and Revolution. . . ," p.296. Of the four mentioned by M.Bayat-Phillip, two were non-Muslims, one an atheist and one a convert to Islam who later re-converted to Christianity.

16. Cheryl Benard, "Islam and Women: Some Reflections on the Experience of Iran," Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies IV/2 (1980) : 14.

17. Roger Savory, "Social Development in Iran during the Pahlavi Era," in Iran Under the Pahlavis. . . , p.90.

18. Ibid., p.92.

19. Nahid Yeganeh, "Women's Struggles in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in In the Shadow of Islam : The Women's Movement in Iran, compiled by A.Tabari and N.Yeganeh (London : Zed Press, 1982), p.32.

20. James Bill, The Politics of Iran. . . , see pp.56-61.

21. Ibid., see pp.62-79.

22. See Eric Hooglund, Land and Revolution in Iran: 1960-1980 (Austin : University of Texas, 1982).

23. Nahid Yeganeh, "Women's Struggles. . . ," p.32.

24. The participation of women in the Islamic Revolution against the Shah and the subsequent attitudes of the Islamic Republic towards women in Iran has provoked a radical review of the status of women in twentieth century Iran,and the last four years have witnessed a large number of publications on this issue.

25. Shahla Haeri, "Women, Law and Social Change in Iran," in Women in Contemporary Muslim Societies, ed. Jane Smith (London : Associated University Press, 1980), pp.209-234.

26. Adele K Ferdows and Amir H Ferdows, "Women in Shi'i Fiqh: Images Through the Hadith," in Women and Revolution in Iran, ed. Guity Nashat (Boulder: West View Press, 1983), pp. 55-68.

27. Ibid., p.64.

28. Ibid., p.59.

29. Ibid., p.65.

30. See Nahid Yeganeh, "Women's Struggles . . . ," p.43.

31. Fatimah Mernissi, Beyond the Veil (Cambridge,Mass : Halsted Press, 1975).

32. Among others who share views similar to Mernissi's is Azar Tabari who speaks of unveiling the Qur'ān in her essay entitled, "Islam and the Struggle for Emancipation of Iranian Women," in In the Shadow of Islam, pp. 22-24.

33. Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics. . . , p. 146.

34. Azar Tabari, "Islam and the Struggle . . . ," p.12.

35. For a comprehensive account of Sharī'atī's views see Adele K Ferdows, "Women in the Islamic Revolution," International Journal of Middle East Studies 15 (1983) : 283-298.

36. Shahla Haeri, "Women, Law and Social Change. . . ," p.217.

37. Ibid., p.215

38. Ibid., pp.217-218.

39. Eliz Sanasarian, The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny Appeasement and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini (New York : Praeger, 1982), p.63.

40. Ibid., p.66.

41. Ibid., p.40.

42. Ibid., see pp.30-47

43. Shahla Haeri, "Women, Law and Social Change. . . ," pp.219-220.

44. Eliz Sanasarian, The Women's Rights Movement. . . , p.82.

45. Shahla Haeri, "Women, Law and Social Change. . . , " p.219.

46. Eliz Sanasarian, The Women's Rights Movement. . . ,

47. Mohammed Reza Shah, Mission for My Country (London : Macgraw Hill, 1961), p.231.

48. See Eliz Sanasarian, The Women's Rights Movement. . . , pp.90-91.

49. Oriana Fallaci, Interview with History (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp.271-272.

50. Shahla Haeri, "Women, Law and Social Change. . . ," pp.229-230.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FRAGMENTED INDIVIDUAL

Farrukhzād was born in 1935 in Tehran. She was the third of seven children in a middle class family. Her early life conformed very much to the traditional patterns of female protectionism and all its accompanying inhibitions. About her childhood, Mehri Bharier observes:

> She lived the typical quiet, secluded life of a Persian girl; active, inquisitive and sensitive, absorbing and questioning her environment but greatly restricted in the type of activities now regarded in most countries as essential for the healthy upbringing of an intelligent child.1

She attended a mixed primary school in Tehran and subsequently proceeded to the high school, where her literary inclinations and independent spirit soon found expression in the originality of her essays. It is also at this time that Farrukhzād began to take serious interest in Persian literature and to write poetry in the traditional style of the ghazal.

Like many girls of her time, Furūgh did not proceed beyond the ninth grade at school, but instead went on to a woman's art college where she attended dress-making and painting classes. Although she seemed to

have enjoyed herself at the art college, developing a particular aptitude in pen and ink drawings, her life seems to have been transformed with the desertion of her father and the subsequent divorce of her parents. Since her mother found it difficult to impose on the teenage girl the strict family discipline which tradition called for, Furūgh was married off at the age of sixteen to Parvīz Shāhpūr, an economics graduate who was older to her by eleven years.

Although Furūgh herself had chosen her husband-to-be, and was happy in the first few months of marriage, there soon emerged differences between them. The main bone of contention appeared to be his growing dislike of the kind of poetry she composed. He had encouraged her to continue writing but could not tolerate the outspoken and explicit language of her poetry, which he regarded as disgraceful and scandalous.

Furūgh seemed to have found herself in a situation where family life did not provide her with the total fulfillment which traditionally she had been socialized into believing it should provide. Within her limited capacities, it seems that poetry offered her a creative medium for self-assertion and self-expression; but because her experiences as a youth were confined to inter-personal relationships, she inevitably ended up by pouring her own emotional problems into her poetry, and so to speak, 'exposed' herself. In doing so she inverted the traditional

virtue of female reticence by what was considered her audacious outspokeness.

Less than a year after her marriage, Furūgh returned to her mother's home and in spite of attempts at reconciliation and the birth of a son, Kāmyār, the marriage was annulled in 1955 and Furūgh was compelled to surrender the custody of her child to her former husband. The brief and stormy experience of this marriage and the loss of her child had a deep and lasting impact on Farrukhzād. It made her extremely cynical of the institution of marriage and bitter about the lot of women in Iranian society.

'The Captive' and 'The Wall' (1955-1956)

Bharier suggests that the publication of Farrukhzād's first volume of poetry, The Captive, was a cause for marital friction.[2] A cause it may have been, but it was much more an expression of dissatisfaction with her marriage. There are several poems in this volume, published in the year of her divorce, which indicate her agonizing conflict and despair at the realization of the incompatability between her marriage and the desire to express herself freely through poetry. The following poem expresses her dilemma vividly and movingly:

REVOLT

Don't put the lock of silence on my lips
Because my heart has untold tales to tell.
Release my feet from these heavy ropes
Because my heart is troubled by this business.

Come here, you man, you selfish being!
Come and open the doors of the cage!
Even if you imprison me for life,
At least give me a breath of freedom again now!

I am a bird, a bird that for a long time
Had meant to fly.
But the songs in my chest have become moans,
My life has ended in disappointment.

Don't put the lock of silence on my lips
Because I must tell my secrets.
I must make the fiery sound of my voice
Reach people's ears everywhere.

Come and open the door so that I may fly away
Towards the bright sky of poetry.
If you let me fly
I shall become a flower in poetry's garden.

My lips with sweet kisses are for you,
My body with its perfume is for you.
My eyes with their hidden sparks,
My heart with its tearful plaint, are all for you.

But oh, you man, you selfish being,
Don't say 'Disgrace! Your poem is a disgrace!',
For visionary lovers you know,
Their cage is tight and cramping.

Don't say 'Your poem is wholly sinful,'
Let me drink a dose of this disgrace and sin!
You may have paradise, and houris and the water of Kowsar;
Let me make my home in the pit of hell.

A book, a quiet place, a poem and silence
Are the rapture and ecstasy of my life.
It does not matter if I am not admitted to paradise
When there is an everlasting paradise in my heart.

At night, when the moon dances silently
In the still, dumb sky,
You are asleep, while I, drunk with desires,
Hug the body of the moonlight.

The breeze took a thousand kisses from me.
I gave a thousand kisses to the sun.
In that prison where you were my warder
One night my whole frame trembled from a kiss.

Drop the talk of 'good name', O man!
My disgrace has given me a drunken joy.
I will be forgiven by God, for He
Gave every poet a crazy heart.

Come and open the door, so that I may fly away
Towards the bright sky of poetry.
If you let me fly
I shall become a flower in poetry's garden. [3]

In the poem quoted above, the poet's attitude towards her husband is open and defiant, but there is also an appeal for his understanding and compassion, and a willingness to continue with her role as a wife. She offers him her lips, body, eyes and heart if only he would stop censoring her poetry. However, in the following poem from the same volume, the husband is no longer present except as her shadowy jailer. The awareness of her imprisonment is powerfully evoked and she longs desperately for freedom, to soar into the sky, even at the cost of breaking up her marriage and the love of her child:

THE CAPTIVE

I want you, yet I know I'll never
Attain my heart's desire in your embrace;
You are that pure and luminous sky,
I, a captive bird in this corner of the cage.

From behind the cold, dark bars,
My rue's astonished look before your face,
I am thinking there might come a hand
And toward you I will spread my wings apace.

I am thinking that in a moment of neglect,
From out this silent prison I will fly,
Laugh in the face of the man who jails me,
And then begin life over by your side.

I am thinking this and know that never
Will I have the strength to leave from out this cage;
Even if the man who jails should wish it,
Breath for my flight no longer now remains.

Each bright morning from behind the bars,
In my face a child's look laughs with bliss;
When I start singing a song of joy,
His lips take wing towards me with a kiss.

If, O sky, I want one day to fly
From out this silent prison, cold and stern,
What shall I say to the child's weeping eyes?
Forget about me, for I'm a captive bird.

I am that candle, with the burning of whose heart
I make a ruin luminous to glow;
If I wish to choose extinguishment,[4]
Upon a nest disruption I will sow.

Farrukhzād's early poems mostly speak of the loneliness and despair of love. There are some poems, however, which express the earlier hopes and dreams of an adolescent girl yearning for fulfilment in love. Hillman comments that "The Captive poems are not joyous for the most part, but the reader feels in them the vitality, sensuality, and hopefulness of the youthful speaker emphatically portraying the significance of love."[5]

It is noteworthy that even in her love poems, the poet is aware of the deceitful and exploitative aspects of the male-female relationship. Hillman points out that some of the men depicted in her poems do not comprehend the meaning of love, while others are wholly ignorant of love's magic and see woman in

terms of a promiscuous object.[6] Farrukhzād refers to the traditional hunter-style male attitude to women in the following verses from the poem entitled 'The Bitter Tale':

They told her only of desire
They saw only her outward aspect.
Wherever she went they sang in her ears
That women are created for enjoyment . . .

Why? She was the clear morning dew
Which fell into the sunflower's trap.
And at dawn when the sun rose,
Fell into its thirsty mouth and died.[7]

In another poem from The Captive, Farrukhzād expresses her disillusionment with the institution of marriage and her painful awakening to reality by showing the naive but suspicious questioning of a young innocent girl and contrasting it with the real experience of a grown woman. The distance in perception between the innocent girl and the grown woman may also be regarded as the gulf between traditional ideals and harsh realities which do not coincide. The little girl's doubts and questions may also be interpreted as a flicker of self-assertion in the midst of social consensus, a flicker yet too weak to emerge into a flaming sun:

THE RING

Smiling, the girl inquired, "And what's
the secret of this golden ring
that's hugging my finger so tightly,
what's the secret of this ring
whose features glitter and glow
so brightly - what secret's in this ring?"
Shocked, the man then answered her,
"Its the ring of happiness, it's life, this ring."
"Blessings upon it!" said everyone.
"Isn't it too bad," the girl replied,
"that still I view it with suspicion."

> Years went by and there came a night
> when a woman was brooding on that golden ring.
> In its gleaming form she saw the days
> that wasted away, the hope wasting
> that her husband would ever be true.
> Bitterly the woman cried, "Woe!
> Woe to this ring, with its features
> that glitter yet and glow, whose meaning
> is slavery and mere servitude."[8]

There is much in common between the first two volumes of Farrukhzād's poems. As the titles of her poems suggest, the mood encompassing the first two volumes are full of dark and gloomy forces, the forces of death, decay and despair, which are conveyed by images of the night, seclusion, cold silence, graves, guilt, sin, broken mirrors, and so on. The same mood and atmosphere is conveyed by some of the titles of her poems, such as 'Night and Desire,' 'Horror-Stricken,' 'Regret,' 'Escape and Pain,' 'The Devil of Night,' 'The Lost,' 'The Sick,' 'The Renounced House,' 'Agony,' 'The Agony of Loneliness,' 'The Blossom of Agony,' 'Fury,' 'Fear,' 'The World of Shadows.'

