



Influences on the Poetry of Forūgh Farrokhzād

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Abstract

This article examines the literary and intellectual influences that shaped the poetry of Forūgh Farrokhzād (1935–1967), one of modern Iran’s most original voices. It advances three interrelated arguments. First, Farrokhzād began her career as an experimental poet, reworking Fereydūn Moshīrī’s *chahārpāreh* style and reinterpreting the classical ghazal—especially that of Ḥāfeẓ—through a modern lens. Second, during her four-year hiatus from publication, she absorbed the innovations of *she ‘r-e now* and the narrative strategies of modern fiction, drawing in particular on the works of Aḥmad Shāmlū, Ṣādeq Chūbak, and Ṣādeq Hedāyat. This period transformed her poetic voice and deepened her engagement with the social and psychological realities of her time. Third, under the influence of Nīmā Yūshīj, synthesizing lyricism, philosophical reflection, and colloquial immediacy, Farrokhzād moved toward creating a new architecture—a distinctive poetic idiom that fused the structural discipline of the *ghazal* with the freedom of *she ‘r-e now*. In doing so, she sought to address urgent contemporary realities while sustaining the aesthetic resonance of the Persian tradition.

Introduction

Forūgh Farrokhzād occupies a singular place in twentieth-century Persian literature. She wrote with candor and intensity at a time when Iranian society sought to confine women within prescribed roles. From her earliest work, she confronted those restrictions directly, giving voice to desire, alienation, and female agency in ways that scandalized some but resonated deeply with readers navigating a rapidly changing Iran.

This study approaches Farrokhzād not simply as a poet of rebellion but as an innovator testing the possibilities of transforming inherited forms into a modern poetic idiom. Her development can be understood through three interrelated modes of influence—pervasive, temporal, and thematic. Pervasive influence denotes an enduring presence: for Farrokhzād, Ḥāfeẓ remained a constant interlocutor, his lyric intensity and Sufi sensibility suffusing her imagination

throughout her career. Temporal influence is more transient. Fereydūn Moshīrī's formal structures shaped her early collections before giving way to the linguistic precision and emotional nuance of Aḥmad Shāmlū, and later to the philosophical vision of Nīmā Yūshīj. Thematic influence, by contrast, reflects her engagement with contemporary Iranian prose writers such as Sādeq Chūbak and Šādeq Hedāyat, whose narrative strategies and psychological depth sharpened her explorations of intimacy, alienation, and modern subjectivity.

Seen through this lens, Farrokhzād's literary trajectory emerges as a dynamic synthesis of tradition and rupture. Her first three collections—*Asīr* (*Captive*), *Dīvār* (*The Wall*), and *Eṣiyān* (*Rebellion*)—display her bold attempt to fuse Moshīrī's *chahārpāreh* structure with the lyricism of the classical *ghazal*.¹ After a four-year withdrawal from the literary scene following her divorce and the loss of custody of her son, she immersed herself in *she 'r-e now* and modern fiction. The result was *Tavallodī Dīgar* (*Another Birth*), a landmark volume in which pervasive, temporal, and thematic influences converge to produce a strikingly original voice. In her final years, Yūshīj's visionary poetics enabled her to integrate philosophical reflection with lived immediacy, reinventing the *ghazal* through colloquial Persian, social critique, and a new spiritual register.

The pages that follow trace this evolution, emphasizing how Farrokhzād synthesized classical heritage, modern fiction, and the innovations of *she 'r-e now* into a body of work that continues to define and transform Persian literature.

Biography

Actress, painter, and documentary filmmaker Forūgh Farrokhzād (1935–1967) was one of seven children born into a middle-class family in Tehran.² Her father, a disciplined military officer, managed the Pahlavi estates in northern Iran. She received her elementary education at Sorūsh School before attending Khosrow Khavar High School. Even as a student, her gift for poetry was so striking that her composition teacher repeatedly accused her of submitting verses copied from other poets.³

After leaving high school in the ninth grade, Farrokhzād enrolled at the Bānuvān Technical School, where she studied sewing and painting. She later remarked that sewing taught her the discipline and rhythm essential to writing poetry. Seeking formal artistic training, she also studied briefly with the distinguished painter Ja'far Petgar (1920–2005).⁴ Of the two surviving portraits attributed to her, the painting of her adopted son, Hussein, reveals both technical assurance and a remarkable sensitivity to emotional expression.

In 1950, at the age of sixteen, she married Parvīz Shāpūr (1924–1999), a neighbor and distant relative. A civil servant by profession, Shāpūr was also an accomplished humorist and caricaturist. Following



¹ *Chahārpāreh* consists of four *beyt*-like fragments not tied to the traditional *owzān*.

² Michael Craig Hillmann, "Furugh Farrukhzad," In *Women Poets Iranica*. Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation <https://poets.iranicaonline.org/article/furugh-farrukhzad/>, 2002.

³ Behrūz Jalālī, "Zendeḡī Nāme-ye Forūgh," *Jāvdāneh Zīstān, dar Owj Māndan: Forūgh-e Farrokhzād (To Live Eternally, Permanence at the Peak: Forūgh Farrokhzād)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 559; *Haftah Nāme-ye Zan-e Rūz*, 16, Esfand, 1345.

⁴ As a painter, Ja'far Petgar was influenced by Kamāl-almolk. He brought his love for the color and patterns of Persian carpets, together with his semi-technical approach to painting to the poor strada of Iranian society.

their marriage, he was transferred to Ahvāz, where the couple settled and where their son, Kamiyār, was born in 1952.⁵

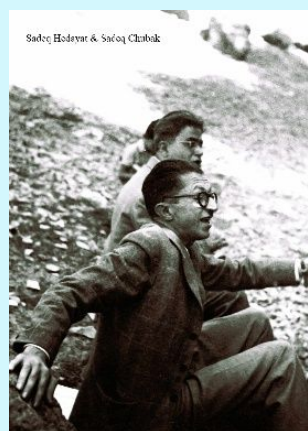
Life in Ahvāz, however, proved deeply constraining for the young poet. Petite, self-assured, and strikingly attractive, Farrokhzād became one of the first Iranian women to appear publicly in form-fitting Western clothing, attracting both admiration and censure. More unsettling, however, was the reception of her poetry. She shared her work openly with friends and acquaintances, inviting candid criticism, only to encounter reactions that ranged from bewilderment to outright condemnation. Her husband, too, struggled to reconcile himself to the emotional candor and sensual intensity of her verse.

Yet the emotional bond between them did not disappear with the collapse of their marriage. Years later, Farrokhzād gave voice to that lingering attachment in lines later quoted by Ḥā'eri:

After him, whatever I turned to
Turned out to be a mirage.
What I cherished and sought
Was nothing but a dream.
After him, there is nothing to await;
After him, what shall I find
But a cold grave...⁶

Despite her efforts to adapt to the conservative atmosphere of provincial life, Farrokhzād grew increasingly isolated. In 1954, she and Shāpūr separated, and their divorce was finalized soon afterward. Custody of Kamiyār was awarded to his father, and under pressure from the Shāpūr family, she was forbidden any contact with her son. To support herself financially, she began writing anonymously for a number of magazines. As she confided to a friend, "I'm working at *Tehrān Moṣawwar*. I write things, but I don't sign my name."⁷

A decisive turning point came in 1958, when the novelist Ṣādeq Chūbak introduced her to the filmmaker and intellectual Ebrāhīm Golestān. Through Golestān, Farrokhzād encountered not only the works of Chūbak and Ṣādeq Hedāyat, but also a wider world of modern literature and cinema. He encouraged her to think more deeply about narrative structure, symbolism, and thematic coherence, influences that would prove decisive in the evolution of her mature poetry.



Ultimately, what transformed Farrokhzād's life—and made her one of the most controversial literary figures of her generation—was her fearless willingness to write about subjects long regarded as taboo in Iran's predominantly Shī'ī society. She treated love, desire, loneliness, and female autonomy with a directness unprecedented in modern Persian poetry. Religious authorities, literary traditionalists, and social conservatives condemned her work; even members of her own family and that of her former husband publicly disapproved of her writings. Although some sympathetic critics sought to defend her by emphasizing the originality of her imagery and her innovations in poetic language, meter, and form, such praise did little to soften the severe public criticism

that continued to surround her throughout her life.

⁵ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Yek Nāme az Dowrān-e Javānī-ye Forūgh," ("A Letter from the Young Days of Forūgh"), *Jāvdāneh Zīstan...* (To Live Eternally...), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 56.

⁶ Tūsi Hāyeri, "Tarḥī az Chehreh-ye Forūgh az Sokhanān-e Dīgarān" ("A Sketch of Forūgh Through the Words of Others"), *Jāvdāneh Zīstan*, p. 613.

⁷ Ibid.

Retrospection

Following the publication of *‘Eṣiyān (Rebellion)* in 1957, Forūgh Farrokhzād entered one of the most turbulent periods of her life, a time marked by emotional upheaval that culminated in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. The years between *Rebellion* and the publication of her landmark collection *Another Birth* in 1964 witnessed a profound transformation—not only in her literary vision and worldview, but also in her intellectual, social, and emotional life. She reassessed her friendships, reshaped her creative partnerships, and reconsidered the role of poetry in her life.

A decisive turning point came in 1958, when the novelist Ṣādeq Chūbak, who knew her well, introduced her to Ebrāhīm Golestān (1922–2023), the distinguished writer, filmmaker, and cinematographer. What began as an artistic acquaintance soon developed into a deep and enduring relationship. Having established his own film studio the previous year, Golestān was looking for creative collaborators. Farrokhzād joined him as an assistant, collaborator, and trusted confidante. Working alongside him, she also entered a new intellectual milieu, attending literary gatherings and private salons with Golestān and his wife and engaging with many of Iran's leading writers and artists.



Forough Farrokhzad & Ebrahim Golestan

The partnership offered Farrokhzād far more than professional employment. Through Golestān, she immersed herself in the works of Ṣādeq Hedāyat, Ṣādeq Chūbak, and other leading figures of modern Iranian fiction. She examined not only their stories but also the architecture beneath them—the interplay of theme, characterization, structure, and narrative design. Under Golestān's guidance, she developed a more sophisticated understanding of literary form and of the ways fiction conveys meaning beneath the surface of its narrative. Their creative partnership endured until her untimely death in 1967.

Although the private dimensions of their relationship lie beyond the scope of this article, its intellectual and emotional significance cannot be overlooked. Their mutual affection found expression in the artistic tributes they dedicated to one another. Farrokhzād dedicated *Another Birth* to Golestān with these lines:

My whole existence is a dark verse
That would perpetuate you and carry you
To the dawn of eternal buddings and growths.
In this verse, I sighed you, sigh.
With this verse, I graft you to trees, water, and fire.⁸

Following her death, Golestān's grief surfaced in a letter to Ṣādeq Chūbak:

I don't think about the past. It is useless anyway. And the future—for me, that too has become meaningless. Should I write? Should I make a movie? Waste of time. Life is a connection. I was a

⁸ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Tavallodī Dīgar (Another Birth)*, Talayeh Publishers, 2003, p. 171.

link in that connection, and still am. Forūgh was in my blood, and still is. Forūgh was between my fingers, but now she is not. There was a time I loved her so much that...⁹

Farrokhzād was never content merely to observe life from a distance or to recount the experiences of others. She believed that authentic art demanded direct engagement with life's deepest joys and darkest extremes, even at considerable personal cost. The crisis she endured became a turning point in her creative life. Emerging from it, she displayed a renewed artistic purpose and a greater confidence in her own voice, as though she had crossed an invisible threshold and returned with a more expansive understanding of herself and her art.

During this period, she deliberately curtailed her poetic output in order to deepen her engagement with the world around her. She read voraciously, immersed herself in contemporary intellectual and artistic currents, and studied the innovations of modern poets and fiction writers. Her objective was never imitation but transformation. She sought to reshape *she 'r-e now* into a poetic medium capable of matching the emotional depth, artistic complexity, and enduring resonance of the great works of classical Persian literature.

By a curious turn of fate, Golestān was undergoing a creative transformation of his own. Their parallel journeys strengthened the bond between them, fostering a partnership sustained by mutual trust, intellectual exchange, and artistic encouragement.¹⁰ When this intense period of renewal had run its course, both had been profoundly changed. Farrokhzād returned to poetry not as a young writer searching for her voice, but as a mature poet—self-assured, formally adventurous, and unmistakably original.

She reentered the world of *she 'r-e now* determined not simply to contribute to its evolution but to redefine its possibilities. Her ambition was to carry modern Persian poetry beyond the achievements of its pioneers and endow it with the artistic depth, permanence, and cultural authority long associated with the great masters of the Persian classical tradition.