Farzaneh Milani remarks as follows on the common thread of alienation, loneliness and frustration running through the earlier volumes of poems:

> She explores the patterns of male/female interdependency with no attempt to manipulate her presentation in order to promote dogma. Her psychological realism reveals the crippling effects of sex role-conditioning.
>
> In the first three collections, woman is deprived of full selfhood by the constraints placed upon her, and man is subjected to mutilation both by his

> imprisonment in the mold of "masculinity" and his drive to possess, to dominate. The results are painfully-flawed relationships filling page after page of the juvenilia. Although much of the three collections is dedicated to love poems, most speak of alienation rather than communication, of loneliness rather than togetherness, of frustration rather than exaltation. The lover and the beloved, the oppressor and the oppressed, the hunter and the prey, the bird and the bird-jailer (to use Farrokhzad's own metaphors), are both damaged by their enactment of prescribed roles. Master or slave, victor or victim, each experiences his or her own brand of human deprivation.9

On the other hand, Girdhari Tikku perceives an evolution of attitude between the two volumes:

> I see her first book, The Prisoner, as a symbol of the 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. The second, The Wall, seems to be the situation of a mind which has tried to break through the traditional restrictions, and yet found himself (sic) in an alienated world, surrounded by a wall, where communication does not become possible simply by the dropping of traditional restrictions.10

If the distinctive features of The Captive are the poet's pervasive sense of guilt, alienation, and despair, what emerges in The Wall is a strong sense of defiance and rebellion. The opening poem sets the tone in a manner designed, it seems deliberately, to shock the crude and perverse sensibilities of traditional and male-dominated morality:

SIN

I have sinned, a delectable sin
In an embrace which was ardent, like fire
I have sinned in the midst of arms
Which were hot and vengeful, like iron

In that dark and silent private place
I looked to his secret-filled eyes
In my breast my heart trembled anxiously
In desire of his entreating eyes

In that dark and silent private place
I sat, distracted, by his side
His lips poured passion upon mine
I was saved from my mad heart's repine

I whispered the tale of love to his ear:
I want you, O sweetheart of mine
I want you, O life-giving bosom
You, O mad love of mine

Passion kindled flames in his eyes
The red wine danced in the glass
In the soft bed, against his chest
My body trembled with drunkenness

I have sinned, a delectable sin
Beside a body, trembling and dazed
O God, how can I know what I did
In that dark and silent private place? [11]

Hillman maintains that the above poem is an honest expression of real passion and that there is nothing sinful about the kind of vital encounter portrayed in it. But by using the term "sin", Farrukhzād intends to show the irony of the situation whereby this sort of natural sexuality is considered sinful in Iranian society, particularly considering that the poem depicts the reversal of male-female roles. According to Hillman's interpretation of the poem, the female speaker of the poem is the lover and the

male, the beloved. He interprets this image as constituting a dramatic challenge to the masculine domination of Iranian society.[12]

Hillman's interpretation of sexuality in Farrukhzād's poetry may be compared to that of Shujāᶜ al-dīn Shafā, who, in the introduction to The Captive, passes an almost Majlisian indictment on her poetry by stating that it appeals more to the senses than to the intellect and that Furūgh seeks sensuality and turmoil more than happiness. He further goes on to say that since we are all sinners, we as readers must refrain from judging her morally.[13]

It would perhaps not be wrong to say that by employing the symbol of sexuality, Furūgh was retaliating against the unreasonable double moral standards of traditional society. Sexuality was a symbol of her rejection of the outward forms of traditional social rules and regulations. In adopting sexuality as a symbol of rejection, she also declares it as the symbol of change and transformation, since she is making an individual moral decision. 'The Sin', at the same time, may be interpreted as an assertion of and a re-affirmation of life; a resurrection of female sexuality that had for centuries been repressed. The archetypal female instinct dammed up in the name of religion for centuries, bursts forth in Furūgh's poetry like a phoenix amidst the ashes of medieval bigotry. With the shattering of traditional mores, love ceases to be either sacred or profane, as G.Tikku points out, it merely becomes an escape route from her prison. We catch a glimpse of the

invigorating and life-affirming aspects of love and sexuality in The Captive, though without the bitterness and despair which characterizes many poems in this volume:

ON LOVING

Tonight from the sky of your eyes
stars pour on my poem.
On the silence of white papers
my claws plant sparks.

My crazy feverish poem,
bashful of the furrows of desires,
once again burns its body -
in its eternal thirst for fire.

Yes, this is the beginning of love.
Though the path's end is not in sight
I no longer think about the end,
for 'loving' itself is beautiful.

Why refrain from darkness
when the night is full of diamond drops?
That what survives from the night
is the intoxicating jasmine fragrance.

Ah, let me be lost in you!
let none find a trace of me in me!
May the burning soul of your moist sigh
blow on the body of my song.

Ah! let me through this open window,
hidden in the silk covering of dreams,
journey with the wings of light,
cross the fences of worlds.

Know you what I want from life?
'I' be 'you'; 'you', head to foot, 'you'.
Should life repeat a thousand times
'you' again, 'you' again.

That hidden ocean existing in me
I have no power to hide.
Of this dreadful storm
I wish I can speak to you.

I am replete with your love and want
to run into the deserts;
to smash my head against mountain rocks;
to beat my body against ocean waves.

I am replete with your love and want
like dust to fall in pieces;
to lay my head in peace at your feet;
to hang to you like your shadow.

Yes, this is the beginning of love.
Though the path's end is not in sight
I no longer think about the end,
for 'loving' itself is beautiful.[14]

G.Tikku views this poem as a desire to give positive direction to the tremendous energy of the irrational that Furūgh discovered in herself.[15] Nonetheless, the poem, in its positive and life-affirming aspects, lacks the inner tension of the struggle with the irrational, which is found in the final poem of The Wall, entitled 'The World of Shadows'. This poem gives expression to the pull of the contradictions within herself and her desperate attempt to preserve a sense of unity and integration of being:

THE WORLD OF SHADOWS

At night on the damp road
our shadows seem to flee from us
far from us down
the slope of the road
into the ominous haze of the fading moonlight
cold and heavy above the vine branches
they softly move toward each other.

At night on the damp road
in the silence of the aromatic earth
sometimes they cling impatiently to each other
our shadows. . .
just like flowers intoxicated with the wine
of last night's dew
as though in their bitter separation from us
they eagerly murmur melodies
which we force angrily back into the silence of
our breasts.

But,
far from the shadows,
unaware of tales of their attachments,
their separations,
their unions,
our weary bodies in their stagnant standstill give
shape to life.

At night on the damp road
how often have I said to myself
does life within our shadows assume colors, or
are we ourselves the shadows of our shadows?

O you thousands of wandering spirits,
sliding about me on the waves of darkness
where is my shadow?
"The light of terror gleams in the crystal of
my silent cry."
where is my shadow?
where is my shadow?

I don't want
for a moment to separate my shadow from myself
I don't want
her to slip far from me on the paths, or
fall heavy and weary under the feet of passers-
by.
Why must she in her searching confront the lips of closed
doors?
Why must she rub her body against the door and wall of
every house?
Why must she travel hopelessly in a cold and alien land?
O. . . O sun
why do you keep my shadow at a distance from me?
I ask you:

Is darkness pain or pleasure?
Is a body a prison or a field of freedom?
What is the darkness of night?
Night is the shadow of whose black spirit?

What does the sun say?
What does the sun say?
Weary
Bewildered
Astonished
I race down the road of endless questions.16

This poem poses several questions about the nature of appearance and reality. The world of shadows may be interpreted as a symbol of the subconscious world. The first verse implies that the poet seems to imagine the subconscious world or the dream world as having an almost independent existence. Shadows which are very much part of individuals are lost as a result of the fear of the individuals to come to terms with the irrational. In the refusal to face the other side of life, the shadows become the lost lives of people who become 'weary', and 'stagnant'. In her desire not to be lost from her shadow, the poet seems to make an attempt to confront and overcome the subconscious, to harness it rather than let it assume an independent existence of its own. In her effort to retain integration of being, Farrukhzād finally turns to the sun for an answer but in her bewilderment she does not hear its reply nor see its light. G.Tikku's comment on the above poem is as follows:

> Furūgh therefore gives identity to the shadow, which at a different level is also symbolic of evil - the shadow of virtue. From a different dimension shadow becomes a transient life, the

> sensual temptations, which must perish in the light of eternal and real life. Yet it is a means for and a reflection of the real. In this sense Furūgh goes back to Hafiz's concept of merging the sacred with the profane.17

'The World of Shadows' is by far the most sophisticated of Farrukhzād's early poems. Its importance lies in that it marks a clear break with her pre-occupation hitherto with questions and problems connected with her personal relationships and embarks boldly upon the exploration of philosophical and existential issues. The poet has at last emerged from her cage and flown into a world of poetic freedom where she can sing without restriction or hindrance of any kind. The newly-found freedom is also reflected in the abandonment of the traditional poetic form for one which is free, innovative, modern and at the same time technically controlled and accomplished. It is in this poem that Furūgh demonstrated her potential and promise as a major poet of her time.

Yet, in spite of the technical breakthrough and her release from the imprisonment of an unhappy marriage, the poet remains very much a prisoner of 'the world of shadows', of the dark subconscious forces of loneliness and despair, and of the external social forces which continue to deny her individual identity and freedom as a woman. It is to challenge these forces that she turns to her poetic powers in her next volume of poetry.

'The Revolt' (1957)[18]

The third volume of Farrukhzād's poems, entitled The Revolt is a logical development of The Wall, in the sense that her earlier attitude of alienation and despair are now extended to open hostility and defiance towards the forces which oppress her. Unlike the poems in The Wall, where her feelings of anguish and resentment are largely internalized, the poems in The Revolt are, generally speaking, directed externally against society and its institutionalized forms of oppression. Farrukhzād's rebellion is targeted particularly against the hypocrisy and obscurantism of the religious establishment. In this relation, she questions fundamental religious assumptions and rejects the notion of an authoritarian God. This shift in perspective between the two volumes of poems is a reflection of the inner transformation within the poet, arising from a deeper awareness of herself as an individual and a clearer perception of her place in society and the cosmos.

The poem entitled 'Slavery' is perhaps the most important one in the volume because it traces the development of Farrukhzād's metaphysical revolt in a controlled and accomplished manner.[19] It is a vivid expression of Farrukhzād's awareness that as a woman in a divinely sanctioned scheme of things, she is as much a prisoner of God as of the society. She consequently places the responsibility for her condition squarely upon God, who is conceived by her

in terms of an all-powerful, cruel and tyrannical being, who drags helpless human beings down "life's tortuous path" to their doom and destruction. Paradoxically, however, by the very act of her protest, Furūgh seeks to communicate with Him and, therefore, technically speaking, her anguished cry becomes a prayer and a plea to be released from the inexorable chains of a meaningless existence.

The opening verses of the poem create the mood and the setting of the poem. The poet makes clear at the outset the alienated condition of her self and the rebellious state of her mind. She is determined to tell God her "dark dismal story" and to interrogate Him about the absurdity of creation:

> On my lips a mysterious question casts a shade,
> In my heart lies a restless and life-burning pain,
> The bewildered secret of this rebellious soul
> I want to set forth with you today.
>
> From the threshold you banish me, yet as long
> As I-am here, servant, and you are there, God,
> My dark dismal story shall not be a tale
> In whose end and beginning you are uninvolved.[20]

In the next five verses, Farrukhzād paints the picture of human life as a painful and endless journey in a cold, dark, empty world, seeming to her devoid of purpose and meaning. Her attitude towards God is not one of denial of His existence, whose "unknown mysterious hand" she acknowledges, but of a fevered complaint against the pain and injustices of human life. There is even a suggestion of betrayal in her realization that there was no more the possibility of

"the grace of the One God so dear."

At midnight the cradles rock peacefully,
Unaware of the painful migration of man;
Like a quivering boat in the mouth of a storm
I am drawn by an unknown mysterious hand.

Faces to me very foreign
Houses atop which fall the star's tears,
Fear of prison and the flashing of chains,
Tales of the grace of the one God so dear.

The cold breast of earth and the gravestone,
Every hello a dark shade's address,
Hands empty and there in a distant sky
An ailing and fevered sun's yellowness.

An endless search and a struggle vain,
Road dark and feet weary of the way,
No sign of fire on the summits of Tur,
From behind the closed door no answers conveyed.

Ah. . . does my lamenting reach you?
To break self-worship's cup upon the stone,
Sit with me, me mortal, for a time,
And drink life's pain from the lip of my ode.

Having invited God to listen to her lament, Farrukhzād questions the notion of freewill and determinism by describing her coming to the world as a prisoner from the very moment of conception, a product of "one pleasure-filled night" without having the freedom to choose her parents, her own identity and "a form for myself":

What am I? The child of one pleasure-filled night,
A stranger thrusts me on this way;
Once a body entwined around body,
And will-lessly into this world I came.

When did you free me, so I could choose
A form for myself, with two open eyes? -
To name for mother who I will,
Set foot on the path without captive ties.

I came into life, in your world to be
The issue of two bodies' burning bond;
When had we met before, you and I?
I came into life without "I" having dawned.

Farrukhzād then proceeds to trace the evolution of her relationship with God through the years of childhood and youth. She recalls the religious instruction she received as a child, replacing the songs of her infancy, the first stirrings of thought and imagination and exploration of the world around her. She is continuously in search of knowledge and truth, "breaking the branches of mystery" and tearing from her feet "the chains of dark", until the time ~~she asked~~ herself the all-important ontological question "what am I?"

Days passed and my eyes filled with blackness,
The dark of your foot's long blind nights
Days passed and my ears were filled with your voice
As the song of the lullaby died.

"Childhood" flew off towards different skies,
Like swallows of colored wing;
Of itself, in my mind the seed of thought stirred,
At the door a visitor's unannounced ring.

I ran in the deserts of fancy,
Drunken I sat by the side of springs;
I broke the branches of mystery, but
Each moment a branch from this bush would spring.

My path led to distant fields and plains,
On the tide of my thoughts was I borne;
In the heart of the wandering waves I crept,
From my feet the chains of the dark I tore.

Finally one day I quietly asked:
What am I? From where do I come?
If I am completely the warm light of life,
Which sky of the secret do I radiate from?

This questioning of the origin and meaning of life, led the poet (it is not clear at what age but most probably in the later part of her adolescence) to the conclusion that she herself was "nothing, nothing from head to toe", and that the creator of mankind is a cruel and oppressive God, who deceives and punishes them unjustly, dragging them down to the fires of hell, like so many cattle being driven to slaughter:

Fear followed that secretive answer -
I set out on a dark twisted road;
A shadow you cast on that "end," and I knew
I am nothing, nothing from head to toe.

A shadow you cast on that "end," and your hand
Held a rope around people's necks ensnared;
You were dragging them down life's tortuous path,
On futility's vision their gaping eyes stared.

You were dragging them down the path, and reciting:
May the fire of hell be the infidels' toll!
Who chooses the devil in place of me,
May the fire of hell burn his soul!

In the final movement of the poem, Farrukhzād takes her complaint to a higher level of sophistication by arguing that the devil himself is created by God, and therefore rejecting the notions of sin and responsibility. If in the poem 'The Sin', male-female relations are inverted, in this poem the functions of God and Satan are reversed, and so is Furūgh's allegiance. It is God who is guilty and Satan who is innocent. This conception of Satan is not uncommon in poetry and is reminiscent of John Milton's view of

Satan in Paradise Lost as well as some Sūfī poets such as Rūmī who maintained Satan's innocence and purity of intention for having refused to bow down to anyone but God.

It was you who created this devil accursed,
Made him a rebel and towards us him drove;
It was you, it was you, who from the one flame
This demon created and set on the road.

As soon as our eyes met the eyes of life
We met up with sin, this ambiguous name;
Sin you created, it moved of itself,
Rushed in upon us, and sin we became.

Would we, were you and your kindness with us,
Leaning or love for the devil know?
Would sign or sound of his footstep still be
In this teaming and raging rebel soul?

You steadily draw us into the grave
So you can say, "Thus I can tread;"
And so that we will be but the stage of your power
You're the cold iron sledge on our head.

The above poem makes it clear as to why Furūgh and her poetry invited so much criticism and hostility from the more traditional and conservative sectors of Iranian society. The explicit treatment of sexual themes in her earlier poems, followed by her outspoken rejection of the notion of a just and caring God in her subsequent poems, could not but have elicited the censure of many critics. What is unusual, however, is Farrukhzād's utter frankness and courage in an environment in which the forces of tradition were deeply entrenched and powerful enough to bring down the government. It is important to note in this context that Furūgh was not the first Persian poet

to sound such a note of radical religious dissent; in fact, she acknowledges her debt to the most famous poet of philosophical scepticism in Persian literature by prefacing her poem with a quotation from Umar Khayyām:

> Into existence, helpless, first He fostered me
> Adding nothing but at my life my great perplexity.
> Reluctantly we've left, and never do we see
> In this coming, living and leaving, what purpose there might be.[21]

According to Girdhari Tikku, the poems in The Revolt, though still charged with passion, bear a seal of maturity which comes from the acceptance of the human condition.[22] Furūgh has certainly come a far way from The Captive, where in the poem 'Face to Face with God,' she entreats God to save her from sin and corruption. In The Wall, sin becomes externalized into shadows and in The Revolt, God becomes the source of shadows. The 'externalization' process of sin is complete, and with it there is also a process of self-discovery. In the first volume, the poet experiences conflict through internalized social values of femininity; in the second volume, she ignores them by acknowledging their relativity; and in the third volume, she attempts to come to terms with universal contradictions of existence. Furthermore, by addressing God as her equal, Furūgh introduces the mystical element of the informal address in Persian poetry where God is the 'Friend.' Her desire and search for a fuller selfhood is inextricable from her

desire to have a better relation with God. The hunter-hunted relation is as despairing with God as it is with man. However, she stops short of the Sufi formula of 'I am You,' but laments about 'You are too much I' and wants to be just 'I'. It is interesting to note that the mystical alternative of 'I am You' was no longer the only alternative open to overcome the over-socialized self, but there was an added secular alternative of 'I am I.' [23]

Another important poem of the third volume is entitled 'A Poem for You' addressed to her son whom she was forbidden to see. Here she is painfully aware of being a stigmatized woman and of the denial of her rights as a mother. She admits that her poetry is concerned with protest - a deep-rooted protest. She also refers to social hypocrisy, and the reference to the "ascétic and sanctimonious group in the devil's nest" can be viewed as a reference to the clergy. The comparison of the "colourless, scentless and dry desert bramble" with the aesthetic "tuberose" appears to be a reference to the pleasure anxiety of the clerical religion as opposed to music and other such pleasures of human life:

A POEM FOR YOU

I write this poem for you
On a thirsty summer's eve,
Halfway on this ill-starred road,
In the old grave of this endless grief

This is the final lullaby
At the foot of your cradle of sleep
The wild hue of this cry perhaps
Through the sky of your youth will sweep

Let the shadow of me, the wanderer,
Be separate and from yours far
If one day we are joined again
No one but God shall stand us apart

Against a darkened door I've leaned
My brow with pain compressed;
Over this open door I run
My cold, thin fingers in hopefulness

I was the one branded with shame
Who laughed at vain taunts and cried:
"Let me be the voice of my own existence!"
But alas, a "woman" was I

When o'er this confused and beginningless book
Your innocent eyes are drawn,
You will see the rooted rebellion of years
Has bloomed in the heart of every song

Here, the stars are extinguished
Here, the angels all weep
Here, the blossoms of tuberoses
Less price than desert brambles reap

Here at every road's end there sits
The demon of shame and hypocrisy
The aurora of morning's awakening
In the darksome sky I do not see

Let once more my eyes be filled
And brimming with drops of dew;
I've so lost self, I cast the veil
From Madonnas' faces, pure of hue

I am torn from the shore of good repute
There shines in my breast the tempest's star
The range of flight for my anger's flame
Is alas, the space of this prison dark

Against a darkened door I've leaned
My brow with pain compressed;
Over this open door I run
My cold, thin fingers in hopefulness

This ascetic and sanctimonious group
Is not easy, I know, to contest;
Your city and mine, my dear sweet child,
Has long been the devil's nest

The day will come when ruefully
Your eyes o'er this pained song will play;
In my words you'll search for me
And inwardly "She was my mother" say[24]

Despite the bleak and pessimistic mood of the poems in The Revolt, the book ends on a hopeful note with the poem entitled 'Life,' which is a re-affirmation of life and an acknowledgement that it is the other face of death:

I regret all those days of my anger
when I was an enemy to you,
and believed your call to be pointless
and paid you no heed, and wasted you

And forgot that you are what endures
while I am running water that moves on
Lost in the evil dust that must fail,
death's dark track is what I walk upon

Ah, o life, I am a looking-glass
You are what fills my eyes with sight
But if death should gaze in me
the face in my glass turns night

I'm in love, in love with the morning star
in love with the clouds floating past
in love with rainfilled days
in love with everything in which your name's broadcast

With my thirsty being I drink
from every incarnation of your fiery blood,
and so deeply take my pleasure from you
that I call down the wrath of your God![25]

If Farrukhzād starts her 'revolt' by rejecting an authoritarian God, she ends it by an intense

affirmation of life. What she rejects in reality is a repressive interpretation of religion which stifles the inherent possibilities of human growth, particularly of the female sex. In her rejection of the outward and institutionalized forms of religion and her celebration of the beauty and wonder of the natural world, there is the possibility of rebirth, and perchance - had Farrukhzād lived longer to realize it - even the possibility of a reconciliation with the Creator of the world.

Footnotes

1. Mehri Bharier, "Forugh Farrokhzad: Persian Poetess and Feminist," (M.Litt thesis, University of Durham, 1978), p.18. The biographical details of Furūgh's life in this chapter, have been cited from M. Bharier.

2. Ibid., p.37.

3. Translated by Mehri Bharier, ibid., pp.39-41.

4. Translated by H.Javadi and S.Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.9.

5. Michael Hillman, "Furugh Farrukhzad: Modern Iranian Poet," in Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak, ed. B.Bezirgan and E.Fernea (Austin : University of Texas, 1977),p.296.

6. Ibid.

7. Translated by M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," pp.119-121.

8. Translated by Jascha Kessler with Amin Banani, in Bride of Acacias: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (New York : Caravan Books, 1982), p.126.

9. Farzaneh Milani,"Forugh Farrokhzad. . . ," p.145.

10. Girdhari Tikku, "Furūgh-i Farrukhzād: A New Direction in Persian Poetry," Studia Islamica 26 (1967) : 153.

11. Translated by H.Javadi and S.Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.11.

12. Michael Hillman, "Sexuality in the Verse of Forugh Farrokhzad and the Structuralist View," Edebiyat 111/2 (1978) : 195.

13. Quoted by G.Tikku, " A New Direction. . . ," p.155.

14. Translated by G.Tikku, ibid., p.157.

15. Ibid., p.167.

16. Translated by Michael Hillman, "Modern Iranian Poet. . . ," pp.298-299.

17. G.Tikku, "A New Direction. . . , " p.169.

18. ʿIsyan has been translated as The Revolt as well as Rebellion.

19. The metaphysical nature of Furūgh's rebellion is best understood in the context of Albert Camus' work, The Rebel, where he defines metaphysical rebellion as a means of protest against the absurd, irrational and unjust nature of the human condition and the whole of creation. According to Camus, an act or rebellion is a demand for clarity and unity in a world of disorder and, therefore, paradoxically, the most elementary form of metaphysical rebellion, while negating existing values, expresses an aspiration to order. See Albert Camus, The Rebel, tr. Anthony Bower (Harmondsworth : Hamish Hamilton, 1953), p.29.

20. The poem 'Slavery' which is also translated as 'Servitude I' is cited from H.Javadi and S.Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.22-25.

21. Ibid., p.22.

22. G.Tikku, "A New Direction. . . ," p.170.

23. Franz Rosenthal views the "I am You" of the Sūfīs as a form of rebellion in society-centred Islam. He views it as a means of individual assertion as opposed to social conformism; as an attempt on the part of individuals to come to terms with over-socialization. See Franz Rosenthal,"'I am You' - Individual Piety and Society in Islam," in Individualism and Conformity in Classical Islam, ed. A. Banani and S.Vryonis, Jr. (Wiesbaden : Harrosowitz, 1977), pp.32-60.

24. Translated by H.Javadi and S. Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp. 15-16.

25. Translated by J.Kessler with A.Banani, Bride of Acacias. . . , p.136.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANOTHER BIRTH

It was noted in the previous chapter that Farrukhzād attained a symbolic reversal of the male/female roles in the social order and the good/evil roles in the cosmic order. Her rebellion as a woman thus assumed the character of a metaphysical rebellion, and sexuality became a medium through which the rebellion was symbolically expressed. Thereafter, glimpses of the sun emerge on the horizon of her later poetry which appeared in Another Birth and a posthumous volume of poems. The poems quoted in the first chapter, which appeared in these two volumes, indicate that the symbols of chaos, darkness, death and decay do not disappear from her later poetry. However, there is a significant change in the locus of the chaos from the individual to the social, implying that the chaos within is a result and a reflection of the chaos without. With this awareness, Farrukhzād comes to terms with herself and attains a kind of 'self-integration' which she terms 'Another Birth' or 'Rebirth.'