Before the *Asīr* Collection

Farrokhzād's poetic career began during a period of profound cultural transition in Iran. *She 'r-e now* (modern verse) was gradually supplanting the conventions of classical Persian poetry, while modern fiction was beginning to reshape the country's literary imagination. Yet these developments initially unfolded beyond Farrokhzād's horizon. Immersed in the mystical lyricism of Ḥāfeẓ, she spent her formative years reading *dīvān* after *dīvān*, largely unaware of the literary revolution taking place around her. Even the poets of her own generation were still searching for direction, uncertain which path Persian poetry should follow. Years later, she recalled those early attempts with remarkable candor:

There was a time when I wrote a great deal of poetry. It poured out of me—two or three poems a day—in the kitchen, behind the sewing machine. ... I was very rebellious. The reason is that I read *dīvān* after *dīvān*. I don't know whether what I created was poetry. But whatever it was, it belonged to the "me" of those days—completely sincere. The poet within me had not yet taken shape. I had neither my own language nor my own form, nor even the intellectual capacity to express myself fully. I lived within a small, confined world usually called the family circle.¹¹

⁹ Hamid and Christina Moghadam, "Correspondence Between Ebrahim Golestan and Sadeq Chubak," *Iranian Studies*, Stanford, Stanford University.

¹⁰ Cf., Mehdi Akhavan Sāless. "Darbāre-ye Forūgh-e Farrokhzād" ("About Forūgh Farrokhzād"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstān* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 412.

¹¹ "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (4), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstān*, pp. 187-188.

In 1955, Farrokhzād submitted her first poem to *Rowshanfekr*. Fereydūn Moshīrī, who happened to be in the editorial office that day, later recalled the scene with cinematic clarity:¹²

A girl with disheveled hair and hands stained with fountain-pen ink entered the offices of *Rowshanfekr*. In her hand she held a folded sheet of paper, worn and crumpled from having been clenched a thousand times. Blushing and visibly trembling, she placed the page on the desk. That girl was Forūgh Farrokhzād. Twelve years before her death, she brought her first poem to *Rowshanfekr*. Within a week, hundreds of thousands of readers had encountered her uninhibited poetry. Before long, she had become a celebrated poet with a growing legion of admirers.¹³

According to Moshīrī, one of the leading poets of the day compared Farrokhzād's fearless voice and uncompromising assault on social hypocrisy to that of Ḥāfeẓ himself. "If she can match the Tongue of the Unseen's command of language," he predicted, "we will have another Ḥāfeẓ on our hands."

Moshīrī's recollection captures a striking contrast between the timid young woman who entered the *Rowshanfekr* office and the formidable literary figure she would soon become. Barely twenty years old, inexperienced, shy, and unfamiliar with Tehran's literary circles, she nevertheless carried a poem whose emotional candor would transform her life. Its publication thrust her into public view before she had fully prepared herself for the consequences.

Did she foresee the effect her poems would have on her conservative family—particularly on her father and her estranged husband? Could she have imagined the cultural shock her voice would unleash in a society unaccustomed to hearing a young woman speak so openly of desire, loneliness, and rebellion?

The sudden notoriety Moshīrī describes recalls the early career of Ṣādeq Hedāyat, whose first publications likewise brought immediate fame at considerable personal cost. Moshīrī's anonymous poet saw in Farrokhzād another Ḥāfeẓ. Had he been equally conversant with modern Persian fiction, he might instead have recognized another literary revolutionary—another Hedāyat.

Fereydūn Moshīrī

Farrokhzād's earliest inspirations were the great masters of classical Persian poetry—Ḥāfeẓ, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and Omar Khayyām.¹⁴ Among contemporary poets, however, Fereydūn Tavallālī served as her first model. She referred to him affectionately as *ostād-e khodam* ("my teacher").¹⁵

From Tavallālī she turned to Noṣrat Raḥmānī, whose poetry initially captivated her.¹⁶ The attraction proved short-lived. She came to feel that Raḥmānī's verse relied too heavily on the

¹² Fereydūn Moshīrī bridges the gap between traditional Persian poetry and *She'r-e Now* by emphasizing content over rigid formal structure.

¹³ "A Girl with Ink on Her Fingers," *Jāvdāneh Zīstan*, dar *Owj Mandan: Forūgh-e Farrokhzād* (Eternal Life, Permanence at the Peak: Forūgh Farrokhzād), Behrūz Jalālī, (ed.), Morvarid Publishers, 1375, pp. 702-703.

¹⁴ Ḥāfeẓ (d. 1390), Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), and Omar Khayyām (d. 1131) are among the most enduring classical Persian poets, whose mystical, philosophical, and lyrical works shaped centuries of poetic tradition.

¹⁵ Tavallālī, Fereydūn (1919–1985) was a key figure in transitional Persian poetry, blending traditional forms with new thematic directions. See Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Yek Nāmeḥ az Dowrān-e Javānī-ye Forūgh" ("A Letter from the Young Days that Forūgh"), *Jāvdāneh Zīstan*, dar *Owj Mandan: Forūgh-e Farrokhzād* (Eternal Life, Permanence at the Peak: Forough Farrokhzād), Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 57.

¹⁶ Assadollāh Rahmani (Noṣrat Raḥmānī (1930-2000), a follower of Tavallālī, wrote *chahārpārehs* and *she'r-e now*.

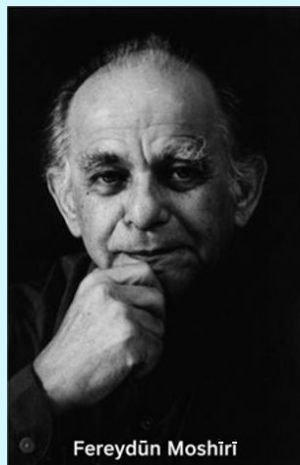
sensual pleasures of language, a style she increasingly regarded as better suited to light verse than to serious poetry.

Her attention then shifted to Mehdī Ḥamīdī Shīrāzī (1914–1986), the distinguished classicist and outspoken critic of Nīmā Yūshīj. She immersed herself in his *ghazals*, while his controversial collection *ʿEṣyān* (*Rebellion*, 1943) remained one of the most widely discussed poetic works of the period.¹⁷

During her early twenties, three younger poets exerted a particularly strong influence on her developing aesthetic: Nāder Nāderpūr (1929–2000), Amīr Hūshang Ebtehāj (Sāyeh) (1928–2022), and Fereydūn Moshīrī (1927–2000).¹⁸ Each represented a different response to the challenge of modern Persian poetry.

Nāderpūr, whose family background resembled Farrokhzād's own, had been introduced early to the works of Rūdakī and Ferdowsī. Yet throughout much of his career he remained suspended between two worlds. Although he gradually embraced Nīmā's revolutionary ideas, he continued composing in classical forms while searching for a modern poetic language. Ultimately, he concluded that the length of a stanza should be determined not by inherited convention but by the weight of thought and the rhythm of speech itself. Rhyme, he argued, should emerge naturally from the movement of the poem rather than from rigid formal requirements.¹⁹

Despite Nāderpūr's prominence—and despite his association with the Tūdeh Party—Farrokhzād showed little interest in either his political commitments or the ideological debates of the day.²⁰ She instinctively shared only one of his conclusions: that rhyme should arise organically from the poem rather than be imposed upon it. Her deepest allegiance remained with Ḥāfeẓ, whose *ghazals* she believed could be renewed for modern readers without sacrificing either their musicality or their emotional power.



Ebtehāj followed a different path. Beginning with classical *ghazals*, he gradually embraced *she'r-e now* and increasingly devoted his poetry to Iran's social and political realities.²¹ Those concerns, however, held little appeal for the young Farrokhzād. Her imagination remained fixed on the intimate dramas of personal experience rather than the ideological conflicts shaping contemporary Iran.

Among these three poets, Fereydūn Moshīrī exerted the deepest influence. His *chahārpāreh* offered precisely the balance she sought: rooted in the lyric tradition yet liberated from its formal rigidity. Moshīrī privileged emotional truth over inherited structure while preserving the cadence, imagery, and intimacy that had long distinguished Persian poetry. Farrokhzād admired the freshness of his imagery, the tenderness of his voice, the vitality of his imagination, and the quiet precision of his metaphors.²²

¹⁷ Ḥamīdī Shīrāzī's *ʿEṣyān* (*Rebellion*, 1943) was notable for its nationalist overtones and stylistic conservatism, standing in contrast to Nīmā Yūshīj's literary revolution.

¹⁸ Nāderpūr, Ebtehāj, and Moshīrī belonged to the post-Nīmā generation wrestling with questions of form, politics, and voice.

¹⁹ Nāderpūr's views on poetic form are discussed in several interviews, including *Goft-o-gū bā Nāder Nāderpūr* (Tehran: Morvarid Publishers, 1991).

²⁰ Farrokhzād's political detachment is widely noted, though some biographers emphasize her growing sensitivity to social injustice in later work, particularly *The House is Black* (1962).

²¹ Ebtehāj's poetry gained acclaim for its elegant balance between lyricism and critique, during the Pahlavi era.

²² Moshīrī's hybrid style is often seen as a bridge between classical to modern Persian poetry.

Toward the end of this formative period, she encountered the poetry of Abolqāsem Lāhūtī (1887–1957), the communist poet who had fled Iran and eventually settled in Soviet Tajikistan.²³ Lāhūtī broadened her artistic horizon. His poetry revealed possibilities that lay beyond the mystical and romantic universe of Ḥāfeẓ and Mawlānā, demonstrating that poetry could also grapple with history, society, and ideology. Under his influence, Farrokhzād gradually loosened her attachment to inherited forms and moved toward a more independent poetic voice.

That transformation becomes visible in her third collection, *‘Eṣyān (Rebellion)*. Throughout the volume one senses the unmistakable presence of *Qur’ānic* imagery and religious discourse.²⁴ Its central poem, "Bandegī" ("Servitude"), unusually long by Farrokhzād's standards, stages a dramatic meditation on the relationship among God, Satan, and humanity. Unlike her earlier poetry, it echoes the philosophical skepticism of Omar Khayyām. Like Khayyām before her, Farrokhzād interrogates divine authority, challenging what she provocatively calls "the Master of the Game."²⁵ Why, she asks, would God bestow the gift of poetic imagination upon humanity only to burden both poets and readers with suffering, doubt, and spiritual unrest?

A final influence deserves mention: Golchīn Gīlānī. More than any of her earlier mentors, Gīlānī encouraged Farrokhzād to leave inherited forms behind and embrace *she’r-e now*. His influence marked not merely a stylistic change but the beginning of her artistic emancipation—a decisive turning point that would shape both her mature poetry and her enduring place in modern Iranian literature.²⁶

Days of Confusion and Captivity

Following their initial appearance in literary journals, Forūgh Farrokhzād's earliest poems were collected under the title *Asīr (The Captive)*. The volume contains forty-four poems written in both Tehran and Ahvāz. To oversee its publication, Farrokhzād traveled repeatedly between the two cities, working closely with the editor, Fereydūn Kār (1929–2007), during the preparation of the manuscript.

In the Iran of the 1950s, such independence was highly unconventional. Women had neither the right to vote nor to hold public office, and mothers enjoyed few legal protections, including the right to retain custody of their children after divorce. Against this backdrop, a young married woman making frequent, unaccompanied journeys to consult a male editor inevitably attracted attention.²⁷

The trips also deepened the strains within her marriage. Her husband, already uneasy about her literary ambitions, became increasingly suspicious of her repeated visits to Tehran and her growing circle of literary acquaintances. The poems themselves—emotionally naked, intensely personal, and often openly erotic—only intensified the conflict. As *Asīr* entered the public sphere, the private tensions that had inspired it became impossible to conceal.

²³ Lāhūtī's exile in Tajikistan and subsequent role as Soviet court poet profoundly shaped both his ideology and aesthetics.

²⁴ The influence of Islamic cosmology and *Qur’anic* themes appears more explicitly in *‘Esiyān* than in Farrokhzād's earlier collections, often in complex and critical manner.

²⁵ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Dīvār (The Wall)*, Amir Kabir Publishers, 1976, pp. 11–49.

²⁶ Golchīn Gīlānī (1910–1971) was a pioneering modernist whose work transformed both Iranian children's literature and adult poetry through innovation in language and form.

²⁷ On the legal and social status of women in 1950s Iran, see Eliz Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny, Appeasement, and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 91–104.

The collection opens with "Shab va Havas" ("Night and Desire"), a poem that offers an early glimpse into Farrokhzād's emotional landscape and the conflicts that would come to define both her poetry and her life. Written in the dialogic style of Parvīn E 'tešāmī and echoing the lyrical cadence of Fereydūn Moshīrī's *chahārpāreh*, the poem personifies Desire as a lonely woman yearning for the embrace of Sleep, imagined as a distant bird perched high in a tree.

I am waiting for sleep, but alas,
Sleep refuses to overtake me again.
Sorrowful and forlorn, I suppose
He withdraws out of coyness.
Like a shadow he endlessly escapes
The bright snare my eyes have set.
Yet his hidden heart
Beats within the chambers of my own.

Gradually the allegory dissolves. Desire ceases to function merely as a poetic figure and begins to speak with the unmistakable voice of the poet herself. Spiritual longing gives way to physical yearning, and the poem acquires an emotional immediacy unusual in Persian poetry of the period.

I am submerged
In the innocence of youth,
In these moments of oblivion,
In these welcoming greetings,
In these kisses, glances, and embraces.
I want him to hold me tightly,
To press love-stricken me against himself,
To wrap me
In his warm and powerful arms.

...
I long for him—I long for him.
I want him beside me in the darkness.
I call to him in tears; I call without rest.
Patiently, endlessly, I call.