Another Birth was published four to five years after The Revolt. It signifies a re-affirmation of life and at the same time an acceptance of death and decay. Flashes of life emerge and co-exist with death in the

poems of this volume; to her the world appears as an embodiment of both 'eros' and 'thanatos.' This chapter will deal with Farrukhzād's attempt at a 'rebirth' through her re-affirmation of life and acceptance of death at three inter-related levels - the individual, the social and the universal. The 'rebirth' is inevitably painful and traumatic, but not without intimations of hope, love and union, almost of a mystical kind. It would not be wrong perhaps to suggest that she attains a kind of '<u>fanā</u>'' by overcoming her prior self and transcending to a new plane of personal and social awareness: Her own critical self-evaluation of the earlier poems testifies to this transformation:

> I don't know if these were poems or not. I only know that there were many "I's" in those days, and they were all sincere. And I know that they were all very easy. I was not formed yet. I had not found my own language, my own form and intellectual world. I was in the small and narrow environment called 'family life.' Then suddenly I was emptied of all those things. I changed my surroundings; that is they changed naturally and by themselves. <u>The Wall</u> and <u>Rebellion</u> are in fact a kind of despairing struggle between two stages of(my)release. The latter is the gasps of breath before a kind of release.1

In <u>Another Birth</u>, Furūgh becomes conscious of social forces as the source of her conflicts. She thus decides to break out of and empty herself of the traditional space of 'family life' in order to

attain self-realization through self-expression on a broader scale. In the process of breaking out of confined space, she fills herself up with external and natural forces, she finds a renewed relation with nature and close identification with humanity, and she begins to see herself as part of a larger whole:

> I think a person involved in artistic work must first of all create and perfect himself, then emerge from himself and look at himself as one unit of being and existence. so that he can give all his perceptions, thoughts and feelings the tenor of universality.2

Consequently, the poems in Another Birth are full of enormous spatial movements, movements of negation and affirmation; sometimes the depths of disintegration and sometimes the height of resurrection. These poems testify to the enormous distance that Furūgh attained from her previous self and the inner growth that elevated her stature to that of one of the leading poets of her time. This is very appropriately captured in the sketch on the cover of the English version of Another Birth translated by H.Javadi and S. Sallee. The illustration depicts Furūgh standing by the foot of a grave, yet significantly looking away from it. In the background, the trees growing from the graveyard are transformed into the figure of a mountainous woman who dwarfs the figure of the

woman in the foreground and looks to the distant horizon which she can now see from her elevated position of oneness with the mountain. She is depicted in the sketch as being born anew, having erupted like a volcano from within the landscape. In contrast to this illustration, her dual or split personality is well expressed in the cover designs of the Persian editions of the volumes of poetry, where only half of her countenance appears on the front and the back covers. These two halves appear to be symbolically separated by the poems in between. The format of the books suggests that the poems are like an umbilical chord, nourishing her growth from her previous incomplete self to the authentic other.

There is a consensus amongst critics of modern Persian literature that with the publication of Another Birth, Farrukhzād attained her own independent and characteristic stylistic maturity and became recognized as one of the leading poets of the country. A detailed study of her poetic form appears in Mehri Bharier's thesis where Farrukhzād is classified according to Muhammad Huqūqī's categories of modern poets.[3] However, Furūgh herself maintained that the content of poetry was more important for her than the form. "The thing that is set forth in a poem is not its form and structure, it is its content, and if the content is such that I, in my own age, feel I can relate to it, then based on this it is one-hundred percent poetry."[4] Elsewhere she asserted:

"In my opinion the time has now passed of sacrificing meaning for the sake of paying homage to the meter."[5]

Poetry, according to Farrukhzād, should be an articulation of human problems and a reflection of life, and it therefore ought to embrace the characteristics of its time. Accordingly, one of her favourite poems was Shāmlū's 'Poetry that is Life.'[6] Farrukhzād did not consider poetic form unimportant, but she felt strongly that it should be determined by the content. Ardavan Davaran observes that the most distinctive feature of modern Persian poetry, that of flexible rhyming patterns within a given poem, is missing for the most part from the first three volumes, which he considers on the whole to be stylistically mediocre.[7] Baraheni also maintains that Furūgh's poetry is one of content more than of form, particularly of feminine content.[8] The controversy that her early poems provoked was no doubt due to the content of her poems, that is the presence of the feminine expression of love and sexuality already dealt with in Chapter Three. In Another Birth, the controversial content does not disappear but merges with a broader social dimension.

The broadening of themes is accompanied by a breakthrough in form and style. Bharier observes that Farrukhzād used both the traditional as well as the modern poetic forms effectively in Another Birth.[9] Massud Farzan remarks that, "In Forugh's poetry, the simplicity of language is not a device, but the

inevitable expression of a mind that has consciously thrown away the embellishments of adult fronts and fantasies."[10] To Kadkanī, on the other hand, the decisive and distinctive characteristics of Furūgh's poetry are her way of presenting images that vividly and exactly portray the abstract view of the poet and a combination of simplicity and conversational informality.[11]

An Individual Amidst the Fragments of the Self

In Another Birth and in Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season (Posthumous Poems), amidst Farrukhzād's fragmentary reflections on the self, various stages of her life can be clearly delineated. Another Birth begins with a poem entitled 'Those Days' which is a reminescence of childhood in what Massud Farzan refers to as disjointed cinematographic images.[12] According to Bharier, some parts of the poem reflect the limited life led by girls in Tehran.[13] In 'Those Days,' the poet identifies childhood and puberty with natural exhuberance, and expresses nostalgia for the early years of her life when the imagination was unfettered:

It was as though, within the pupil of my eyes,
there lived a restless rabbit of joy
who every morning, with the ancient sun,
would go in search of unknown fields,
and disappear each night into the woods of darkness.[14]

The above lines convey the free adventurous spirit of childhood. Similarly, in subsequent verses of the poem, she describes her growing-up and awakening to puberty as a process of joyful discovery of herself and the world around her. In the last stanza, however, the innocence of puberty is suddenly uprooted and everything comes to an end as she looks back upon her past:

Those days are gone
Those days like plants rotting in the sun,
rotting from the burning of the sun.
Lost are those alleys giddy with acacia's perfume
lost in the clamouring crowds of one-way streets
And the girl who used to colour her cheeks
with the petals of geraniums-ah,
now is a lonely woman,
now is a lonely woman.

Furūgh's comments on her own adolescence and youth were as follows:

> I feel that I've lost my life, and I know less than I should know at the age of twenty-seven. Perhaps the reason is that I have never had a clear life. That ridiculous love and marriage at sixteen have shaken the foundations of my future life.
> I have never had a guide in life. No one has educated me intellectually and spiritually. Whatever I have, I have from myself, and whatever I don't have are those things which I could have had, but which I was barred from attaining by lack of self-understanding, by going astray, and by the impasses of life. I want to begin. My wrong-doings are not for the sake of wrong-doing. They are due to a strong feeling against futile acts of goodness.15

In many of Farrukhzād's poems, adolescence and youth are identified with death. Below are some verses which identify adolescence and youth with death, in contrast to childhood which is identified with a life of wonder and innocence. According to Bharier, the last stanza quoted below reflects the restrictive atmosphere of Furūgh's home and her belief that the beginning of the schooling process was the first step in her loss of innocence.[16]

O age of seven
O moment of wonder at departure
After you, whatever has gone, has gone
in a throng of madness and ignorance

After you, the window which had been
a luminous and fully living connection
between us and the bird
between us and the breeze
broke
broke
broke
After you, that clay doll
which said nothing, nothing but water, water
was in the water drowned.

After you, we killed the sound of the crickets
and fastened our hearts to the sound of bells
which rose from the letters of the alphabet
and to the sound of the factory whistles.

After you, our playground was beneath the table,
from beneath the tables
to behind desks
and from behind desks
we reached the table tops
and we played upon the tables.
and we lost, we lost your color, O age of seven.[17]

With reference to the overwhelming presence of death in her poetry in general and with particular reference to the poem entitled 'Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season,' Bharier suggests that Furūgh's sudden death may have been an outcome of a deathwish and, therefore, perhaps a pre-meditated suicide.[18] Eliz Sanasarian poses a few questions in relation to the proneness of present day Iranian Mujāhidīn women to self-sacrifice and their readiness to embrace death:

> Indeed there is a need for a comprehensive study of why these women long for death. Is it a way to express their personal discontent with life? Is the glorification of death a cultural trait? Does it stem from the teachings and socialization of Islam? Does the women's youth make them vulnerable to martyrdom?[19]

Although Furūgh was neither a martyr nor a mujāhīd, nor is there any conclusive proof that she entertained a deathwish, Sanasarian's questions are pertinent in relation to the overwhelming presence of death in her poetry. Many poems in Another Birth indicate that Furūgh seems to connect death with the socialization process of traditional inhibitions which she encountered as a woman in Iran, implying that it is a negation of the female personality. In breaking away from traditional inhibitions, Furūgh discovered life anew in terms of personal fulfilment in a healthy inter-personal male/female relationship which fell outside the traditional confines. However, at a deeper level,

she also identified the process of modernization with death. While tradition represses natural spontaneity in the individual woman, modernity conquers nature and human beings as well, since it leads to mechanization of life and alienation of man from nature. Whilst tradition confines women to timelessness, modernity objectifies them and confines human beings as a whole to loneliness. Tradition is death at the individual level, while modernity is death at the social level. At times Farrukhzād's attitude towards modern society and her moods of despair are very similar to those of the existentialists. Her attitude towards modernity, however, is as ambivalent as that of other Iranian intellectuals. Like them, she seems to espouse modernity on the one hand and at the same time to reject it. In fact, in her volume of posthumous poems, these two attitudes are sometimes fused together.

Two metaphors which are recurrent throughout her later poems and which are interestingly and significantly linked with childhood are the 'window' and 'connection.' The window is the connecting link between herself and nature, an opening through which to see the outside world and thereby escape from the confines of her childhood. The end of childhood is identified with the shattering of this 'luminous connection.' It is this window of awareness that Furūgh desires in many of the poems she composed in her later period. In fact, one of her later poems is entitled 'Window' :

A window for seeing
A window for hearing
A window which like the shaft of a well

extends in its depths to the heart of the earth
and opens towards the expanse of this blue and recurring
kindness.
A window which fills the little hands of loneliness
with the nocturnal gift of the generous stars' perfume
From there one can invite the sun
to the estranged geraniums
One window is enough for me [20]

The 'luminous connection' is first disconnected by schooling and then by the onset of puberty and youth as described in the following verses from 'Window.' These verses evoke a general atmosphere of oppression, cruelty, barrenness, unhealthiness and artificiality in which Furūgh grew up; it is an atmosphere in which the innocence of childhood is crucified and the dreams and aspirations of youth are reduced to dust:

I come from the land of dolls
from beneath the shadows of paper trees
in a picture-book garden,
from the dry seasons of barren encounters with friendship
and love
in the dusty streets of innocence,
from years of learning the pallid letters of the alphabet
behind the desks of consumptive schools,
from the moment when the children could spell
the word "stone" upon the board
and the starlings flurried off headlong from the aged tree

I come from amongst the roots of carnivorous plants
and my mind, still,
is brimming with the terrified cry of a butterfly
that they crucified
in a notebook with a pin

When my confidence was dangling from the feeble
rope of justice
and all through the city
they shattered the hearts of my lamps
When they bound the childish eyes of my love
with the dark handkerchief of the law,

and streams of blood spurted forth
from the tremulous temples of my desire
When my life was nothing anymore,
nothing but the tick-tock of a clock on the wall
I realized I must
I must
I must
. . . love madly

A window is enough for me,
a window for a moment of awareness, and seeing, and silence
. . .

In the verses quoted above, the window becomes the link between Furūgh and the world outside; as well as a link between the past and the present. She protests against a sterile and cruel world, which is full of "barren encounters," the pain and agonies of sudden death, and where love is blinded by "the dark handkerchief of the law". The 'window' of the poem thus becomes her refuge, her sanctuary, her 'female space' (discussed in Chapter Two), where she has the opportunity for hearing, seeing, awareness and silence. There is a desperate desire to escape from this world through love, for she realizes that only through love can she hope to overcome and transcend life's harsh realities.

Another interesting glimpse into Farrukhzād's adolescence and youth is afforded by the poem 'Friday' which formspart of Another Birth. In this poem, the process of death and decay is expressed in terms of time and space, Friday being for her a fruitless and lifeless period of the week, and her house is like a tomb in which she is confined, where even the light of the sun does not penetrate:

FRIDAY

Friday of silence
Friday, deserted
Friday like old, sorrowful streets
Friday of sick, languid thoughts
Friday of long, noxious yawns
Friday without expectation
Friday of resignation

Empty house
Depressing house
House with doors barred to the onrush of youth
House of darkness and dreams of the sun
House of solitude, divination,and doubt
House of closets, curtains, pictures, and books

* *

Ah, how proudly and quietly it passed!
My life, a strange stream
in the heart of these silent, deserted Fridays
in the heart of these houses, depressing and empty,
Ah, how proudly and quietly it passed. . . 21

Michael Hillman observes that the poem 'Friday' is a bitter-sweet nostalgic recollection of an Iranian girl's youth in the pre-revolutionary period:

> . . . one begins to see the poem as a characterization of an Iranian girl's adolescence, a period of time where society stifles feminine sexuality so that a girl will remain a virgin until marriage. In Iran, Friday is the weekly day off, the sabbath, a day (in post-Mosaddeq, pre-Khomeini Iran) of window-shopping, visits to friends and relatives, and picnics, except for the unchaperoned teenage girl. For her it can be desolate, full of daydreams only, as she has to stay at home with doors physically shut against "the onslaught of youth" and youthful sexuality outside. 22

Perhaps in no other poem is the theme of death and decay explored with such obsessive single-mindedness than in the poem entitled 'The Lagoon'. This poem is also remarkable for its dream-like, surrealistic and almost nightmarish quality, which defies analysis and explanation. At the same time, it demonstrates the poet's ability to fuse diverse thoughts and images into an integrated poetic unity. 'The Lagoon' is comparable to some of the finest symbolic poetry in Western literature and is illustrative of the emerging poetic and technical maturity of Farrukhzād in the poems she wrote shortly before her untimely death.

The title of the poem calls for a brief explanation. The translation of the Persian 'Murdāb' as 'Lagoon' does not convey the connotations of the original which is actually a compound word consisting of two words, 'murd' and 'āb', literally meaning still water. However, Furūgh uses the term to mean dead water; it is an enclosed pool of stagnant water with no water coming in, nor any water flowing out; a swamp characterized by disease, corruption and the stench of death and decay. These connotations conveyed by the title are identified in the early part of the poem with the person of a woman, part of whom is already dead and the other part engaged in a desperate struggle to stay alive. The term 'Murdāb' may therefore, be interpreted as a symbol of the poet's own mortal struggle with the forces of life and death:

The night went black and grew diseased
Insomnia took over, the eyes were seized

The eyes, alas, that never cease to see
That know, alas, no other way to be

He came to me and found a field of death
Found me waiting, an old and longheld breath

He saw that wasteland and my isolation
And my moon of cardboard, my cardboard sun

An aged fetus struggling with the womb
Its nails clawing at the walls of its womb

Alive, yet yearning to be born from her
Dead, the deathwish living still in her[23]

The dream-like setting of the poem is established at the very onset of the poem, with the subject caught in the twilight zone between sleep and wakefulness, fighting to extricate herself from a womb and yet longing to be born dead. The last two verses may be regarded as an expression of the agonising conflict of a woman in the situation of 'not-yet and never-more'.[24] That the conflict is connected with traditionally defined inhibitions pertaining to female sexuality and the resulting consequences is apparent in the following lines:

Selfish with the pain of the self-denier
Worn out struggling against sleep's barrier

My laughter saddened by futility
My shame at such a futile chastity

Exiled because I gave my heart to love
Death's strong passions embracing my love

I never quit my roof to claim my right
And watched my execution from that height

An earthworm burrowing in musty ground
Her kites in purest heaven sailing round

Half of her secret, from herself hidden
And ashamed of his face, simply human

Yet addicted to the scent of her mate
From street to street she runs, hunting her mate

Sometimes finding him, but doubting it's he
Her mate, someone lonelier yet than she

Both trembling and fearful of each other
Ungrateful, bittertongued to each other

Their love a madness that must be condemned
Their union a suspect dream that must end

The poem then takes a turn whereby the deathwish is replaced by a lust for life, a desire to flow like a rivulet, which is portrayed in vigorous, sexual terms, a rivulet where each bubble or droplet of water reflects the light of the sun. The flowing river is a contrast to the stagnant water of the swamp. The reference to the deer may be interpreted as representing innocence, or perhaps childhood or freedom, standing at the threshold of the two possibilities offered by youth - the "sleep of the sleepless one" or the "unexhausted image of the sun".

O if my path to the sea might be found
I'd never be fearful that I'd be drowned

When the lagoon's water has lost its flow
It goes stale, stagnating and sinking low

Its soul becomes the empire of decay
Its depths a tomb where fish decay

Deer, O deer browsing free in the field
If, near crossroads that wildflowers conceal

You sometimes find a singing rivulet
That meanders towards the sea's violet

She's riding the chariot of her flood
She's flowing like silk on the moving flood

Fingers laced in the mane of the wind's horse
The red soul of the moon trailing her course

Parting grassy green thighs in acquiscence
Stealing from bushes their virgin fragrance

Overhead, as in each bubble's reflection
The unexhausted image of the sun

Remember that sleep of the sleepless one
Remember that dying in the lagoon.

It seems that the stagnant lagoon and all its connotations of decay and death, represent the ascetic stifling of feminine instincts and hence the suppression of possibilities of love, freedom and happiness. This is then juxtaposed against the free-flowing torrents of human love with its invigorating and liberating power, described in vigorous sexual imagery. The success of this poem lies mainly in the impact of this contrast and in its powerful indictment of the anti-feminine, social and religious forces encountered by Farrukhzād in her own life.

Another poem about the painful awakening to realities is 'The Green Illusion,' which deals with the theme of unfulfilled sexuality, although it is not clear which period of her life the poet is referring to.

However, what is important in the case of this poem is not its biographical context, but the manner in which Furūgh was bold enough to give expression to intimate feminine experience, which few women poets have ever written about with such openness and frankness. Unlike many other poems of Farrukhzād concerning sexuality, this one cannot be regarded as being necessarily culture-specific but as giving voice to a universal aspect of feminine experience:

I wept in the mirror all day long
Spring had entrusted my window
to the green illusion of the trees
My body could not be contained
in the cocoon of my loneliness
and the smell of my paper crown had polluted
the atmosphere of the sunless scene. [25]

The first verse sets the stage for the journey in search for meaning and authenticity. The journey begins with self-examination in the mirror and the realization that spring, the season identified with life, youth and rejuvenation is no more than an illusion. In the process of re-definition, the self is confronted by two spaces, "the green illusion of the trees" and "the cocoon of my loneliness," the former suggesting the youthful promise of fulfilment and the latter indicating the reality of disillusionment and personal inadequacy. The paper crown appears to signify one of the parapharnelia used by an Iranian bride at her wedding:

I could not, I could not any longer-
the sound of the street, the sound of the birds,

the sound of tennis balls being lost,
the fleeing clamour of children,
the dance of kites, like bubbles of soap,
climbing aloft at the tip of a stem of string,
and the wind, the wind, as if panting
at the bottom of love-making's deepest dark moments,
pressed upon the walls
of the silent citadel of my confidence
and through the ancient fissures
called my heart by name

All day long my gaze was fixed
upon the eyes of my life,
upon those anxious fearing eyes
that fled from my steady gaze
and took refuge, like liars,
in the safe retreat of eyelids

The struggle of confronting the self continues and the conflicting situation is portrayed by the 'two' selves, one intently watching the other in the mirror, the other seeking retreat behind the eyelids as if afraid to see. (In Freudian terms, the confrontation perhaps could be seen as one between the super-ego and the id.) The process of self-examination then assumes an interrogative tone, questing the nature of human sexuality. The desire to exchange a rose for the paper crown perhaps signifies the search for a relationship unencumbered by the institution of marriage:

Which summit, which peak?
Do not all these winding roads
reach this junction and then end
in that cold and sucking mouth?
What did you give me, O word beguiling the naive,
O mortification of body and desires?
Would it not have been more enticing
to have fixed a rose upon my hair
than all this falsehood, than this paper crown
that smells upon my head?

How I was taken by the spirit of the wild,
and distanced by the moon's magic from the faith of
the flock!
How great became the incompleteness of my heart,
and how no half ever made this half whole!
How I stood and watched the earth
slackening its ground beneath my feet,
and the warmth of my lover's body
not fulfilling my body's futile hope!

In her despair, the distraught woman at last tears her gaze away from the mirror and looks out upon the world through her window. Her sense of loneliness is intensified by the sight of a world seemingly unaffected by her personal crisis and she longs to be like the "simple, perfect women" who live a toilsome, depressing and superstitious life but apparently do not suffer the despair of unfulfilled sexuality which she feels so profoundly:

Which summit, which peak?
Give me shelter, O perturbed lamps,
O bright and doubt-filled houses
upon whose sunny roofs
clean clothes flutter in the arms of fragrant smoke

Give me shelter, O simple perfect women
whose fine and delicate fingertips
trace rapturous embryonic movements
beneath the skin
from the opening of whose shirts
the smell of fresh milk forever mingles
with the air

Which summit, which peak?
Give me shelter, O hearths full of fire-
O horseshoes of good fortune-
O song of copper pots and pans in the sooty toil of
the kitchen,
O depressing hum of the sewing machine,
O constant contention of carpet and broom
Give me shelter, O greedy loves all

whose nuptial beds are adorned
by the painful desire for existence
with talismanic water
and drops of virginal blood [26]

The poet's sense of despair mounts to a climax in the penultimate verse of the poem in a vivid description of the poet contemplating death by drowning, followed by a realization in the final verse that she had let excessive despair take possession of herself. In spite of the overwhelming pessimistic mood of the poem, it ends on a positive note with the poet walking away from the mirror, rejecting death and affirming life:

All day long, all day long
cast like a corpse on the water, cast,
I moved toward the most frightening rocks,
toward the deepest caverns of the sea,
and the most carnivorous fish,
and the slender vertebrae of my back
stiffened with the sense of death

I could not, I could not any longer-
the sound of my footsteps rose
in denial of the road,
my despair had outstepped the patience of my soul,
and that spring, and that green illusion
which passed by the window, said to me
"Look
You never went forward
You went down."

Unlike 'The Green Illusion', the poem entitled 'The Conquest of the Garden' does not associate love with death and the elements of loneliness, despair and hopelessness are not expressed. As indicated by

the title, 'The Conquest of the Garden' is a manifestation of a more positive and triumphant spirit, a celebration of love which is open, pure and joyous, uncontaminated or in any way diminished by a hostile, corrupting environment. The term 'garden' therefore refers to the primordial garden of Adam and Eve before their expulsion from Eden, whereas, the 'conquest' is the rediscovery of the pristine beauty and purity of the garden by two individuals in intimate physical union. This impression is reinforced by the poem's pantheistic undertones:

THE CONQUEST OF THE GARDEN

The crow that flew
over our heads
and plunged into perturbed thought
    of a passing cloud,
whose cry traversed, like a short spear,
the expanse of the horizon
will carry news of us to the town

* *

Everyone knows
Everyone knows
that you and I saw the garden
from that tiny window, cold and stern
and picked the apple from that branch
frolicking beyond the grasp

Everyone is fearful.
Everyone is fearful, but you and I
joined the water and mirror and light
and did not fear

The talk is not of a loose bond between two names
nor of an embrace in registry's old pages
The talk is of my lucky hair
with the burning peonies of your kiss,

of our candid bodies in playfulness,
the irridescence of our nakedness
like the scales of fish in water
The talk is of the silvery life of a song
that the little fountain sings at dawn.

In that green and rippling forest
we asked one night the wild hares,
in that restless and indifferent sea
we asked the pearl-laden shells,
and on that forlorn, triumphant mountain
we asked the young eagles
what should be done

Everyone knows
Everyone knows
that we've found a way to the cold and silent sleep
of the phoenixes
that we discovered truth in the garden
in the shy glance of a nameless flower
and found existence in one infinite moment
when two suns gazed at one another

The talk is not of a fearful whisper in the dark
The talk is of day and open windows
and fresh air,
of a hearth upon which useless things burn
of a land sown with a different seed
of birth, evolution and pride
The talk is of our loving hands
that over the night have built a bridge
from the message of fragrance, and breezes, and light

Come to the meadow
Come to the great meadow
and call me from behind the breath of the acacia blossoms
just as the deer calls its mate

The curtains are filled with a hidden gloom,
and from the heights of their white towers
innocent doves
cast eyes upon the ground[27].

A. Davaran considers this poem to be a fine example of Furūgh's mature verse and he analyzes it stylistically.[28]

According to him, a metaphorical language takes command at the outset. The crow broadcasts the gossip about the lovers to the world, since a crow is associated in Persian folk-tales with gossip; its sound is like a sharp wounding weapon. Unlike the poem 'Sin', here the act is unspecified but implied by the use of imagery of the garden of Eden and the forbidden fruit in the second verse. Davaran explains the light, water and mirror as images from a Persian wedding symbolizing illumination, purity and good luck which Furūgh uses to sanctify the union of the lovers. In the poem 'Sin', the legal status of the couple is not mentioned, but here, Furūgh takes care to deny that their relation is "a loose bond" and also implications of a formal, legal wedlock. The relation is a matter of real, emotional and sensual union, and not just a feeble joining of names in musty record books.

Davaran interprets the line "what should be done" in the fifth verse as a reference to Lenin's work 'What is to be done', and he maintains that Furūgh directs the question to natural creatures rather than to intellectuals and social philosophers. However, what Furūgh seems to suggest is not merely a rejection of intellectuals and philosophers, but a repudiation of the whole human race with its contrived and coercive social mores in favour of the natural and instinctive world of hares, sea-shells, eagles and phoenixes, in other words, the primordial garden of Eden.