The appeal receives no answer. Longing gradually yields to resignation, and the poem closes on an image of haunting isolation:

My every gaze, still thirsty,
Searches every corner
Of the endless night.
Yet that bird is perhaps
Weeping on the roof of a wandering star.²⁸

Farrokhzād's decision to let her own voice emerge from within the allegory fundamentally alters the poem's structure. The boundary between narrator and character dissolves, transforming what begins as a conventional symbolic dialogue into an intimate erotic confession. The innovation was as daring as it was unsettling. That such verses had been written by a woman barely twenty years old shocked readers accustomed to female modesty and poetic restraint. Why, critics demanded, would a respectable young woman compose such poetry—and, more provocatively still, submit it to a widely read magazine such as *Rowshanfekr*?

Later critics often interpreted these early poems through the lens of feminist resistance. Such readings, however, risk imposing later concerns upon an earlier moment. The young woman

²⁸ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Asīr*, Amir Kabir Publications, 1976, pp. 11-14.

who entered the offices of *Rowshanfekr* with ink-stained fingers was not yet a political dissident. She was an ambitious literary experimentalist seeking recognition, longing for her father's approval, hoping to preserve her marriage, and searching for an authentic poetic voice.

Her immediate ambition was not to overthrow the *ghazal* tradition but to renew it. She believed that the classical form, especially in the hands of Ḥāfeẓ, still possessed untapped expressive possibilities.²⁹ If its emotional and thematic range could be expanded, the *ghazal* might once again speak directly to contemporary readers.

The editors of *Rowshanfekr* quickly recognized the sensational potential of her work. Rather than soften its provocative qualities, they emphasized them, helping to manufacture both her celebrity and her notoriety.

Public reactions were filtered through what Farrokhzād herself would later call the "petrified minds" of her critics. Some observers—notably the poet 'Alī Sepānlū—interpreted the elusive bird at the poem's conclusion as a symbolic representation of Farrokhzād herself.³⁰ Others, including relatives and acquaintances, responded far less sympathetically, denouncing both the poems and their author. Wounded by the hypocrisy of public admiration coupled with private condemnation, Farrokhzād answered with "Ramīdeh" ("Shunned"):

I flee from these people who,
Upon hearing my poems,
Bloom like roses before my face,
Yet in their secret gatherings
Brand me a woman of ill repute.³¹

What, then, was Farrokhzād attempting to modernize? The answer lies less in the poem's subject than in its emotional architecture. Whereas Ḥāfeẓ addresses the beloved through layers of metaphor, ambiguity, and mystical indirection, Farrokhzād strips away that protective distance. Her Desire pleads not with an abstract ideal but with an absent, tangible man—perhaps even her own husband. The mystical vocabulary of classical Persian lyric becomes the language of personal intimacy.

Herein lies the poem's central tension. As a Sufī master, Ḥāfeẓ spoke from within a shared symbolic universe in which every image invited multiple meanings. Farrokhzād, by contrast, wrote as a young wife and mother living within the constraints of a deeply patriarchal Shi'ī society. Her intervention is neither allegorical nor safely symbolic. It is immediate, vulnerable, and unmistakably personal. By allowing the poet's own voice to overtake the allegory, she deliberately destabilizes the poem's symbolic framework. By its conclusion, the reader can no longer say with certainty whether the elusive bird represents Sleep, Desire, the absent beloved, or Farrokhzād herself.

Yet precisely this instability became the source of the poem's originality. As Moshīrī later observed, it also became the foundation of her sudden fame.³²

Her second collection, *Dīvār* (*The Wall*), contains twenty-five poems and opens with the controversial "Gonāh" ("Sin"). Although artistically less accomplished than "Shab va Havas," it carries her experiment one decisive step further. Here personification disappears altogether. The

²⁹ Farrokhzād's admiration for Ḥāfeẓ is widely documented. See Afsāneh Najmābādī, "Reading with Forūgh: Recasting Women, Prescribing Gender," *Iranian Studies* 28, nos. 1–2 (1995): 101–22.

³⁰ 'Alī Sepānlū, quoted in Mahnāz Koushā, *Voices from Iran: The Changing Lives of Iranian Women* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 137.

³¹ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Asīr*, Amir Kabir Publications, 1976, pp. 18–20.

³² See Fereydūn Moshīrī, interview in *Roshd Literary Quarterly*, no. 3 (1973): 27–32.

poem recounts what appears to be an illicit sexual encounter with startling directness. No symbolic figures intervene between experience and expression; only the poet's own voice remains, recalling an act so overpowering that, in her own words, "I could not stop myself from committing it."

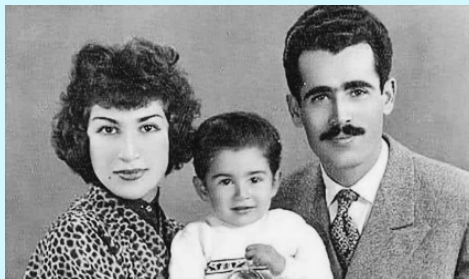
In her third collection, *ʿEṣyān (Rebellion)*, Farrokhzād returned to the dialogue between personified emotions but with considerably greater artistic control. In "Setīzeh" ("Strife"), Desire confronts Dream directly, while the poet herself remains outside the dramatic exchange. Dream, like Sleep in "Shab va Havas," perches upon a branch and begins his enchantment. This time, however, Desire refuses to surrender. Distrusting Dream's promises, she reaches instead for a potion to ward off sleep. When Dream protests and recounts the hardships he has endured to reach her, she quietly closes her weary eyes; when he persists, she presses her eyelids shut in an act of final defiance.

Taken together, the three collections comprise eighty-six poems. Yet Farrokhzād herself would later judge them with remarkable severity. Reflecting in 1961 upon her early work, she concluded:

In the three books that I have published so far, judged by my present standards, there may not be more than seven or eight good poems.³³

Husband

At the age of sixteen, Forūgh Farrokhzād entered marriage deeply in love with her husband, Parvīz Shāpūr. Yet, for reasons discussed earlier, the union soon unraveled, ending in divorce after only a few years. Her family—especially her father—viewed both the marriage and its dissolution with deep disappointment. Farrokhzād addresses this conflict in a letter to him:



[You] consider me a frivolous woman with silly ideas obtained from reading romance novels and the stories in the *Tehrān Moṣawwar* magazine. I wish that was the case. If that was true, I could live a happy life! Because I would be satisfied with having a small room, a husband who is satisfied with life, employment, and dreads any new responsibility or seeking any advancement. And, of course, fighting with the mother-in-law and thousands of other dirty and meaningless issues. That would be if I didn't know a bigger and more beautiful world. Then I would accept to, like a silkworm, languish and grow in my limited, dark cocoon to the end of my life! But I have refused, and continue to refuse, such a life.³⁴

As Farrokhzād became increasingly involved in Tehran's literary circles, Shāpūr grew uneasy with her close friendships with male writers and intellectuals, including the editor of *Roshanfeker* magazine and the distinguished modernist poet Nāder Nāderpūr.³⁵ Reports that some

³³ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Negareshī be She'r-e Emrūz" (A Look at Contemporary Poetry), in Behruz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 167.

³⁴ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Yek Goftogū-ye Kūtah," ("A Brief Conversation"), Behruz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 219.

³⁵ Nāder Nāderpūr was one of the prominent figures of the modernist generation of Persian poets influenced by Western literary forms and existentialist thought. Although his friendship with Farrokhzād has often been discussed in literary circles, it was also sensationalized by the popular press. See Michael C. Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman: Forūgh Farrokhzād and Her Poetry* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1987), 52–54.

of these men—notably Nāderpūr—viewed their relationships with her in romantic terms only deepened his suspicions and strained an already fragile marriage.³⁶

Despite the divorce, Farrokhzād continued to visit Shāpūr and, as the father of her son Kāmiyār, regarded him as a lasting member of her extended family. The enduring bond between them is evident in the dedication to her second poetry collection, *Dīvār* (*The Wall*), where she wrote:

"Dedicated to Parviz, in memory of our shared past and with the hope that a token of my small gift
can be a response to his infinite love.
—Forūgh Farrokhzād, July 12, 1956 [1335]."³⁷

Shāpūr's affection appears to have been reciprocated. Even after their divorce, he financed Farrokhzād's trip to Europe—a gesture that reflected not only generosity but also a continuing emotional investment in her future.³⁸

Farrokhzād's poetry traces the emotional evolution of this relationship. In poems such as "Ḥasrat" ("Regret") and "Yādī az Gozashteh" ("A Remembrance of the Past"), she recalls with tenderness the early years of their life together in Ahvaz.³⁹ As her poetic voice matured, however, nostalgia gradually gave way to disillusionment. In "'Eṣyān" ("Rebellion"), she confronts her husband's attempts to regulate both her writing and her independence. Recalling his objections to her increasingly provocative poems and his efforts to confine her to the domestic sphere in order to protect the family's reputation, she writes:

I said cage—but how can I explain?
I was oblivious to hypocrites.
This scheming, playful world—
It eventually deceived me.⁴⁰



In "Bāzgasht" ("Return"), Farrokhzād attributes the failure of her marriage not merely to her husband's conduct but to the suffocating conventions of Iranian society itself. The critique becomes more intimate in "Rāz-e Man" ("My Secret"), where she portrays a husband incapable of understanding the emotional demands of a poet. Mistaking her melancholy for infidelity, he fails to recognize it as the natural expression of a restless creative spirit:

Woe to me—and those eyes that
Continuously searched in hidden places—
Day and night, trying to decipher
The secret in my eyes.
Constantly eavesdropping
On my conversations.

³⁶ For further discussion of Farrokhzād's controversial relationships and their impact on her public reputation, see Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 182–84.

³⁷ For the original dedication, see the second edition of *Dīvār* (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1956), unnumbered front matter.

³⁸ Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, 56.

³⁹ These poems appear in various collections of Farrokhzād's early work. See Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Divār* (Tehran: Morvarid Publications, 1956), poems 8 and 11.

⁴⁰ Translation adapted from Sholeh Wolpé, trans., *Sin: Selected Poems of Forūgh Farrokhzād* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 76.

...
Well, here it is—
What you have been so intently searching for:
My secret—the secret of a mad woman.
A mad woman for whom
Renown and grace have no meaning.
The secret of a woman
Who has become a source of hate for you.
That is what pains me—not your anger,
Which means nothing to me.⁴¹

The poems collected in *Dīvār* are rarely angry denunciations. Instead, they are intimate vignettes that preserve fleeting emotional moments with remarkable delicacy. Farrokhzād believed that such moments, though easily overlooked, possessed a truth inaccessible to reason alone. In "Gonāh" ("Sin"), for example, she evokes a brief moment of forbidden intimacy that resists moral judgment or rational explanation.⁴² Throughout the collection she explores her private longings, disappointments, memories, and desires—particularly those connected with her husband and her son—revealing the emotional complexity of a woman struggling to reconcile love, artistic freedom, and social expectation.

In "Haḡqeh" ("The Wedding Band"), Farrokhzād widens her critique beyond her own experience to challenge the institution of marriage itself. The wedding ring becomes a powerful symbol of confinement, representing the social conventions that reduce marriage to a mechanism of obedience, silence, and female submission.⁴³ What began as the story of a failed marriage thus evolves into a broader indictment of the cultural structures that deny women autonomy and self-expression.



Son

Following the dissolution of her marriage, Forūgh Farrokhzād endured the deepest personal trauma of her early life: the loss of custody of her only son, the three-year-old Kāmyār (affectionately known as Kāmī). Stripped of her maternal rights, she likened herself to a caged bird, sustained only by dreams of a reunion that seemed increasingly beyond reach. While she expressed her grief in deeply personal terms, critics and readers repeatedly misread her poetry, imposing romantic and erotic interpretations on verses that were, in fact, laments for her absent child.

In the title poem of her first collection, *Asīr* (*Captive*), the simple declaration *tora mīkhāham* ("I want you"), addressed to her son, was widely mistaken for a lover's plea:

I want you although I know
I shall never embrace you.
You embody the bright blue sky;
I remain a mere caged bird.

⁴¹ Ibid., 89.

⁴² Ibid., 53–55.

⁴³ See Afsāneh Najmābādī, "The Erotic Vocabularies of Reformist Women Writers in Early Twentieth-Century Iran," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 17 (2000): 47–62.

...
Oh, sky, were I to one day
Fly away from this silent cell,
What should I say to that child?
Forget me. I am a caged bird!⁴⁴

Kāmyār remained with his father and attended school in Tehran. He was in the ninth grade when his mother died. He later continued his education in London and, in 1979, graduated from the Art Center. Although he painted numerous portraits of his mother, he admitted that nothing could fill the void her absence had left in his soul. In addition to the poems in *Asīr* and *ʿEṣyān*, Kāmyār believed that the following verses from *Īmān Biyāvarīm be Āghāz-e Faṣl-e Sard* (*Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season*) also referred symbolically to him:

When my trust was dangling on the loose string of justice,
And, all over the city, they were cutting my heart into pieces.
When they were covering the childish eyes of my love
With the dark kerchief of law.⁴⁵

Kāmyār believed that these experiences remained permanently etched in his mother's memory.⁴⁶ The familiar second-person pronoun *to*, entirely natural in a mother's address to her child, was instead interpreted as an illicit appeal to a male lover.⁴⁷ This persistent misreading, rooted in patriarchal and moralistic assumptions, deeply troubled Farrokhzād. A poem suffused with maternal longing and separation was transformed, in the minds of many readers, into an expression of romantic desire.

This misunderstanding was not an isolated incident. The theme of maternal loss recurs with striking emotional force in "Dīv-e Shab" ("Night Demon"), in which Farrokhzād dramatizes the moment when her mother-in-law arrives to take Kāmyār from her home. The sleeping child, his head resting in her lap, becomes the center of a haunting allegory: a night demon invades the domestic sanctuary, stealing children from their mothers' arms. The poem begins as a lullaby before evolving into a surreal confrontation with an accusatory force that leaves the poet painfully self-aware:

Kāmī, Kāmī, lift your head off my lap.⁴⁸

The moment evokes not merely separation but an irreparable rupture—a passage from intimacy into emptiness.⁴⁹ In the poem "Bīmār" ("Sick"), Farrokhzād imagines her son burning with fever, helpless in his bed. Holding his delicate fingers, she recalls the warmth and vitality that once filled their lives. Her anguish is immediate and visceral:

Often his voice reaches my ear:
"Mom, my heart is on fire."
When I look, I see a little boy
In an unkempt bed,

⁴⁴ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Asīr*, Amir Kabir Publications, 1976, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁵ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Īmān Biyāvarīm," *Tavallodī Dīgar*, p. 303.

⁴⁶ Kāmyār Shāpūr, "Harfhāi az Kāmyār Shāpūr" ("A Few Words by Kāmyār Shāpūr"), Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 624.

⁴⁷ See Afsāneh Najmābādī, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 126-27.

⁴⁸ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Asīr*, Amir Kabir Publications, 1976, pp. 69-72.

⁴⁹ Farzāneh Milānī, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 114.

Burning with fever.
The night is silent. In my arms,
The child moans in intense pain.
The monotonous beat of the clock
Laughs at my agitation and distress.⁵⁰

Here, time itself becomes cruel and mocking, reinforcing the poet's utter helplessness. Motherhood is rendered not as an abstract ideal but as immediate, physical suffering.

At this stage of her life, Farrokhzād found consolation only in imagining a future in which Kāmyār might finally understand her side of the story. She believed that, with time, he would recognize how his father's family had shaped his perception of her. In "She' rī Barā-ye To" ("A Poem for You"), she addresses that imagined future directly:

I am the one with a soiled reputation,
The one who laughs out loud.
I sought a voice of my own—
But, regrettably, I was a woman.⁵¹

Here Farrokhzād transforms social condemnation into an act of quiet defiance. She later reflected:

I thought of that land [Iran], the land that now was so many miles away from me, the land where being *qua* being was controversial. There I saw ridiculous and weak people who bowed their heads with artificial humility before idols of their own making. Idols that, over the years, they themselves had created and which they themselves knew were false. Yet they did not have the courage to strike those idols down and step out of that ridiculous and hateful world.⁵²

Her voice grows sharper as she indicts the moral arbiters who had helped shape her fate:

I know it is difficult to fight
This faith-wearing hypocrite lot.
It is a while, my dear innocent child,
Since Satan has made our city his lair.⁵³

Yet even amid this bitterness, she imagines a day when Kāmyār, now grown, will discover her true voice hidden within her poems:

A time will come when your eyes
Will glide over this painful verse.
You will look for me between my words
And will say: She was my mother.⁵⁴

Her voice thus shifts from lamentation to hope, however fragile, resting on the enduring power of literature and memory. Some critics have detected echoes of Ḥāfeẓ in these lines. More revealing, however, is their uncompromising indictment of the moral hypocrisy that had estranged the poet from both her society and her son.

⁵⁰ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Divān-e Forūgh Farrokhzād* [Collected Poems of Forūgh Farrokhzād], Behrūz Gharīb (ed.), Morvarid Publishers, 1985, 198.

⁵¹ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Eṣyān (Rebellion)*, Amir Kabir Publishers, 1976, pp. 55-61.

⁵² Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Dar Diyār-e Dīgar, Khāterāt-e Safar-e Orūpā (Safarnāme-ye Itāliyā)" ("In a Different Land, Memoirs of a Journey to Europe [The Italian Diary]", in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 97.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵⁴ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Eṣyān (Rebellion)*, Amir Kabir Publishers, 1976, pp. 57-60.

By the time she composed "Bāzgasht" ("Return"), even that fragile hope appears to have faded. Returning from abroad, Farrokhzād encounters a homeland drained of life: oppressive heat, a dry riverbed, colorless houses, and the once-familiar dome of the old mosque resembling an overturned, broken bowl. Children torment stray dogs with stones, completing a vision of moral and spiritual desolation. Returning to her small room, she whispers:

I leaned against the wall,
And quietly asked, "Is that you, Kāmī?"
But alas, I realized that
From that bygone bitter memory
Only a name has remained.⁵⁵

Years later, when Kāmyār was asked which of his mother's poems, apart from "Bāzgasht," meant the most to him, he named "Fath-e Bāgh" ("The Conquest of the Garden"). It is one of Farrokhzād's major poems. Looking through a narrow crevice in a weathered wall, she glimpses a radiant reality concealed from ordinary sight. According to Kāmyār, that hidden landscape symbolized the peaceful world his mother had always longed for—a world free from artificial rules, prohibitions, and human constraints.

This quiet devastation marks the end of a journey—not merely through space, but through the inner landscape of a mother estranged from her child. Her whispered question hangs in the air, unanswered, dissolving into silence.

Muse

Farrokhzād's muse is one of the central forces behind the intensity and originality of her poetry. Reflecting on the nature of inspiration, she once remarked:

For me, my muse is like a friend with whom I can share my troubles. My muse completes me, satisfies me, without bothering me.⁵⁶

More than a literary convention, this muse emerges as a deeply internalized source of creative resilience—a presence that not only inspires her poetic voice but also sustains her as she confronts the social, political, and personal pressures of her time. It is this inner companion that enables her, despite relentless opposition from critics and a largely unsympathetic literary establishment, to persevere in her poetic experiments until they achieve full artistic realization. Many of her harshest detractors lacked the imagination to appreciate the originality of her vision and sought instead to dismiss or suppress it.

In *Īmān Biyāvarīm be Āghāz-e Faṣl-e Sard* ("Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season"), Farrokhzād alludes to the simultaneous birth of herself and her muse, suggesting a metaphysical union that lies at the heart of her poetic identity.⁵⁷ More often than not, the muse appears as a gentle companion, coaxing creativity from the edge of despair. At times, however, as in the poem "Qorbānī" ("Sacrifice"), it assumes a darker, more demanding form—voracious, relentless, and ultimately destructive:

⁵⁵ Ibid., 211.

⁵⁶ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Goftogū bā Forūgh (No. 5)" ("A Conversation with Forūgh (No. 5), in Behrūz Jalālī ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 202. (interviewers: Sīrūs Ṭāhbāz and Dr. Gholamhosayn Sā'edī)

⁵⁷ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Dīvān-e Forūgh Farrokhzād* [Collected Poems of Forūgh Farrokhzād], ed. Behrūz Gharīb (Tehran: Morvarid Press, 1985), 243.

Except these tearful eyes,
What else remains to me for you to take away?
Oh poetry, oh blood-sucking muse,
Enough is enough. No more sacrifice!⁵⁸

Here, Farrokhzād portrays the muse as both benefactor and tormentor, demanding creative fulfillment at the cost of personal suffering. Poetry may offer redemption, but for Farrokhzād it is never without sacrifice.

Death

During this turbulent period, the cumulative weight of Farrokhzād's personal struggles drove her to the brink of suicide. Yet the confrontation with death proved not to be an ending but the catalyst for a profound personal and artistic transformation. As she later reflected, the experience compelled her to reorder her life, confront her inner conflicts, and redefine the purpose of her art.⁵⁹

In "Ba 'dhā" ("In the End"), she constructs a haunting meditation on the moments following her own imagined death—a vision marked less by tragedy than by remarkable serenity:

My hands, free from the charm of poetry,
Slide gently across my notebook.
I remember how once the blood of poetry
Coursed aflame in my hands.
After me, a stranger, thinking of me,
Will step into my humble room.
At the side of the mirror, he will see
A strand of hair, a fingerprint, and a comb.⁶⁰

In this poem, death is not tragic but strangely intimate—a quiet release from the confines of the "family circle," the former life, and the roles she had been compelled to inhabit. The death she imagines is symbolic: a necessary severance from her former self. What follows is not oblivion but rebirth.

This turning point finds further expression in "Zolmat" ("Pitch Dark"), where a faint light appears on the horizon, though even this glimmer is shadowed by uncertainty. Her muse cautions her against mistaking illusion for hope:

The glimmer in the distance
Might not be a light at all.
It could be the shining eyes
Of the wolves of the desert.⁶¹

Yet, despite the warning, Farrokhzād chooses to continue. She embraces uncertainty and willingly passes through the portal of metaphorical death, emerging not merely as a poet but as a self-aware, socially conscious artist.

⁵⁸ Farzāneh Milānī, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 119–20.

⁵⁹ Farrokhzād, *Dīvān*, 248.

⁶⁰ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Eṣyān (Rebellion)*, Amir Kabir Publishers, 1976, pp. 127–130.

⁶¹ Forūgh Farrokhzād, *Eṣyān (Rebellion)*, Amir Kabir Publishers, 1976, pp. 87–88.

This transformation was intellectual as well as spiritual. During this period of withdrawal, Farrokhzād deliberately curtailed her poetic output and immersed herself in the study of contemporary literary movements. She read widely—modernist poets, progressive fiction writers, and the leading critical thinkers of her day—while simultaneously examining the structures and injustices of Iranian society. Her temporary silence was therefore not a retreat but a period of preparation.

When she finally re-emerged into the realm of *she 'r-e now*, Farrokhzād brought with her a voice that had not merely survived suffering but had been transformed by it. She returned not simply to write, but to reshape the possibilities of modern Persian poetry, seeking to endow it with a cultural and spiritual resonance worthy of the great classical tradition while remaining unmistakably modern.

Days of Liberality and Vision

At the dawn of the 1960s, following a failed suicide attempt, Forūgh Farrokhzād entered a period of profound self-examination. The crisis, rather than marking an end, became a turning point—a moment in which she reassessed the direction of her life, her artistic commitments, and the possibilities that still lay before her. Convinced that her education, experience, and creative instincts could provide the foundation for a meaningful future, she resolved to undertake sweeping changes in both her personal and artistic worlds. Despite the limitations that had shaped her earlier years, she returned to literature with renewed determination, studying the principles of *she 'r-e now* and approaching contemporary fiction with an intensity and curiosity that transformed her understanding of literary expression.

In her earlier work, Farrokhzād had experimented with combining the lyrical sensibility of Ḥāfeẓ's *ghazal* tradition with the *chahārpāreh* form popularized by Fereydūn Moshīrī. The experiment had proved successful and had resulted in three published collections of poetry. Yet, by this stage of her development, she was no longer satisfied with refinement within existing forms. She sought a more radical transformation: to unite the emotional depth and symbolic resonance of the classical *ghazal* with the structural freedom of *she 'r-e now*; to renew the themes of Persian poetry through contemporary experience; to incorporate the narrative power of modern fiction; and ultimately to create a poetic voice unlike anything that had appeared before in Persian literature.

With this goal in mind, Farrokhzād immersed herself in the aesthetic reforms initiated by Nīmā Yūshīj, the founder of New Persian Poetry. Responding to Iranians' growing encounter with European thought and culture, Nīmā had challenged the inherited conventions of classical verse by transforming its metrics (*awzān*), structures, and approaches to rhyme.⁶² He argued that the strict formal requirements of traditional poetry often prevented poets from expressing the psychological tensions, social uncertainties, and existential concerns of the modern age.

Farrokhzād recognized in Nīmā's work a revolutionary redefinition of both rhythm and poetic vision. No longer bound by the fixed proportions of the classical *miṣra'* (hemistich), the poem could now unfold according to the natural movement of thought and emotion. The length and structure of each poetic unit were determined not by inherited rules but by the inner rhythm of

⁶² Cf., Abdulālī Dastgheyb, *Nīmā Yūshīj: Naqd va Barrasī* (Nīmā Yushīj: Criticism and Review), Farzin Publications, 1973, p. 54.

the poet's experience. This liberation allowed poetry to absorb new realities, accommodate unfamiliar ideas, and respond more directly to the complexities of modern life.

Equally significant was Nīmā's rejection of obligatory rhyme, a convention that had often restricted vocabulary and forced poets into artificial expressions. Freed from this constraint, poets could select words according to meaning, tone, and emotional necessity, including colloquial and contemporary expressions previously excluded from serious poetry. The result was a broader and more authentic poetic landscape. In this new vision, the beloved (*ma 'shūq*) was no longer an inaccessible idealized figure but a living, physical presence—a human being of flesh and emotion, much like the beloved portrayed in Farrokhzād's own earlier poem "Shab va Havas" ("Sleep and Desire").⁶³ Poetry became an organic act of discovery: the poet transformed personal experience into language, while the poem itself evolved freely in the process of creation.