Davaran further considers the phoenixes of the sixth verse to be a reference to the Sihmurgh of ʿAttār, and he maintains that Furūgh's use of the image is intended symbolically to bring the lovers to the level of perfection which the phoenix traditionally represents. This idea is further reinforced by the use of mystical imagery in the four lines immediately following the reference to the phoenixes, in which Furūgh talks about "discovery of truth in the garden," "finding existence in an infinite moment," and of "two suns gazing at one another." At this point, erotic love is sublimated into a moment of truth in a journey back to man's origin, the primordial garden.

It is in the seventh verse that the poet's perspective shifts from the idyllic garden to the social reality, and makes an appeal for "a land sown with a different seed, a land of birth, evolution and pride," which is open, free and joyful, without the "fearful whispers in the dark"; a country in which love is not a furtive thing in the dark of the night, but a bridge built across the night into the light. In the last two conclusive verses, Furūgh returns to the vision of the garden which to her represents the ideal social order. The poem ends with the image of doves, symbols of innocence and freedom, in contrast to the image of the crow, representing social taboos and prohibitions, with which the poem opens. Thus, the captive bird in the corner of the cage in Furūgh's first volume of poetry, The Captive, attains flight in and discovers truth in Another Birth.

The garden from which Adam and Eve were expelled is symbolically conquered and the original fall of man is cancelled out by the discovery of innocence and love.

There are several other poems in Another Birth which celebrate love in erotic and pantheistic and quasi-mystical terms, such as 'Union', 'Lovingly' and 'The Sun Shines'. In these poems Furūgh makes a connection with the sun and is resurrected into new life. From the evidence of 'The Conquest of the Garden' and other poems in Another Birth, it is apparent that the presence of affirmative feminine sexuality and its inevitable identification with rebirth may partly be explained by the fact that in the search for authenticity and identity, Furūgh's femininity becomes a more immediate part of her experience than her religion or nationality.

From the Window to the Street

A distinctive feature of the earlier poetry of Furūgh Farrukhzād is that it is intensely personal. Her earlier volumes of poetry are largely concerned with herself and about herself, and she writes of things other than herself only in so far as they affect her directly as a person. In the poems of The Wall and Rebellion, Furūgh is painfully aware of social conditioning and expresses much hostility and defiance of the society, but she still remains the subject and object of the poems. It seems that she

was unable to change the focus of her poetry from a preoccupation with herself to a more detached and objective examination of the social environment. However, as observed before, the poems in Another Birth demonstrate a considerable shift in focus and increased ability to write about issues other than herself. This indicates a movement from intense self-awareness to greater social consciousness, which may be described in Furūgh's own imagery as a transition from the 'window' to the 'street'.

In connection with the above point, Furūgh made the following observations in an interview given in 1964:

> ". . . I do not condone taking refuge in a room behind closed doors and looking introspectively within (oneself). I say that the abstract world of a man must come as the result of his searching, observation and constant contact with his own world. One must look in order to see and be able to choose. When a person finds his own world amidst people and in the depths of life, then he can always have it with him and be inside it while staying in touch with the outside world. When you go out on to the street and return to your room, the things of the street which relate to your personal existence and your personal world remain in your mind. But if you don't go out into the street, if you confine yourself (in your room) and content yourself with merely thinking of the street, it is not certain whether your thoughts will be in harmony with the realities taking place on the street. Perhaps the sun is shining in the street, and you still think it is dark. Perhaps there is peace and you s still think there is war. This state is a sort of negative withdrawal. It does

> not deliver a person, nor is it constructive. At any rate, poetry comes into being from life. Everything beautiful and everything that can grow is the result of life. One should not run away or negate (life). One must go (into life) and experiment - even the ugliest and most painful moments of life.29

The poems entitled 'Earthly Verses' and 'My Heart Grieves for the Garden', discussed in Chapter One are illustrative of the poet's social criticism expressed in an impersonal and detached style. Another such poem is 'Mechanical Doll', in which Furūgh portrays the absurdity of the lives of women governed by social conditioning. The poem attacks the absurdity and meaninglessness of the role assigned to women in a male-dominated society, and it exposes how women themselves are deluded to accept this role. The alienation of women depicted is not that of the worker from his product in the Marxist sense of the term, but it is the dissolution of the personality in the unquestioned acceptance of outward forms of social behaviour, both religious and secular:

MECHANICAL DOLL

More than all these, ah yes
more than all these, you can keep silent

* *

For long hours you can stare
with a gaze like the gaze of the dead, fixed,
at the smoke of a cigarette
at a colorless flower in the rug
at an imaginary line upon the wall
You can, with withered fingers,
draw aside the curtain and see
a heavy rain falling in the alley
a child with his colorful kites
standing in a doorway

a dilapidated cart clattering off
hastily from the deserted square

You can stay there standing
by the curtain, as if deaf, as if blind

You can cry out
in a voice utterly false and strange
"I love-"
You can, in the over-powering arms of a man
be a wholesome and beautiful female
with a body like chamois spread
with large firm breasts
You can, in the bed of a drunk, a vagrant, a fool
defile the chastity of a love

You can abase with cleverness
any wondrous riddle
You can work alone at a crossword puzzle
You can, alone, please the heart
by discovering a useless answer
a useless answer, yes, five or six letters

You can kneel for a lifetime
with head bowed, at the foot of a cold tomb
You can see God in the grave of one unknown,
find faith in worthless coins
You can rot in the cubicles of a mosque
like an old reader of pilgrims' prayers
Like zero in adding, subtracting, multiplying
you can always attain the same result
You can take your eyes, in the cocoon of their wrath,
for the colorless buttons of a worn-out shoe
You can, like water, dry up in your own ditch

You can shamefully conceal the beauty of a moment
like some dark, ridiculous instant photo
in the bottom of a trunk
You can hang in the empty frame of a day
the picture of someone condemned, or conquered, or crucified
You can conceal the crack in the wall with masks
You can mingle with images even more absurd

You can be just like a mechanical doll
and view your world with two glass eyes
You can sleep in a cloth-lined box for years
with a body stuffed with straw
in the folds of net and spangles
You can cry out for no reason at all
with every lascivious squeeze of a hand:
"Ah, how lucky I am" 30

The poem is a warning of a living death. The conditioning is in keeping with the Iran of the sixties, being a mixture of the traditional and the modern. The poet starts off by depicting through implication the conditioned existence within the four walls of the home where the 'stiffened' individual is oblivious to the rhythm of life beyond the window and looks without seeing and hears without listening. The second form of conditioning is that of being identified as a product for consumption. The third form of conditioning portrayed is in terms of various tenacious forms of escapism, in futile mental games or in religious shrines and beliefs.

Furūgh then refers to the resulting stagnation in terms of three images. The first image is the least numerical value in mathematical terms, namely a zero. Secondly, it is portrayed in terms of the eyes, the organs of vision and expression which have turned into bleached, colourless buttons from an old shoe. The allusion to decay is once more made with the reference to water drying up in its own ditch. Thereafter, there is a reference to the conditioned repression of vital feelings and the outward covering up of the resulting emptiness by symbols of defeat - the "empty frame" is filled by the "picture of someone condemned, or conquered, or crucified." Furūgh ends the poem with the image of a mechanical corpse unaware of its own death in its richly ornate box, perhaps implying a coffin. Furūgh seems to imply that a static personality is a prison of death.

The message of the poem is that life ought to be lived more meaningfully, in freedom and creativity, not in sterile mechanical activity. Perhaps this explains Furūgh's own intense desire to be actively involved in the creative arts such as theatre and cinema, in addition to her poetic efforts.

The long and satirical poem '0 Bejewelled Land' (the title being a reference to a patriotic song) is highly critical of various aspects of Iranian society, and its lack of a common purpose and direction. This poem, considered to be a social commentary, is full of reproachful references to the bureaucratization of Pahlavi Iran. According to Furūgh, the 'self' in this poem is society, a society which is dealing a deathblow to itself.[31] The acquisition of the identity card in the poem reduces Furūgh to a mere number and enables her to perform meaningless tasks and therefore does not mean anything:

I did it
I got myself registered
dressed myself up in an ID card with a name
and my existence was distinguished by a number
So long live 678, issued from precinct 5,
resident of Tehran
Now my mind is completely at ease
The kind bosom of motherland
the nipple of former ages full of history's glory
the lullaby of culture and civilization
and the rattling of the rattle of the law. . .
Ah
Now my mind is completely at ease 32.

There is a deriding reference to the poets of the time who considered the standard measure of art as

absolute and fixed in the distant past.
The artificiality and hypocrisy of these poets is described in the following verse where the traditional symbols of Persian poetry, the nightingale and the rose, are transformed into crows and paper roses:

In the land of poetry, nightingales and roses
living is a blessing, yes, indeed
when the fact of your being, after so many years,
    is approved -
a place where I
with my first official glance see six-hundred seventy-
    eight poets through the folds of the curtain
impostors, each in the strange guise of beggars
searching for rhymes and meters in heaps of rubbish

In the following lines the reader is faced with a biting criticism of the Iranian intelligentsia who are depicted as hypocritical, indifferent and motivated by their own material interests :

Living is a blessing, to be sure
in the home of Mr. Fool-son, instant fiddler
and Mr. O Heart-Heart of the drum, clan of drums,
city of superstar champions - legs, hips, breasts and
    glossy covers of Art,
cradle of the authors of the philosophy, "Hey man,
    what's it to me,"
source of Olympic scholastic games - ay!
a place where from every broadcast you turn on,
    in vision or voice,
there blares the bleating horn of some young ingenious
                                                genious,
and the nation's intellectual elite
when they gather in adult classes
each has arranged upon his breast six-hundred seventy-
    eight electric kebab grills
and on each wrist six-hundred seventy-eight
    Navzar watches, and they know
that impotence comes from an empty purse
    not from ignorance

The poem directly criticizes the Pahlavi regime by a reference to the corrupt practice of buying votes and by linking this practice with the weekly lottery of a charity organization run by one of the Shah's sisters:[33]

From tomorrow on I shall be able
to hold in heart and mind
like any zealous patriot
a share of that profound ideal everyone pursues
passionately and anxiously
each Wednesday afternoon -
a share of those thousand fantasies born
of each thousand-rial bill
which you can redeem for curtains, furniture or fridge
or give some night,
in exchange for six-hundred seventy-eight natural votes
to six-hundred seventy-eight sons of the native land

On the whole, the poem portrays a society characterized by artificiality, greed, selfishness, hypocrisy and corruption, a society that has lost its purpose and direction in its headlong rush for modernization and Westernization.

One of the more remarkable poems of Farrukhzād is the one entitled 'Someone Who is Like No One.' What is so distinctive about this poem is that it is probably the most political of all her writings. In no other poem is she so critical of the social and political conditions of Iran under the Pahlavi regime. What is even more unusual about the poem is that for the first time, Furūgh openly and explicitly aligns herself with the Marxist or socialist revolutionary movement in Iran. These views are not expressed directly, but through the voice of a poverty-stricken child who dreams of a saviour who will deliver him/her from

his/her wretched conditions :

SOMEONE WHO IS LIKE NO ONE

I dreamt that someone is coming
I dreamt of a red star,
and my eyelids continually flutter
my shoes continually pair off
may I go blind
if I'm lying

I have dreamt of that red star
even while not sleeping
Someone is coming
Someone is coming
Someone new
Someone better
Someone who is like no one, not like father,
not like Ensi, not like Yahya, not like mother
He is like the one who must be,
taller than the trees of the architect's house
his face even brighter
than the last Imam's 34

It is significant in the above lines that the young child connects the deliverer with the twelfth imām of Iranian Shīᶜism without identifying them as such, because that 'someone' is brighter and better than the latter. Nonetheless, the function of the deliverer is similar to that of the hidden imām who, according to Isnaᶜashirī belief, is expected to usher in a world of justice, freedom and peace upon his return from occultation. The poet has very cleverly fused the modern image of a revolutionary hero with the traditional Shīᶜī idea of the twelfth imām as the mahdī or saviour. This impression is reinforced in the following verses, where the revolutionary-hero-saviour is portrayed in almost mythical and supernatural terms through the child's idealistic imagination:

He does not even fear the brother of Seyyid Javad
who has gone and donned the police uniform,
nor even Seyyid Javad himself
who owns all the rooms of our house
and whose name it is that mother invokes
at the beginning and end of her prayers:
"O judge of all judges,"
"O grantor of all wishes"

He reads all the hard words in the third-grade book
with his eyes closed
and can even take one thousand away from twenty million
without decreasing their numbers

According to Javadi and Sallee, the 'thousand' is a reference to the ruling elite under the Shah, which was often referred to as the 'thousand families' and the number 'twenty million' is a reference to the population during the sixties.[35] It is clear that for Furūgh, the poem is a vehicle for expressing the injustices and corruption which characterized the Pahlavi regime. It is in the concluding verses, however, that the message of the poem becomes more explicit and ideological in character:

Someone is coming
Someone is coming
Someone in heart who is with us
Someone in breath who is with us
Someone in voice who is with us

Someone whose coming
cannot be stopped,
handcuffed and thrown in jail
Someone who has fathered children beneath Yahya's aged trees,
who day by day
grows bigger and bigger
Someone coming through the rain, through the sound of pouring rain, amidst whispering petunias
Someone is coming from Tupkhaneh's sky
on the night of fireworks

He is spreading the cloth
and dividing the bread
and dividing the Pepsi
and the national park,
dividing the medicine for whooping cough
dividing the registration day
dividing the numbers in hospital
dividing the rubber boots
dividing Fardin's cinema
and the trees of Seyyid Javad's daughter
and whatever goods remain
He gives us our share
I have had a dream . . .