Nīmā's innovations, however, were far from universally accepted. Among his early followers was Fereydūn Tavallālī, whom Farrokhzād once affectionately called her *ostād-e khodam* ("my own master"). Although Tavallālī initially adopted Nīmā's methods, he eventually became one of their prominent critics and returned to the classical forms of the *ghazal* and *qaṣīda*.⁶⁴ Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī (1914–1991), seeking a position between traditionalism and radical modernism, developed a simplified poetic style of his own. In contrast, Aḥmad Shāmlū (1925–2000) extended Nīmā's innovations in new directions, creating an increasingly complex and distinctive poetic language. Drawing upon the symbolic richness of Ḥāfeẓ and Khayyām, Shāmlū constructed a landscape of paradox in which abstract and concrete images merged through striking personifications and oxymoronic expressions—an achievement without precedent in Persian poetry.

These innovations deeply influenced the literary avant-garde of the period, and Farrokhzād soon moved beyond Moshīrī's *chahārpāreh* tradition to embrace Shāmlū's more expansive vision. Her poem "Setīzeh" ("Strife") reflects this transitional stage, revealing a poet searching for a new language capable of expressing inner conflict, social awareness, and the complexity of modern existence.

At the same time, Farrokhzād recognized that traditional poetic themes could no longer fully represent the psychological and social realities of contemporary Iran. She therefore turned her attention to modern Persian fiction, where she discovered new possibilities for exploring human experience. The short stories of her time were often organized around plot, social issues, and a wide range of characters—most of them urban men. Farrokhzād sought to enlarge this literary world by bringing women's lives, private struggles, and the experiences of the marginalized into the center of artistic representation.

In search of new models, she studied the works of Ṣādeq Hedāyat (1903–1951), Iran's most influential modernist writer of the 1930s and 1940s.⁶⁵ In *Būf-e Kūr* (*The Blind Owl*, 1937), Hedāyat had woven together Iranian, European, and Indian intellectual traditions, creating a cosmopolitan style that deeply attracted her. She admired his disciplined organization, haunting imagery, and philosophical intensity. She examined *Būf-e Kūr* alongside his celebrated short story "Seh Qaṭreh Khūn" ("Three Drops of Blood," 1932), paying close attention to his careful construction of theme,

⁶³ Cf., Karīmī-Hakkāk and Kāmran Ṭalaṭṭof (eds.), "Essays on Nīmā Yūshīj: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry," *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 12 no. (2004): 100-105.

⁶⁴ Kāmyār 'Ābedī, "Tavallālī, Fereydūn," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2016.

⁶⁵ Īraj Bashīrī, "The Life of Sadeq Hedayat," 2019.

structure, and language. These techniques became essential elements in her own evolving artistic approach.⁶⁶

Farrokhzād also engaged closely with the fiction of Šādeq Chūbak (1916–1998), an outspoken atheist and advocate for women's rights. Through stories such as “‘Adl” (“Justice”) and “Daryā Cherā Tūfānī Shode Būd?” (“Why Had the Sea Grown Stormy?”), she encountered a literature marked by uncompromising realism, social criticism, and moral urgency. Chūbak's willingness to confront suffering, inequality, and human vulnerability expanded her understanding of what literature could reveal and challenge.

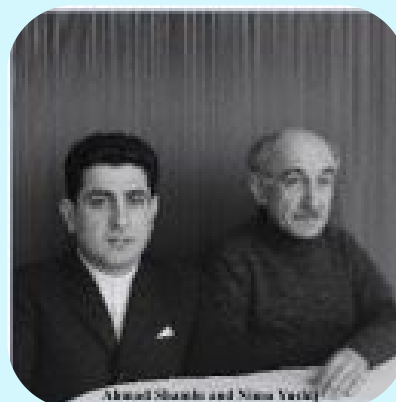
This sustained engagement with the poetry of Nīmā and Shāmlū and the fiction of Hedāyat and Chūbak opened before Farrokhzād a vast landscape of formal and thematic possibilities. More importantly, it revealed the extraordinary expressive power of the Persian language once freed from the ornamental restrictions of classical poetics. Although the precise influence of these writers on her later poetry remains a subject for further study, their impact on her intellectual development is undeniable. They introduced her to new artistic methods as well as to the competing social, philosophical, and political ideas circulating throughout mid-century Iran—ideas that broadened her vision of both literature and life.

Thus, Farrokhzād emerged from the turbulence of youth and the confines of familial and social expectation into a self-defined existence shaped by intellectual independence and artistic courage. The works she produced during this period bear witness to that transformation. The paths she opened—toward a more personal, experimental, and socially conscious poetry—continue to inspire those who seek to extend her vision. The following sections will examine more closely the influence of Shāmlū and, subsequently, Nīmā on the evolution of Farrokhzād's poetic voice.

Aḥmad Shāmlū

Before encountering the poetry of Aḥmad Shāmlū and, later, the innovations of Nīmā Yūshīj, Forūgh Farrokhzād had given little sustained thought to the nature of poetic language or to the poet's visionary responsibility.⁶⁷ In the early stages of her career, she viewed poetry largely as a source of pleasure—a private means of amusement and self-expression. As she later acknowledged, she had once believed that writing poetry added something to her existence. Only after encountering Shāmlū's work did she arrive at a more sobering understanding: the act of writing poetry did not merely enrich the poet; it demanded a sacrifice. In the process of creation, the poet gives something of herself away.⁶⁸

This realization marked a decisive turning point in Farrokhzād's artistic evolution. Many of the poems in *Tavallodī Dīgar* and *Īmān Biyāvarīm be*



⁶⁶ Īraj Bashīrī, "The Blind Owl: A Summary of the Story (Revised 2020)," rev. ed., 2020.

⁶⁷ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 6), in *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 225-226.

⁶⁸ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 4) in *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 194.

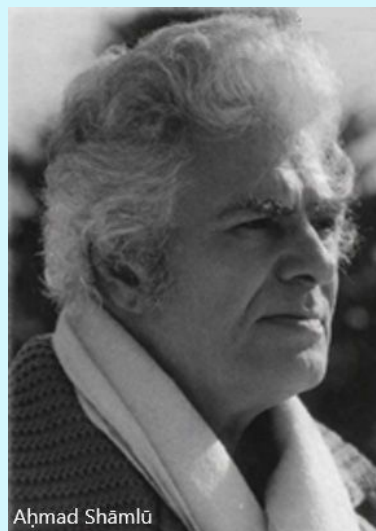
Āghāz-e Faṣl-e Sard emerged from this period of intellectual and emotional transformation. It was during these years, as she herself observed, that “thought qua thought” entered her life.⁶⁹ She discovered that liberation from inherited poetic restrictions did not merely alter form; it deepened the poet’s capacity for reflection, allowing emotion and intellect to develop together.⁷⁰

Farrokhzād came to recognize that poetic form, by itself, possesses neither a purely traditional nor a purely modern identity. A form is not classical or contemporary simply by virtue of its structure; rather, its vitality depends on how meaning is created within it. Likewise, she argued that despite the historical distance separating her world from that of Ḥāfeẓ, the fundamental concerns of human existence remained remarkably similar. Both societies wrestled with questions of religion, morality, love, honor, and courage.⁷¹ For this reason, she believed that the beauty and depth of the classical *ghazal* could be preserved while its structure, imagery, and rhythms were renewed for the modern age—replacing the traditional *beyt* (couplet) with more flexible poetic units and contemporary modes of expression.⁷² (This subject will be examined in greater detail below.)

One of the great advantages in studying Farrokhzād’s poetry is the extensive body of self-reflective commentary she left behind: observations, confessions, and critical assessments concerning her own work, her artistic development, and the achievements of her contemporaries. Some of these statements are forceful and even polemical, particularly when directed against critics whom she believed were imprisoned by convention and unwilling to recognize innovation:

In our country, and perhaps throughout the world, there are people who stubbornly cling to their own opinions and rumors. For them, nothing exists unless they declare that it exists. This includes “beauty.” An object is considered beautiful or harmonious only when it conforms to their predetermined standards. “Correct” is whatever falls within the boundaries of their limited or expansive vision. As judges, they oppose everything new—new ideas, new forms—in life, love, poetry, music, painting, and elsewhere... without making even the slightest effort to understand what they are judging.⁷³

Yet Farrokhzād was equally generous toward those whose criticism and encouragement contributed to her growth. Her tone toward such figures—especially Shāmlū and Nīmā—is marked not by rivalry but by gratitude, respect, and intellectual kinship:



Aḥmad Shāmlū

⁶⁹ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), “Goftogū bā Forūgh” (No. 6), in *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 228.

⁷⁰ Behrūz Jalālī, “Goftogū bā Forūgh” (No. 2), in *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 176.

⁷¹ Behrūz Jalālī, “Goftogū bā Forūgh” (No. 1), in *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 172.

⁷² Behrūz Jalālī, “Goftogū bā Forūgh” (No. 1), in *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 169-172.

⁷³ Forūgh Farrokhzād, “Dar Diyār-e Dīgar, Khāterāt-e Safar-e Orūpā (Safarnāme-ye Itāliyā) (“In a Different Land, Memoirs of a Journey to Europe [The Italian Diary]”), Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 110.

I became familiar with Shāmlū before I came to know Nīmā. Shāmlū was the bridge between Nīmā and my generation.⁷⁴ People encountered Shāmlū before they encountered Nīmā.⁷⁵

Farrokhzād regarded Shāmlū as the catalyst for her linguistic awakening and for her discovery of the immense expressive possibilities of Persian. Reflecting on his poetry, she wrote:⁷⁶

Throughout his artistic career, [Shāmlū] has addressed social realities, viewing the world through a broad and encompassing lens. He expresses the oppression and despair of his age through the blood and sinew of his language. His pain—raw, beautiful, and humane—is genuine, and it often raises his poetry to epic dimensions... Beneath the surface of his verse lives a child with an innocent heart, crying out for sunlight and for life.⁷⁷

Through close study of Shāmlū's style and experimentation with language, Farrokhzād came to understand that poets, like students, advance through stages of growth. She recognized that poetic themes cannot simply be borrowed or imposed; they must first be absorbed, experienced, and transformed within the poet's own consciousness before they can emerge authentically in verse. During her creative silence, she therefore pursued two parallel paths: an inward journey to discover her true self and a rigorous reexamination of her craft in order to align herself with the principles of *she 'r-e now*. Reflecting on this period, she wrote:

Once you know yourself and master your craft, poems flow from your pen effortlessly.⁷⁸

One of the most significant lessons Farrokhzād gained during her engagement with Shāmlū's work was the ability to absorb the voices and insights of other writers and artists without losing her own identity. Through her relationship with Ebrāhīm Golestān, she learned how the ideas of others could become integral elements within her own poetic architecture rather than mere external influences. Her incorporation of thematic and conceptual elements drawn from Ṣādeq Hedāyat and Ṣādeq Chūbak, discussed below, demonstrates the depth of this artistic maturation.

Her admiration for Shāmlū, however, did not prevent her from evaluating his poetry critically. She appreciated his achievements while remaining attentive to what she perceived as his limitations. In her view, Shāmlū was sometimes overwhelmed by the beauty of grand ideas without sufficiently examining their deeper implications:

In my opinion, Shāmlū is often enchanted by beautiful concepts. The praise that appears in some of his poems arises from the blending of these concepts without sufficient discrimination. It comes from his fascination with humanity, love, friendship, and women. He observes, becomes captivated, and forgets that in order to reach true solitude—the inner space of contemplation—he must descend more deeply into those very ideas.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Dar Diyār-e Dīgar, Khāterāt-e Safar-e Orūpā (Safarnāme-ye Itāliyā) ("In a Different Land, Memoirs of a Journey to Europe [The Italian Diary]"), Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 110.

⁷⁵ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 4), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 186.

⁷⁶ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 4), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 186-187.

⁷⁷ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Negāreshī be She'r-e Emrūz" ("A Look at Contemporary Poetry"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 160.

⁷⁸ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 4), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 194.

⁷⁹ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 5), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 218.

Shāmlū, in turn, developed his own critical perspective on Farrokhzād's poetry. He admired the clarity and directness of her vision but believed that her poetic gaze was often more observational than exploratory.⁸⁰ He suggested that *Another Birth* contained instances of imprecision resulting from insufficient attention to linguistic detail:

These [errors] arise from carelessness. Unfortunately, a lack of concentration is not uncommon in Forūgh's work.⁸¹

Shāmlū pointed to several examples. In one line, Farrokhzād writes *barf mībārīd bar reshte-ye sost-e tanāb-e rakht* ("snow fell upon the loose thread of the clothesline"). Shāmlū argued that the more precise expression would have been *bar band-e sost-e rakht* ("upon the loose clothesline"), since the object described was not a thread but the line itself.

In another passage, Farrokhzād describes the marketplace as immersed *dar bū-ye tond-e qahveh va māhī* ("in the sharp smell of coffee and fish"). Shāmlū objected that *pāsāzh* ("arcade"), despite being a more modern term, would have conveyed the setting more accurately. The traditional *bāzār*, he argued, carried associations with the familiar scents of spices, cinnamon, and traditional commerce rather than the combined odors of coffee and fish.

He also questioned some of her conceptual formulations. In the phrase *zavāl-e zībā-ye golhā* ("the beautiful decay of flowers"), he challenged the apparent contradiction:⁸² "How can decay be beautiful?"⁸³ Likewise, he found problematic Farrokhzād's belief that ugliness must be exposed and fully represented in order to be understood. His criticism extended even to grammatical precision. Regarding the final line of "Tavallodī Dīgar," he argued that *be-donyā mī-āyad* ("is born") would have been more appropriate than *be-donyā khāhad āmad* ("will be born"),⁸⁴ since the latter weakened the immediacy and force of the poetic image.