The reference to 'Tupkhaneh,' a famous square in Tehran known as the scene of many political events,[36] confirms that Farrukhzād is looking forward to a revolutionary uprising against the Shah's regime. The egalitarian society that she envisages towards the end of the poem may be interpreted as an expression of her own growing commitment to the socialist or Marxist ideal. The poem also indicates the emergence of a political dimension to Furūgh's rebellion, which previously was largely concerned with resistance to the male-dominated moral and religious strictures of Iranian society.

Although some critics consider the poems 'O Bejewelled Land' and 'Someone Like No One' to be 'unpoetic,' Davaran considers these two poems to be examples reflecting Furūgh's belief in a freedom of language that could correspond to the realities of the street. He maintains that in writing 'street poetry,' she paved the way for a new direction in the modern Persian poetic tradition with a journalistic approach that was freer, more spontaneous and naked, an approach which nonetheless had beneath it all, a solid sense of structure.[37]

From Death to Rebirth

The one continuous feature that stands out throughout the course of Farrukhzād's poetic development is her affinity with nature. From the early poems in The Captive to Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season, Farrukhzād always turned to nature for solace and comfort and meaning in a world that appeared so often as painful, tragic and irrational to her. This relationship is described by Furūgh in terms of oneness and union, which imparts to many of her poems a pantheistic and mystical colouring. This impression is vividly illustrated in the opening verses of one of Furūgh's earlier poems from The Wall entitled 'Bathing':

Naked I stood in that heart-stirring air
To bathe in the waters of the spring;
Night's hush poured temptation on my heart
To tell its sorrow to the ear of the spring.

The water was cool, and sparkling waves
Crept round me, moaning in desire
As if they drew me, body and soul
With soft, crystal hands to their inward fire.[38]

The same spirit of union with nature and its rhythms finds expression in many poems of Another Birth and Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season, as for example, in 'The Conquest of the Garden' discussed earlier in this chapter. Whereas it is true that there are many more poems in the total corpus of Furūgh's poetry which convey a sense of gloom and despair, the positive and life-affirming spirit of her nature poems can often be overlooked.

The essential function of nature in Furūgh's poems is not only to serve as a source for beauty, comfort or solace, but more importantly as a medium for personal transformation and rebirth. This regenerating and rejuvenating function of nature in the poet's own life is clearly manifest in the following poem:

I WILL GREET THE SUN ONCE AGAIN

I'll give greetings to the sun once again,
to the stream that flowed within me,
to the clouds that were my tallest thoughts,
to the painful growth of aspens in the garden
who endured the seasons of drought with me,
to the flock of crows
who as a gift
brought the field's nocturnal scent to me,
to my mother who lived in a mirror
and revealed the figure of my old age,
and to the earth, whose burning womb I've filled
with green seeds in my lust for repetition -
I'll give greetings once again.

I come, I come, I come
with my hair exuding the smells beneath the earth
~~with my eyes thick~~ with experiences of gloom
with the bouqet of greens I picked from the wood,
on the other side of the wall
I come, I come, I come
The threshold fills with love
and I, on the threshold, will greet once again
those who love, and the girl
still standing on the threshold filled with love [39]

The general impression conveyed by this poem is of a person who has been resurrected to life from death. In terms of Furūgh's life story, the poem can be interpreted, therefore, as a conviction of being reborn or arising to another life, which is fresher

and happier than the previous life. In that sense, the poem looks to the future, to the life to come; but at the same time the poem is also retrospective and looks to the past and the youth of the poet. The use of the present tense in the second stanza adds a further dimension to the poem, in which the past, present and the future intermingle and fuse into a single poetic experience.

A closer analysis of the first stanza reveals that the world which Furūgh is recollecting, anticipating and reliving simultaneously is her own life as a young girl when she felt a sense of communion and oneness with natural phenomena (the sun, the stream, the clouds, the aspens, the crows, the fields, the earth). The only human being she recalls and wants to greet is her mother, who "lived in a mirror" and "revealed the figure of my old age" - an obscure line which perhaps suggests a sense of identity and continuity as well as of love and affection between mother and daughter.

In the opening lines of the second stanza, the poet describes herself in the present-tense rising from the grave with her hair "exuding the smells beneath the earth" and her eyes "thick with experiences of gloom." In the second part of this stanza, however, the time changes once again from the present to the future as the poet looks forward to greeting "those who love" and "the girl still standing on the threshold filled with love." Thus, the rebirth which

the poem describes is of a world filled with love and a sense of oneness and communion with nature. The girl referred to in the last line is obviously the poet herself as an adolescent waiting for true love to come. The overall impression conveyed by the poet of a person who accepts the fact of not finding love and happiness in this life and longing for it to materialize in the next life gives to the above poem a special quality of poignancy, realism and idealism.

An interesting light is thrown on the meaning of the above poem by Furūgh herself in an interview given in the spring of 1964. She was not referring to 'I Will Greet the Sun Once Again,' but her identification of rebirth with love and greeting is significant in the context of this poem:

> For me, "decay and exile" are not death, but rather a stage from which one can begin life with a new outlook and a new vision. It is love itself, minus all the additions and extraneous things. It is a greeting to everything and everyone without demanding or expecting an answer. The hands which can be a bridge for the message of fragrance, breeze and light grow green in this very exile. 40

The search for enduring elements in life through rebirth and transformation finds its climax in the title poem entitled 'Another Birth.' This is one of the most complex and accomplished poems composed by Furūgh, which moreover she helped to translate into English.[41] The poem is essentially a meditation on the meaning of life and death. In his insightful

interpretation of the poem, H.Javadi maintains that"Forugh mingles the idea of growth and rebirth with a search for meaning in life and a nostalgic invocation of childhood's bygone days."[42] But it is not the nostalgia of a lost childhood which leaves a strong impression on the mind of the reader as much as the sheer, sober realism of her reflections at the time when the poem was composed:

ANOTHER BIRTH

All my existence is a dark verse
which repeating you in itself will take you
to the dawn of eternal blossoming and growth
I have sighed to you in this verse, ah,
in this verse I have grafted you
to tree and water and fire

Perhaps life
is a long street on which a woman with a basket
    passes every day
Perhaps life
is a rope with which a man hangs himself from a tree
Perhaps life is a child returning from school

Perhaps life is lighting a cigarette
    in the languid interval between two embraces
or the mindless transit of a passer-by
who tips his hat
and with a meaningless smile says "good morning"
    to another passer-by

Perhaps life is that thwarted moment
when my gaze destroys itself in the pupil of your eyes
And in this lies a sensation
which I will mingle with the perception of the moon
    and the discovery of darkness

In a room the size of one loneliness
my heart
the size of one love
looks at the simple pretexts of its happiness,
at the fading of the beauty of the flowers in the vase
at the sapling you planted in the garden of our house

at the song of the canaries
that sing the size of one window

Ah. . .
This is my lot
This is my lot
My lot
is a sky which the hanging of a curtain steals from me
My lot is descending an abandoned stair
to find something in decay and exile
My lot is a grief-stricken walk in the garden of memories
and surrendering my soul in the sadness of a voice
    that says to me:
"I love
your hands"

I plant my hands in the garden
I will grow green, I know, I know
and in the hollows of my ink-stained fingers
swallows will lay eggs

On my ears I hang earrings
of twin red cherries
and stick dahlia petals on my nails
There is a street where
still, the boys who loved me
with the same tousled hair, slender necks, lanky legs
think of the innocent smile of a girl
whom one night the wind bore away

There is a street which my heart
has stolen from the scenes of my childhood

The journey of a form on the line of time
and with a form, impregnating the dry line of time,
a form aware of an image
which returns from the party of a mirror

And it is thus
that someone dies
and someone remains

In the shallow stream that flows into a ditch,
    no fisher will hunt a pearl.

I
know a sad little fairy
who takes abode in the ocean
and plays her heart on a wood-tipped flute
softly, softly
a sad little fairy
who dies from a single kiss at night
and will be born with a single kiss at dawn 43

Furūgh maintained with reference to this poem, that it must be read as a whole and one must not insist on the meanings of individual lines.[44] However, for the purpose of analyzing the poem critically, it may be useful to divide the poem into a number of parts or sections. The first part consists of the very elusive verse with which the poem opens. The poet's existence is fused with her poetry which is an eternally regenerating force, unifying the 'I' and 'you' of the verse with natural elements.

The next part of the poem comprises of the second, third and fourth verses, in which Furūgh reflects on the human condition and perceives life in terms of a series of impressionistic images of human life and activity, such as a passing woman, a hanged man, a child returning from school, the act of lighting a cigarette, and so on. Perhaps, Furūgh is referring in these verses to the absurd and meaningless character of human life, in which death is no more or less a significant event than a passer-by saying "good morning." The expressions "perception of the moon" and "discovery of darkness" could be interpreted to represent the positive and negative aspects of human experience which one retains in the

memory or the subconscious.

In verses five, six and seven, the poet describes herself living alone in a room, reflecting upon things which give her "pretexts" for happiness, such as fading flowers, a sapling planted by a loved one or the remembrance of his voice. She bewails her loneliness and exile in the "garden of memories." The situation which the poet describes here is one of grief and despair which is apparently connected with separation from a beloved one. Once more, Furūgh talks about the loss of the 'luminous connection' with the light of the sun, which is obliterated by the curtain. Javadi is probably right in regarding the seventh verse as the centre of the poem, for it is in these lines that the poet describes herself planting her hands and ink-stained fingers in the garden. An extract from one of Furūgh's letters throws this verse into perspective:

> . . . I feel a stupifying pressure under my skin. . . I want to pierce everything and penetrate as far down as possible. I want to reach the depths of the earth. My love is there, in the place where seeds grow green and roots reach one another, and creation perpetuates itself amidst decay.[45]

Referring to the same image of planting, Javadi observes:

> Self-perpetuation is again envisaged in natural terms, this time as the process of planting, growth and interaction with

> other natural creatures . . .
> Thus it is Furūgh's very hands,
> stained perhaps with the ink of
> her poetic art, that become for
> her the source of fertility and
> generation.46

The identification of creativity with natural growth leads to the reminescence of a transient childhood, which passes as swiftly as the wind. The tenth verse is highly abstract and philosophical in tone, and Javadi interprets it with reference to Furūgh's own words:

> According to Forugh herself, "hajm"
> here represents the human mind and
> thought, whereas the "image" indicates
> the physical and superficial aspects
> of life. While man is alive, his
> external life is "a feast in the
> mirror", and that which is permanent
> are his thoughts, or "hajm" - that
> is, the thoughts of a powerful mind
> will occupy a larger volume on the
> line of time and leave their imprint
> for generations to come.47

What Furūgh seems to be suggesting in the tenth verse is that there is a close association between rebirth and creativity. To her, the meaning of rebirth is to leave the imprint of her own thoughts on time through renewed creativity, for it is only thus that "someone dies and someone remains." The pearl mentioned in the twelfth verse represents this goal of the poet, which cannot be attained with ease but has to be striven for by an active participation in the act of planting and creation. In other words,

the prospect of another birth lies in transcending the transistoriness and sadness of life through the power of poetry created by her own ink-stained fingers.

Javadi sees the sad fairy living in the ocean as the poetess herself, dying in the dark of the night and being reborn by the light of the day. The song of the heart is, according to him, the final symbol of the poet's art with which she explores various aspects of life.[48] It is therefore in poetry that Furūgh found the central meaning and justification for her life and it is through poetry that she hoped to conquer death. As she herself put it in an interview:

> I think all those who are involved in creative work have as their motives, a sort of need to struggle with and stand in front of annihilation. These are individuals who love life more and likewise death. Creative work is a kind of struggle to maintain existence, or else to perpetuate "self" and negate the meaning of death. . . [49]

Footnotes

1. "An Interview with the Poet, M.Azad, Summer 1964," translated by H.Javadi and S.Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.97-98.

2. "An Interview with the Critic, Cyrus Tahbaz, and the Novelist-Playwright, Gholam-Hosein Sa'edi, Spring 1964," translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.11.

3. Mehri Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," see pp.135-210.

4. "An Interview with Iraj-e Gorgin of Radio Iran, 1964," translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.94.