Īraj Mīrzā

Īraj Mīrzā (1874–1926) stands among the pioneering voices of modern Persian poetry in twentieth-century Iran, celebrated especially for his incisive criticism of deeply rooted social customs and cultural conventions. His most famous didactic quatrain, memorized by generations of Iranian schoolchildren, appears deceptively simple:

One day 'Alī's mother warned him:
"Beware! Do not go near the pool!"
'Alī went—and fell straight into the water.
Dear child, heed your mother's advice!⁸⁵

Framed as a lesson in obedience and consequence, the poem draws on the rhythms of folk wisdom and the clarity of a child's moral tale. Yet beneath its simplicity lies Īraj's characteristic

⁸⁰ Aḥmad Shāmlū, "Shā'ereī Jostojūgar" ("An Inquisitive Poetess"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 274.

⁸¹ Aḥmad Shāmlū, "Tabalvor-e Jān-e She'r" ("The Crystallization of the Soul of Poetry"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 286.

⁸² Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Tavallodī Dīgar," (Another Birth), Talayeh Publishers, 2003, p. 279.

⁸³ Aḥmad Shāmlū, "Shā'ereī Jostojūgar" ("An Inquisitive Poetess"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 284.

⁸⁴ Aḥmad Shāmlū, "Shā'ereī Jostojūgar" ("An Inquisitive Poetess"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 285–286.

⁸⁵ Found in older elementary school textbooks. Attribution to Īraj Mīrzā is uncertain.

irony: the child's disobedience becomes both a moment of folly and an inevitable encounter with the limits of human understanding. Decades later, Forūgh Farrokhzād would take this familiar childhood verse as the point of departure for a far more complex and psychologically charged meditation on choice, transformation, and death.

Drawing on the plainspoken diction and folkloric resonance associated with Aḥmad Shāmlū's poetic language, Farrokhzād recast Īraj Mīrzā's brief moral lesson in a hauntingly modern voice. Her poem, "'Alī Kūchīkeh" (Little 'Alī), begins with the same apparent innocence. At first, Little 'Alī inhabits a world of security and contentment: his surroundings are familiar, his needs are satisfied, and his life unfolds within the comforting boundaries of the known. But as his imagination expands and he discovers the vastness, mystery, and hidden beauty of the sea, he is drawn into a profound existential struggle. Should he remain within the shelter of certainty, or should he surrender himself to the sea's irresistible call—a call that promises wonder and freedom, but also danger and annihilation?

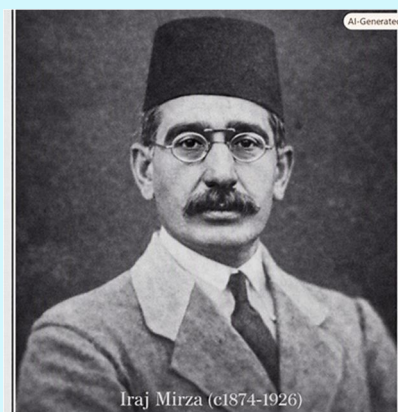
Here the poem undergoes its essential transformation. What begins as a moral parable becomes a metaphysical inquiry. The sea is no longer merely a place of danger; it becomes a realm of revelation. To experience its splendor and penetrate its hidden mysteries, Little 'Alī must undergo a fundamental transformation. Yet transformation, Farrokhzād suggests, demands a symbolic death. Rebirth can occur only after the self has passed through the darkness of dissolution. The path toward transcendence leads through the terrifying threshold of annihilation.

The poem's final movement reads less like a children's story than like the interior voice of a soul standing at the edge of irreversible choice. It carries the unsettling clarity of someone contemplating self-destruction—not out of simple despair, but through a painful and deliberate reckoning with existence itself. The sea becomes more than a symbol of the unknown; it becomes an image of liberation through surrender, a boundless expanse in which the individual self may either be transformed or erased. Little 'Alī chooses to cross that threshold, to enter the sea and accept the mystery of death—whether as a passage into renewal or as the final dissolution of the self.

Farrokhzād later reflected on the deeply personal nature of the poem:

In this poem, I have actually settled my accounts—with myself and with life. At the same time, I have spoken for all those who lack the courage to take risks. This poem is the result of my personal choices... It began as something private and became a public reckoning.⁸⁶

The replacement of Īraj Mīrzā's small pond with the immense and unpredictable sea is central to Farrokhzād's reinterpretation. The change is not merely symbolic; it emerged from a specific literary and artistic encounter. The image of the sea was inspired by a short story by Šādeq Chūbak, one of the most influential figures in modern Iranian fiction and among the earliest writers to establish colloquial Persian as a legitimate literary medium. At the time she composed "'Alī Kūchīkeh," Farrokhzād was also involved in producing a film titled *The Sea*, based on Chūbak's story "Cherā Daryā Tūfānī Shodeh Būd?" ("Why Had the Sea Become Stormy?").⁸⁷



⁸⁶ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū ba Furūgh" (No. 5), *Jāvdāneh Zīstan, dar Owj Māndan: Forough-e Farrokhzād* (Eternal Life, Permanence at the Peak: Forough Farrokhzād), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 212.

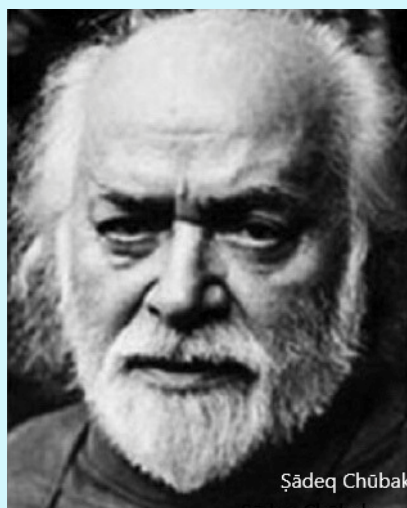
⁸⁷ Ḥassan Kāmshād, *Modern Persian Prose Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Chūbak's story draws upon a disturbing piece of coastal folklore from southern Iran: the belief that when the sea turns violent, it is because villagers have cast their illegitimate children into its depths. The restless waters thus become a repository of collective guilt—a vast and indifferent body forced to carry the burdens of human cruelty, secrecy, and shame.

Having herself stood at the threshold between life and death, Farrokhzād understood the terrifying attraction of that abyss. She knew both the promise of the sea and the price demanded by its depths. Her compassion extends beyond Little 'Alī to all those children and souls pushed toward the edge by society, silence, rejection, or sorrow. In transforming Īraj Mīrzā's simple moral tale, she does more than revise an inherited story: she liberates it from the confines of instruction and turns it into a profound meditation on mortality, freedom, and the fearful beauty of becoming.⁸⁸

Şādeq Chūbak

While preparing her documentary films, Farrokhzād immersed herself in the works of a wide range of contemporary writers. Through reading, conversation, and collaboration, she became deeply engaged with the intellectual and social concerns of her age. That engagement left a lasting imprint on her poetry, especially in *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season*, where literary influences are transformed into deeply personal and lyrical meditations. Tracing these intertextual currents provides an illuminating perspective from which to read and interpret her work.



Among the writers who profoundly influenced Farrokhzād was Şādeq Chūbak—novelist, short-story writer, outspoken critic of religious orthodoxy, advocate of women's rights, and one of the pioneers of modern Persian fiction. In his 1945 collection *Kheymeh Shab Bāzī (The Puppet Show)*, the story "Adl" ("Justice") appears to have left a particularly deep impression on her. Its imagery and underlying concerns seem to reemerge, transformed, in her haunting poem, "Īmān Biyāvarīm be Āghāz-e Faşl-e Sard" ("Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season").

Chūbak's story unfolds in a bleak alleyway at daybreak. An automobile has collided with a *doroshkeh*, leaving the carriage horse sprawled helplessly in the street. Two municipal street sweepers and a laborer struggle unsuccessfully to raise the exhausted animal. Before long, a crowd gathers. A man carrying a leather briefcase and wearing dark glasses, a father and his young son, a weary policeman, a beetroot vendor, a *mullāh*, a pipe smoker, a journalist, and a burly laborer all offer opinions, diagnoses, and unsolicited advice. Yet no one succeeds—or perhaps truly attempts—to relieve the horse's suffering. Their words accumulate while their compassion remains paralyzed. Chūbak's description of the fallen horse is unforgettable:

Thin wisps of steam rose from its nostrils. Its body gave off warmth into the cold morning air. Every rib showed beneath its skin. Across its neck and back remained the dried imprint of five muddy

⁸⁸ Moḥammad Rezā Ghānoonparvar, "Chubak, Sadeq," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2009.

fingers. The horse trembled violently, yet stood in silent resignation, gazing at the crowd with wide, tearless eyes—the bearing of a dignified creature enduring the fate imposed upon it.⁸⁹

Behind the restrained realism of this scene lies a broader social allegory. The fallen horse embodies a society rendered powerless, while the crowd represents a public capable of endless commentary but incapable of meaningful action. The automobile—whose unseen driver disappears from the narrative—introduces the disruptive force of modernity and external power. Equally striking is the presence of the *mullāh*, who, despite his moral authority, contributes nothing beyond passive observation. The dried imprint of the "five muddy fingers" suggests an allusion to the *Panj Tan-e Āl-e 'Abā*—the Five of the Cloak—invoking, however obliquely, the burden of inherited religious authority. Just as significant is the absence of women from the gathering. The only feminine presence appears indirectly through the young boy's unseen mother, whose absence underscores the exclusion of women from the public sphere and from any role in healing the wounded society before them.

Farrokhzād evokes a strikingly similar landscape when discussing the origins of her own poetry: a deserted alley, the aftermath of a traffic accident, and a bitter wind sweeping through the darkness. In *Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season*, she transforms this setting into an interior landscape. A solitary woman stands in an empty alley as the cold closes around her.⁹⁰ Confronted by loneliness, she turns inward, accusing herself of blindness and inaction. From that moment of self-reckoning, her thoughts travel backward to the mystery of her own beginning—to the first encounter between life, solitude, and death.

She recalls the night of her conception, imagining it as a mystical union between herself and the creative spirit that would accompany her throughout her life:

That night of pain and becoming,
when the sperm took form...
And my muse returned to the sperm.
I saw my muse in the mirror—
pure, translucent—
and it called me by name.⁹¹

The memory gradually deepens into revelation. Her mother's tears were not simply the pains of childbirth but an intimation of the life awaiting her daughter—a life marked by struggle, isolation, and the burden of speaking unwelcome truths. She was born into a world where truth invited persecution and compassion carried its own punishment. Farrokhzād writes:

Look over there—
the one who spoke in words,
who soothed with glances,
who sought peace through tenderness,
is crucified upon the cross of illusion.

The trace of five fingers,
five letters of truth,
is stamped upon his face.⁹²

⁸⁹ Šādeq Chūbak, "Adl" ("Justice"), *Kheymeh Shab Bāzī (The Puppet Show)*, Tehran, 1945.

⁹⁰ Bahman Khalīfe Banarvanī, "Introduction," *Dīvān-e Furūgh-e Farrokhzād*, Talyeh Publishers, 2002, p. 62.

⁹¹ *Īmān Biyāvarīm be Āghāz-e Faṣl-e Sard*, p. 290.

⁹² Furūgh Farrokhzād, *Īmān Biyāvarīm be Āghāz-e Faṣl-e Sard* (*Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season*), in *Divan-e Furūgh Farrokhzād*, Bahman Khalīfe Banarvanī, (ed.), (Tehran: Talyeh Publishers, 2002), p. 294. See also Aḥmad Shāmlū, "Ebrahīm dar Ātash" (Ibrahim in Fire), (Tehran: Zaman Books, 1978), pp. 28—29.

The image recalls Chūbak's dying horse, marked by the imprint of five muddy fingers. Farrokhzād enlarges the symbol, transferring it from the animal's body to the face of the visionary—the one who dares to speak, to love, and to console. Horse, woman, poet, and prophet become variations of the same figure, each bearing the scars of a society that punishes empathy while rewarding silence.

With this poem—and with others such as "Kasī ke Mesl-e Hīch Kas Nīst" ("He Who Is Like No One Else")—Farrokhzād assumes a place among the prophetic voices of modern Iranian literature, alongside Šādeq Hedāyat and Aḥmad Shāmlū. Hedāyat warned of the dangers of religious authoritarianism decades before the Islamic Revolution, drawing unsettling parallels with neighboring Afghanistan. Shāmlū, in his own poetry, voiced similar anxieties about tyranny disguised as redemption.⁹³ Farrokhzād gives those apprehensions their most intimate and lyrical expression. The "cold season" of her title becomes more than a metaphor for emotional desolation; it foreshadows a social and spiritual winter in which promises of justice dissolve into division, deprivation, and disillusionment.⁹⁴

Her vision reaches its culmination in the poem's bitter irony:

[He will]
Spread the tablecloth, and
divide the bread, and
divide the Pepsi, and
divide the garden, and
divide the whooping cough medicine...
And they would take our share as well.
I have dreamed...⁹⁵

Šādeq Hedāyat

"Earthly Verses" is one of Farrokhzād's most intricate and unsettling poems. To appreciate its architecture, we must first locate an appropriate point of entry. Šādeq Hedāyat's short story "Se Qaṭreh Khūn" (*Three Drops of Blood*), itself a layered and elusive work, offers just such an opening. Before turning to that comparison, however, it is useful to consider how previous scholarship has approached the relationship between Hedāyat and Farrokhzād.

In his article "Is *Another Birth* a Child of *The Blind Owl*?" Mehdi Borhānī identifies striking affinities between scenes in Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl* and Farrokhzād's *Another Birth*.⁹⁶ The passages he examines undeniably share emotional



⁹³ Moḥammad Reza Ghānoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom: Literature as a Socio-Political Phenomenon in Modern Iran*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), p. 38.

⁹⁴ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Kasī ke Methl-e Hīch Kas Nīst" (He Who is Not Like No One Else), in *Īmān Biyāvarīm be Aghāz-e Faṣl-e Sard* in *Dīvān-e Forūgh-e Farrokhzād*, Bahman Khalīfe Banarvanī (ed), (Tehran: Talyeh Publishers, 2003), p. 316.

⁹⁵ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Kasī ke Mesl-e Hīch Kas Nīst" (He Who is Not Like No One Else), in *Tavallodī Dīgar*, (Tehran: Talyeh Publishers, 2003), pp. 312-316.

⁹⁶ Borhānī, Mehdi. "Āya 'Tavallodī Dīgar' Mowlūd-e Būf-e Kūr Ast?" ("Is *Another Birth* a Child of *The Blind Owl*?"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 537-546.

atmospheres, thematic concerns, and a common vocabulary of alienation, despair, and estrangement. Yet Borhānī confines his analysis largely to these formal and emotional correspondences, leaving unexplored the deeper conceptual structures that animate both works. His comparison remains focused on the emotional states of Hedāyat's narrator and Farrokhzād's poetic speakers rather than on the philosophical questions they seek to confront.

Şādeq Homāyūnī likewise draws parallels between Farrokhzād's poetic figures and Hedāyat himself, treating the author rather than the narrator of *The Blind Owl* as the primary voice of the novel.⁹⁷ In doing so, he repeats a common critical error: conflating Hedāyat with his fictional creations. Farrokhzād's case is markedly different. Her life was unusually public and has often been mined for biographical explanations of her poetry. Hedāyat, by contrast, deliberately concealed himself behind his fiction, leaving a life that remains enigmatic and readily susceptible to mythmaking.

What ultimately unites these two writers is neither autobiography nor temperament but method. Both approached literature as careful observers of human experience, experimenting with psychological states almost empirically before translating those observations into art. Understanding that shared method provides a more fruitful framework for comparing their works than simply cataloguing similarities of imagery or mood.

Since Borhānī and Homāyūnī have already examined many of the more obvious formal parallels, the following discussion seeks instead to illuminate the conceptual affinities between Hedāyat's fiction and Farrokhzād's poetry. In doing so, we keep in mind Farrokhzād's own conviction that an author's message resides not in isolated images or passages but in the organic unity of the work as a whole.⁹⁸

Farrokhzād's literary experimentation has been well documented. Her adaptation of Fereydūn Moshīrī's *chahārpāreh*, her subversive engagement with the *ghazals* of Hāfez, and her creative reworking of stories such as "Justice" and "Why Had the Sea Become Stormy?" all testify to her relentless search for new poetic forms and expressive possibilities. Hedāyat's oeuvre likewise reveals two distinct currents: works intended primarily for a broad readership and others conceived as sustained philosophical explorations. In the latter, psychological and social environments are constructed with remarkable deliberation.

Before writing "Three Drops of Blood," whose setting is a psychiatric asylum, Hedāyat spent time observing institutional life firsthand. He immersed himself in the rhythms of the asylum, studying how its residents inhabited space and time, how they interacted with one another, and how they perceived the world beyond their confinement. Only after absorbing the internal logic of this closed and disordered universe did he begin to narrate from within it, adopting the fractured consciousness of its inmates. Upon publication, the story bewildered many readers. Some even questioned Hedāyat's own sanity.

The source of that bewilderment is easy to understand. Even in his most philosophical fiction, Hedāyat rarely announces that his narrators or characters are mentally unstable. Instead, their fractured consciousness gradually reveals itself through contradictions, improbable associations, broken sequences, and faulty reasoning. The reader instinctively attempts to restore coherence to what appears irrational. Yet the more vigorously one searches for conventional logic, the more elusive the narrative becomes—until a crucial realization emerges: the story does not

⁹⁷ Homāyūnī, Şādeq. "Forūgh va Hadāyat," (Forūgh and Hedāyat"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 547-553.

⁹⁸ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 5), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan* (Eternal Life), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 216.

operate according to ordinary logic at all. Once that insight is reached, the narrative acquires its own disturbing coherence.

Farrokhzād's "Earthly Verses" presents a similarly dislocated world, one that has somehow slipped from both its moral and metaphysical foundations:

Then
the sun grew cold,
and blessing departed from the fields...

The grass withered in the fields,
the fish perished in the seas,
and the earth refused
to receive its dead...

The sun was dead.
The sun was dead, and
in the minds of children
tomorrow had become a blurred and forgotten word...

They illustrated
the strangeness of that ancient word
in their notebooks
with thick black stains...

Yet always, at the edges of the squares,
you could see those little murderers
standing silently,
gazing
at the rising water of the fountain... ⁹⁹

Some critics objected to the poem's grotesque imagery, describing its characters as ugly and morally repellent, and asked Farrokhzād to justify her vision. She refused to soften either its language or its implications. On the contrary, she regarded "Earthly Verses" as one of her most significant achievements, noting that it marked her first sustained experiment with dialogic structure.¹⁰⁰ She defended such unsettling images as the dead sun, the earth refusing to receive its dead, starving prophets fleeing the Promised Land, and members of a murderous society sleeping upon beds soaked in blood beside underage girls. These images, she insisted, did not portray inherently depraved individuals but rather the deforming effects of a diseased society:

There is no ugliness in the people themselves. The ugliness, the decay, and the violence are symptoms of a society that has made them abnormal. At the end of the poem, when the little murderers stand listening to the murmuring water, it becomes clear that their capacity for beauty has not entirely disappeared.¹⁰¹

Read alongside "Three Drops of Blood," the poem reveals striking conceptual affinities. Like Hedāyat's asylum inmates, Farrokhzād's "little murderers" inhabit a world estranged from ordinary moral perception. Yet beneath that estrangement survives a fragile capacity for renewal:

Perhaps behind those crushed eyes,
deep within the frozen silence,

⁹⁹ Banārvanī, Bahman Khalīfeh. "Āyehā-ye Zamīnī," *Dīvān-e Forūgh-e Farrokhzād* (Forūgh Farrokhzād's Collection of Poems), Talāyeh Publishers, 2003, pp. 232-237.

¹⁰⁰ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 5), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 209.

¹⁰¹ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 5), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 209.

there still survived
a confused half-living thing
desperately longing
to believe in the purity
of the song of water.¹⁰²

In a world where the sun has died and time itself has lost meaning, human beings no longer orient their lives according to transcendent values. Instead, they obey a distorted moral order of their own making. Hedāyat places his readers within a society whose inhabitants no longer recognize the laws of reason; Farrokhzād imagines a civilization that has lost its relationship with faith. In both cases, readers must gradually discover that the apparent disorder is itself the governing principle of the world being depicted.

One important distinction nevertheless remains. Hedāyat's universe, however psychologically distorted, remains anchored in observable reality. Farrokhzād's is visionary, symbolic, and almost apocalyptic. Yet both portray communities deprived of an essential sustaining force. In "Earthly Verses," that absence is named explicitly:

The sun was dead,
and no one knew
that the name of the sad dove
that had departed from human hearts
was Faith.¹⁰³

A similar descent into darkness appears in "Dīdār dar Shab" ("A Meeting at Night"), one of Farrokhzād's most metaphysical poems. Its exploration of revelation through darkness recalls Hedāyat's "Tārīkhhāneh" ("The Dark House"). Hedāyat's story follows a man, disillusioned by accelerating westernization and profound social inequality, who withdraws from society into near-complete isolation. In a room resembling a womb, he contemplates both his own existence and the civilization he has abandoned:

Like a hibernating animal, I wanted to find a hole in the ground, disappear into it, and recover my equilibrium. Darkness and silence, like a photograph slowly emerging in a developing tray, reveal those delicate, hidden features that the noise of everyday life conceals. That darkness already existed within me, yet without knowing why, I spent my life trying to drive it away.¹⁰⁴

Farrokhzād reverses this movement. In "A Meeting at Night," the speaker converses not with a living recluse but with a spirit unwilling to relinquish its attachment to earthly existence. Through this spectral dialogue, she explores the difficulty of interpreting reality once familiar certainties have dissolved. Yet she also suggests that the darkness which obliterates outward forms can become the very medium through which inward truth is disclosed:

Have you,
who conceal your face
behind the shadow of life's gloomy mask,
ever considered this sorrowful truth—

¹⁰² Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 5), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 217.

¹⁰³ Forūgh Farrokhzād. *Tavallodī Dīgar*, Talayeh Publishers, 2003, p. 237.

¹⁰⁴ Šādeq Hedāyat. "Tārīkhhāneh" ("The Dark House"), *Sag-e Velgard*, Amīr Kabīr, 1964, p. 134.

Also at: https://www.academia.edu/45044111/The_Dark_House_by_Sadeq_Hedayat_translated_by_Iraj_Iraj_Bashiri.

that those who are alive today
are merely facsimiles of living beings?¹⁰⁵

In composing this poem, Farrokhzād reveals that she herself had passed through a comparable period of inward darkness.¹⁰⁶ The result is not surrender to despair but a more profound inquiry into what it means to live, to perceive, and to believe in an age when the sun has grown cold, faith has departed, and reason itself appears eclipsed.

Nīmā Yūshij

We have already examined the roles of language and subject matter in shaping Forūgh Farrokhzād's poetic voice. We now arrive at a third, and perhaps more fundamental, dimension of her artistic evolution: vision. During the final years of Nīmā Yūshij's life, Farrokhzād was entering her early thirties—a period marked by profound self-examination and creative renewal. It was then that she sought not merely to write differently, but to see differently:

I am happy that my hair has turned white and that two deep lines have appeared between my brows.
I am glad I am no longer a dreamer. I am about to turn thirty-two. Though it means thirty-two years
have passed, it also means I have finally found myself.¹⁰⁷

Farrokhzād revered Nīmā with an admiration rivaled only by her devotion to Ḥāfeẓ. In conversation, she frequently quoted his aphorisms, returning again and again to the principles that underlay his poetic philosophy:

You have to diminish something in order to increase something else.¹⁰⁸

She described his influence on her own development in deeply personal terms:

For me, Nīmā was a beginning. It was in his poetry that I first encountered an intellectual atmosphere—not superficial or vulgar sensationalism, but a voice that interpreted experience, a voice endowed with vision and feeling beyond petty desires and ordinary circumstances. His simplicity astonished me, especially because such profound and dark questions of existence lay concealed beneath it... In his simplicity, I discovered my own.¹⁰⁹

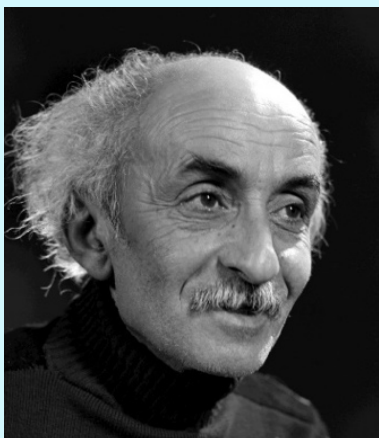
¹⁰⁵ Cf., Manūchehr Ātashī, "Shūresh va She'r-e Forūgh," in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 521.

¹⁰⁶ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 5) in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 209.

¹⁰⁷ Forūgh Farrokhzād. "Az Nāmeḥā-ye Forūgh" ("From Forūgh's Letters"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰⁸ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No.5) in, Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 212.

¹⁰⁹ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.) "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No.4) in, Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, pp. 185-186.



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Like Hāfez before him, Nīmā became a point of origin—a second beginning in Farrokhzād's artistic life. He transformed the way she thought and gave her the intellectual space in which her own poetic identity could mature. What captivated her was not rhetorical complexity but the hidden depth beneath his unadorned language. Nīmā taught her that poetry begins with perception. He taught her how to see. Yet Farrokhzād did not simply inherit his vision; she refracted it through the distinct sensibility of a woman writing in modern Iran.¹¹⁰ She looked through the same window, but the landscape she perceived was unmistakably her own.