5. "An Interview with the Poet, M.Azad. . . ," p.100.

6. ibid., p.98.

7. Ardavan Davaran, " 'The Conquest of the Garden': A Significant Instance of the Poetic Development of Forugh Farrokhzad, " in Another Birth. . . , pp.117-118.

8. Quoted by Michael Hillman, "Modern Iranian Poet. . . , " p.315.

9. M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," see the section entitled 'The Style of Forugh's Poetry', pp.201-209.

10. M.Farzan, "Forugh Farrokhzad, Modern Persian Poet," in Critical Perspectives. . . , p.435.

11. Quoted by M.Hillman, "Modern Iranian Poet . . . ," p.314.

12. M.Farzan, "Forugh Farrokhzad, Modern Persian Poet," in Critical Perspectives. . . ," p.436.

13. M. Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," pp.18-23.

14. 'Those Days,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.26-29.

15. "Excerpts from the Letters of Forugh to Ebrahim Golestan," translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.114.

16. M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," p.23.

17. 'Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Seaon,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.65-75.

18. M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," pp.8-15.

19. Eliz Sanasarian, "An Analysis of Fida^{c}i and Mujahidin Positions on Women's Rights," in Women and Revolution in Iran. . . , p.104.

20. 'The Window,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.76-78.

21. 'Friday,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.39.

22. Michael Hillman, "Sexuality in the Verse of. . . ," pp.196-197.

23. 'The Lagoon,' translated by J.Kessler with A.Banani, Bride of Acacias. . . , pp.54-56.

24. The terms 'not-yet' and 'never-more' are used by Shayegan to depict the condition of traditional cultures in relation to the modern. See Chapter One.

25. 'The Green Illusion,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.48-50.

26. Javadi and Sallee explain the image of talismanic water as a reference to polygamy; see footnote 9, Another Birth. . . , p.131-132:

> In former times of Iranian culture, men would take more than one wife. 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 spinkle specially prepared water over the nuptial bed of the new bride, a custom to which Forugh refers in this line.

27. 'The Conquest of the Garden,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.52-53.

28. For Davaran's analysis of the poem, see A.Davaran, "A Significant Instance. . . ," pp.117-124.

29. "An Interview with the Critic. . . ," p.106.

30. 'Mechanical Doll,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.40-41.

31. "An Interview with the Critic. . . ," p.107.

32. '0 Bejewelled Land,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.56-60.

33. See footnote 11 and 12 in Another Birth. . . , p.132.

34. 'Someone Who is Like No One,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , pp.83-86.

35. See footnote 38 in Another Birth. . . , p. 133.

36. See footnote 43, ibid., p.134.

37. A.Davaran, "A Significant Instance. . . ," p.123.

38. 'Bathing,' translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . , p.12.

39. Translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth. . . ," Another Birth. . . , p.61.

40. "An Interview with the Critic. . . ," p.109.

41. Hasan Javadi, "Notes on 'Another Birth,' " in Another Birth. . . , p.126.

42. Ibid.

43. Translated by Javadi and Sallee, Another Birth Another Birth. . . , p.62-64.

44. "AnInterview with the Critic. . . , p.109.

45. "Excerpt from the Letters. . . ," p.114.

46. H.Javadi, "Notes on . . . ," p.128.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p.129.

49. "An Interview with the Critic. . . ," p.101.

CONCLUSION

Furūgh Farrukhzād's poetry is full of traditional symbols which are very much rooted in Persian culture. For example, the imagery of darkness and light, which goes back to Zoroastrianism and was incorporated into the Ishrāqī school of thought, permeates her poetry. The symbol of return from death or 'rebirth' has strong connotations of the Sūfī notions of 'fanā'' and 'baqā''. Although the lover and the beloved of Furūgh's poetry are far from being identical with those of Sūfī poetry, in her desire to unite with nature, the reader can perceive mystical and pantheistic tendencies which she also expresses elsewhere:

> . . . There are beats on the water, and it's not clear where the sea ends. If I could be part of this infinity, then I could be wherever I wanted to be. . . I want to die like this or go on like this. There always emerges from the earth a power that attracts me. Ascending or advancing are not important to me. I only want to descend, along with all the things that I love, to dissolve into one changeless whole. It seems to me that this is the only avenue of escape from annihilation, mutability, perdition, nothingness and nullification.[1]

It is primarily through the imagery of light and dark that Furūgh explored the problems of modern Iranian society. The dark becomes a symbol of all that she perceived as negative and destructive of the human spirit, such as asceticism, over-socialization,

mechanization, poverty and injustice. Light is identified with freedom and dignity of the individual, the regenerative force of nature and the creative act of art, and especially with the liberating power of human love. The poet's acceptance of the physical and sensual life is in a sense a reversal of the traditional usage of the symbols. The light always meant the spiritual and the purely intellectual, whereas the dark stood for the physical, the material and the sensual. What Farrukhzād was stating, in effect, was that the light is very much part of the material world and can be discovered in the joy and ecstasy of human love. Thus, even while adopting the traditional symbols, she was at the same time reacting against the spiritual tradition from which they were drawn.

The pre-eminent theme of Farrukhzād's poetry is sexuality. Although many Iranians were outraged by her celebration of erotic love and her rejection of traditional sexual conventions, the theme of sexualiity is the source of Farrukhzād's real strength rather than weakness. It is this characteristic which gives her poetry social relevance and a singular place in modern Persian literature. There were a number of reasons why the theme of sexuality in Furūgh's poetry provoked so much controversy. It can be argued that all these factors derive from the fact that she was a woman who dared to challenge, and therefore, threatened to undermine some of the most deeply entrenched traditions of a male-dominated society.

Firstly, by virtue of her divorce, Farrukhzād became a stigmatized woman.[2] She had gained the freedom of poetic self-expression at the cost of social stigma. Subsequently, her espousal of liberated sexuality in her poetry, while still not remarried, implicated Furūgh as a moral transgressor and a social non-conformist. Furūgh also came under criticism for her relations with a number of men following her divorce, a fact which she did not attempt to conceal.[3] Extra-conjugal relations are, of course, strictly forbidden by Islamic law. However, considering that Iranian Shī'ism permits men to practice polygamy and to have temporary wives as well, adultery becomes almost exclusively a woman's sin. This partly explains the criticism and controversy that Furūgh provoked.

The very fact that Furūgh's poetry was judged in the first instance by traditional moral standards goes to show that even when it came to aesthetic considerations, the deeply ingrained prejudice against women, immediately came into play, and she was judged more as a woman than a poet. As Hillman points out, in Iranian literature of the last half-century or more, sexuality has been a major image through which love and death have been portrayed; religious, cultural and political institutions have been questioned, and individual frustration and aberrations have been represented.[4] But one does not encounter moral pronouncements in relation to the many male writers

who have used sexuality as a theme in their works. The moral judgement passed on Farrukhzād in the sixties was itself a symptom of the clash between the old and the new, between the traditional and the modern.

It has been said of Furūgh that she did not concern herself with the various women's organizations or movements in Iran and that she was more concerned and preoccupied with obtaining her own personal freedom than with fighting for women's rights in general.[5] Perhaps her reluctance to associate with women's organizations could be seen in the light of the co-optation of the feminist movement by the Pahlavi regime as well as in the light of the Pahlavi patronage of the various women's organizations.[6] Whatever the reason for it, it cannot be denied that Farrukhzād's life and poetry are an expression of some of the fundamental and burning issues which lie at the mainstream of the feminist movement. Her defence of the freedom, dignity and rights of women epitomizes the ideals and aspirations of many women across the Muslim world. One must recognize also the courage and determination it must have taken her to express these attitudes and feelings so openly and frankly in the face of constant hostility from her family and society.[7]

It is significant that in spite of the criticism and hostility incurred by Farrukhzād, a number of Iranian intellectuals could sympathize with her and recognized in her poetry the voice of a bold, new conscience.

According to Hillman, for example, Kadkanī is of the opinion that "Furugh is the pre-eminent spokesperson for the current generation of liberated Iranians and is unparalleled in her depiction of typical moments and moods in the lives of the members of the group - loneliness, alienation, surrender, silence." [8] Hillman also refers to Barāheni who views Furūgh as follows: "Prior to Furugh no woman poet in Persian had ever composed love poems with men as the love object, and after her none can escape her influence. According to Barahini, Furugh's works cause the development of a feminine tradition in Persian poetry, and she will have a permanent place in the Persian pantheon for this reason rather than for inherent qualities of form and technique in her verse." [9]

It has been pointed out in the course of this thesis that Farrukhzād's later poetry reflects an awakened political and social conscience. Although one cannot in any way be certain what shape her political commitment and preference would have taken had she lived longer, one may venture to make some assumptions based on the indications in her poetry. It may be assumed that unlike her contemporary Tāhirah Saffarzādih, [10] Furūgh would not have espoused Shī^{c}ism as a political ideology, since she had rebelled against a 'given order' and had attempted to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religion. Even acceptance of a non-clerical interpretation of Shī^{c}ism such as that propounded by ^{c}Alī Sharī^{c}atī, would have entailed the acceptance of a 'given order.' Sharī^{c}atī's ideal

of womanhood attracted many Iranian women "caught in the cross currents of change and tradition."[11] His criticism, like that of many Iranian intellectuals, was directed on the one hand against the traditional religious views of the clergy and, on the other hand, against what he considered the Western view of women's position in society which, according to him, the Pahlavi regime was promoting. He saw the former as fanatical suppression and the later as materialistic slavery. His third alternative, symbolized by the Prophet's daughter Fāṭimah as an exemplary wife, mother and daughter, has been described by one critic as a vague and puritanical image of an ideal woman.[12] Sharīʿatī raises the issue of women but fails to address it logically, thus leaving his model not very different in essence from that of the clergy.[13]

Furūgh's predicament as a woman stemmed partly from the fact that, she did not deem a third, collective and effective alternative as immediately possible. She may in the long-run have opted for a secular socialism, as indicated by some of her later poems which reflect a growing concern with the problems of poverty, injustice and inequality in society.

Farrukhzād was first and foremost a poet and it was to poetry that she turned for companionship, solace and comfort; it was in poetry that she found truth and beauty and happiness; her search for identity and authenticity began and ended in poetry; it was through the creative act of poetic composition that Furūgh felt herself become one with the rhythm of nature and the cycle of birth, death and regeneration; poetry was

the space, the 'window' which enabled her to make connections with the past and the future; most important of all, it was in poetry alone that Farrukhzād found the meaning and purpose of her existence, which she could not find anywhere else:

> Poetry for me is like a window that opens automatically whenever I go toward it. I sit there, look out, sing, shout, cry, merge with the image of the trees, and I know that on the other side of the window there is a space and someone hears me, someone who might live two hundred years hence or who lived three hundred years ago. It makes no difference - it is a means of connection with existence, with existence in its broader sense. The good thing about it is that when someone writes poetry, that person can say: "I too exist," or "I too have existed." How can one say, "I too exist" or "I too have existed" except through this form? 14

In one of her letters Farrukhzād wrote: "I wish I could write like Hafez, and possess, like him, a sensitivity that would create a connection with all the genuine moments contained in all the lives of future generations."[15] Although Farrukhzād died relatively young and her total output was small, there can be no doubt that her voice will continue to be heard for a long time to come as a genuine expression of the Persian spirit. In her restless search for authenticity, in her passionate affirmation of life and love and death, in her consuming devotion to poetry and creativity, in her struggle against

prejudice and hypocrisy in society, in her championing of the cause of the weak and the defenceless, and above all, in her uncompromising defence of the freedom and dignity of women, Furūgh Farrukhzād becomes a symbol of modern Irān in search of an identity.

Footnotes

1. "Excerpts from the Letters. . . ," p.115.

2. M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," p.49. Bharier maintains that like other divorced women, Furūgh was treated as a dangerous temptation for other wives husbands.

3. M.Hillman, "Sexuality in the Verse. . . ," p.193.

4. Ibid., p.191.

5. M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," p.112.

6. See Chapter Two and see Eliz Sanasarian, "The The Women's Rights Movement. . . .

7. See M.Bharier, "Persian Poetess. . . ," Chapter One, "The Death and Life of Forugh," pp.7-51. Bharier touches upon the hostility Furūgh encountered, during the course of the Chapter.

8. Quoted by M.Hillman, "Modern Iranian Poet. . . ," p.315.

9. Ibid., p.316.

10. See Farzaneh Milani, "Revitalization: Some Reflections of the Work of Saffar-Zadeh," in Women and Revolution. . . , ed. Guity Nashat, pp.128-140.

11. A.Tabari, "Islam and the Struggle. . . ," p.12.

12. Ibid.

13. Adele Ferdows, "Women in the Islamic Revolution," International Journal of Middle East Studies 15 (1983) : 283-298.

14. "An Interview with the Critic. . . ," pp.101-102.

15. "Excerpts from the Letters. . . ," p.116.

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