Central to Nīmā's influence was his insistence upon the organic unity of a poem. He rejected the classical expectation that each *beyt* should function as an independent vessel of meaning. Instead, every part of the poem was to serve the integrity of the whole. Farrokhzād regarded this as one of the defining achievements of modern Persian poetry:

One of the valuable traits of contemporary poetry is that it moves closer to the essence of poetry itself. It resists the generalizations of classical Persian verse, where each couplet was expected to encapsulate a portion of the whole.¹¹¹

For Nīmā, a poem was not a string of isolated insights but a living organism whose form, rhythm, and imagery together embodied the emotional and historical realities of its age. Contrary to the claims of some advocates of *she'r-e sepīd* (blank verse), he did not reject poetic form altogether; he transformed it.¹¹² Farrokhzād shared this conviction:

I do not support this kind of poetry [*she'r-e sepīd*]. A complete work of art emerges only through the total fusion of form and content. Once that union is achieved, nothing can be added, removed, or altered. In this respect, *she'r-e sepīd* remains vulnerable. It is too easily reshaped and reinterpreted.¹¹³

Under the combined influence of Nīmā and Aḥmad Shāmlū, Farrokhzād gradually moved beyond the emotional immediacy and sensuality that had characterized her earliest collections. Her poetry acquired greater structural discipline while engaging more deeply with the ideological, political, and social tensions of her time. From Nīmā she inherited an expansive intellectual framework that extended beyond personal experience toward broader historical and philosophical questions.¹¹⁴ Building upon his innovations, she refined *she'r-e now*, strengthened its structural coherence, and infused it with a distinctly feminine consciousness.

Her relationships with both Shāmlū and Nīmā ultimately shaped her into an independent and self-aware poet. From Shāmlū she learned to bear witness to the human condition; from Nīmā she learned to reconstruct reality through poetic vision. Their influences converged in poems such

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.) "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No.4) in, Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 171. (Radio interview with Iraj Gorgīn, 1965.)

¹¹² Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No.1) in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 172. (Radio interview with Iraj Gorgīn, 1965.)

¹¹³ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No.2) in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 179. (Interviewer: Moḥammad Taqī Šālehpūr)

¹¹⁴ Farzaneh Milani, "Farrokhzād, Forūgh-Zamān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2011, Volume IX, Fasc. 3, pp. 324-327.

as “Daryāft” (“Snapshot”), where life and art become inseparable. Time slips continuously through the speaker's grasp,¹¹⁵ and every ending simultaneously contains a beginning. Meaning emerges not from individual stanzas but from the cumulative movement of the poem itself. Here the poem's architecture embodies its philosophy, standing in deliberate contrast to the self-contained couplets of classical Persian verse. Farrokhzād herself emphasized this principle:

In my view, we should never isolate a single stanza for judgment. Doing so obscures the larger intent. Read separately, individual passages may appear weak; only within the poem's complete intellectual structure do they reveal their true significance. This is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary poetry—meaning no longer unfolds *beyt* by *beyt*.¹¹⁶

The same holistic vision informs her satirical poem “Ey Marz-e Por Gohar” (“O Precious Land”). The title deliberately echoes the patriotic anthem recited daily by Iranian schoolchildren during the Pahlavī era, a song celebrating the nation's beauty, abundance, and destiny. Farrokhzād appropriates that familiar refrain only to overturn it. What had been a hymn of national pride becomes an ironic lament. The anthem's “precious gems” prove to be little more than comforting illusions, detached from the lived realities of ordinary people.¹¹⁷ Employing colloquial Persian, biting irony, and dark humor, she confronts subjects that earlier generations of poets largely avoided: social decay, hollow nationalism, political hypocrisy, and spiritual desolation.

By the time she composed the poems collected in *Let Us Believe in the Onset of the Cold Season*, the philosophical reach of her poetry had deepened considerably. Her poems probe systemic failures, evoke an atmosphere of impending catastrophe, and articulate fears long buried within the collective consciousness of Iranian society.¹¹⁸ Among the finest examples is the haunting lyric “Delam Barā-ye Bāghcheh Mīsūzād” (“I Feel Sad for the Garden”), a poem that is at once an intimate family portrait and a broader meditation on a civilization in decline.

The poem opens upon a landscape of quiet desolation: a neglected garden, fading flowers, and an empty courtyard. Each member of the household inhabits a private world of complacency, insulated from the gathering darkness: the father is content with his pension, the mother waits for the Mahdī, the brother loses himself in passing pleasures, and the sister pursues the glitter of modernity. Their contentment, however, is tragically illusory. Beyond the walls of the house, violence steadily encroaches:

The yard of our house is lonely.
The yard of our house is lonely.
All day long, behind the door,
echoes the sound of dismemberment
and explosions.

In their gardens, the neighbors plant
grenades and submachine guns.
The children in our alley
have filled their schoolbags with little bombs.

¹¹⁵ M. R. Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom: Literature as a Socio-Political Phenomenon in Modern Iran*, University Press of America, 1984, pp. xxi, 73-96.

¹¹⁶ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), “Goftogū bā Forūgh” (No.5) in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 216.

¹¹⁷ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), “Goftogū bā Forūgh” (No. 5), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 209.

¹¹⁸ Cf., M. Azad, “Barrasī-ye Tavalloḏī Dīgar” (Review of *Another Birth*), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p.378.

The yard of our house is dizzy.
I am afraid of a time that has lost its heart,
of the futility of all these countless hands,
of the strangeness painted upon so many faces.

The poem closes with one of Farrokhzād's most haunting images:

And the heart of the garden has swollen
beneath the sun.
And the mind of the garden
is slowly being emptied
of the memory of green.¹¹⁹

Throughout her final poems, Farrokhzād repeatedly returns to images of living things deprived of the conditions necessary for life: the dying horse abandoned in the alley, the solitary woman standing in the freezing wind, the garden gradually forgetting the color green. These are not isolated symbols but recurring expressions of a single imaginative vision. Each depicts a society suffering from moral exhaustion, spiritual disorientation, and historical decay. The external landscape mirrors an inner collapse. Farrokhzād herself attributed this sharpened vision to Nīmā:

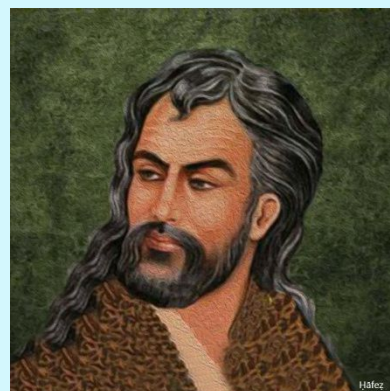
Nīmā opened my eyes and said, "Look." But I taught myself how to look. There was a time when Nīmā nearly drowned me. Now I feel I have rescued myself. Nīmā was the first traveler. I want to continue from where he stopped—whether because he could not go farther or because he never had the opportunity to smooth the rough terrain before him. I will try to make that path easier. I will do my honest best.¹²⁰

That statement captures the essence of Farrokhzād's artistic inheritance. Nīmā taught her to look beyond appearances; she transformed that lesson into a vision entirely her own.

Shams al-Dīn Ḥāfeẓ

As noted earlier, the influence of three of the greatest classical Persian poets—Khayyām, Maulānā, and Ḥāfeẓ—formed part of the literary heritage from which Forūgh Farrokhzād emerged. Khayyām's influence can be seen particularly in *Eṣyān* (*Rebellion*), where his philosophical skepticism provided a point of departure for some of her intellectual concerns. Maulānā's influence was deeper, particularly in Farrokhzād's conception of love as a force extending beyond physical desire. These influences, however, constitute only part of the larger classical inheritance from which her poetry developed.

The more significant influence for the present discussion is Ḥāfeẓ. Farrokhzād's engagement with him was not simply a matter of borrowing images, language, or themes. It involved the possibility of continuing the *experiment* of the *ghazal* in a modern poetic environment. As noted earlier, she had already absorbed the musicality and lyrical richness of the classical *ghazal* and combined them with the *chahārpāreh* form



¹¹⁹ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Delam Barāy-ye Bāghche Mīsūzād" ("I Feel Sad for the Garden"), *Tavallodī Dīgar*, 2003, pp. 306-311.

¹²⁰ Cf., Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh # 6" ("A Conversation with Forūgh # 6"), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan* (*Eternal Life*), Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 228.

popularized by Fereydūn Moshīrī. Her encounter with Nīmā Yūshīj, whom she came to regard as possessing an intellectual and human depth comparable to that of Ḥāfeẓ, encouraged her to return to this earlier experiment with renewed purpose.¹²¹

A traditional *ghazal* normally consists of seven or more couplets and concludes with a *maqtaʿ*, often containing the poet's *takhalluṣ*.¹²² Farrokhzād appears to have been searching for a way to preserve the *ghazal*'s inner progression while transforming the relationship among its individual units. Rather than allowing each couplet to remain relatively independent, she sought greater continuity among them. In this sense, her experiment was not a rejection of the *ghazal* but an attempt to discover what the form might become in modern poetry.

"Āftāb Mīshavad" ("The Sun Will Rise") is particularly important in this regard. The poem consists of seven couplets, yet it lacks both the conventional *maqtaʿ* and Farrokhzād's *takhalluṣ*.¹²³ Its structure nevertheless suggests that she was testing the possibilities of a form that remained recognizably related to the *ghazal* while moving toward greater thematic and emotional continuity.

Farrokhzād herself was dissatisfied with the poem. When discussing poems she considered unsuccessful, she described "Āftāb Mīshavad" as being "entirely off track," although she acknowledged its musicality and its ability to create a pleasant feeling.¹²⁴ Yet this judgment need not be taken as evidence that the experiment itself had failed. On the contrary, the poem may be more revealing precisely because it stands at the threshold between what Farrokhzād had already accomplished and what she had not yet achieved.

The poem begins with the rising sun dissolving sorrow and transforming the poet's troubled existence. From there, the poet moves beyond ordinary existence toward a realm of poetry and inspiration, where she encounters the spiritual source of her poetic creation. The movement is therefore not simply from one image to another; it suggests a progression from dissolution to renewal and from ordinary consciousness toward poetic creation. The final images, in which the muse breathes upon the cradle of the poet's poetry and causes it to shine, are especially significant:

Look how the wax of night
melts away, drop by drop,
and how the dark goblet of my eyes
fills with the wine of your lullabies.
See how, as you, like the sun,
breathe upon the cradle of my poetry,
it begins to shine.¹²⁵

The importance of *Āftāb Mīshavad*, therefore, may lie less in what the poem successfully accomplishes than in what it *attempts to open*. It is an experiment with the possibility of giving the modern *ghazal* a continuous inner movement while retaining the musical and formal inheritance of Ḥāfeẓ. In this respect, it occupies an interesting position in Farrokhzād's development.

The comparison with Ḥāfeẓ becomes particularly suggestive here. Ḥāfeẓ himself did not arrive fully formed at the architecture of his mature *ghazals*. Earlier poems reveal stages in the process through which he refined the relationship among image, metaphor, ambiguity, and the

¹²¹ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Ghazal" ("Sonnet"), *Tavallodī Dīgar*, Talāyeh Publishers, 2003, p. 190.

¹²² A *maqtaʿ* is the final *beyt* of a *ghazal*; the *takhalluṣ* is the poet's pen name. Farrokhzād uses Forūgh.

¹²³ "Āftāb Mīshavad" consists of seven *sheʿr-e now* stanzas.

¹²⁴ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 4), in *Jāvīdāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 196.

¹²⁵ Forūgh Farrokhzād, "Āftāb Mīshavad" ("The Sun Will Rise"), *Tavallodī Dīgar*, Talāyeh Publishers, 2003, pp. 180–182.

movement between material and spiritual realms.¹²⁶ Farrokhzād's *Āftāb Mīshavad* may likewise be viewed as a work in progress—a preliminary structure pointing toward a poetic form that she had not yet fully realized.

This possibility becomes especially compelling when considered against Farrokhzād's own sense of an unfinished poetic future. She said that, although she had left *Another Birth* behind, she believed she could begin again: "A new intellectual beginning. Language and rhythm will find their place. What matters is thought." She specifically associated this new beginning with the poem of the sad little fairy who dies each night and is reborn each dawn.¹²⁷ Her statement suggests that she did not regard *Another Birth* as the end of her development but as the threshold of another stage.

Gholāmhossein Yūsefi similarly recognized in *Āftāb Mīshavad* a lyrical quality, delicate language, fresh imagery, and a poetic sensibility that connected it with the later Farrokhzād.¹²⁸ The parallel between Yūsefi's assessment and Farrokhzād's own statement is striking. The poem that she publicly dismissed may nevertheless have represented, for her, an early attempt at something she had not yet found the means to complete.

Had Farrokhzād lived, it is difficult to know where this experiment would have led. Yet *Āftāb Mīshavad* gives us a rare glimpse of a possible direction: a modern poetry that did not simply abandon the *ghazal* but *continued its formal and imaginative experiment from within*. In this sense, Ḥāfeẓ's importance to Farrokhzād lies not merely in influence but in unfinished dialogue. She inherited the *ghazal*, questioned its possibilities, and began to reshape its internal architecture for a new age.

Her death at thirty-two makes the significance of this unfinished experiment especially poignant. *Āftāb Mīshavad* may be imperfect, but it points toward a poetic future that Farrokhzād had begun to imagine and had not yet had the opportunity to realize. It is therefore best understood not as a failed poem but as evidence of a poet still experimenting with what the Persian *ghazal* might become.

Conclusion

Forūgh Farrokhzād occupies a singular place in the history of modern Persian literature. Her poetry emerged from the convergence of personal experience, intellectual inquiry, and artistic courage, transforming intensely private struggles into works of enduring cultural significance. Throughout her career she confronted questions of love, desire, motherhood, mortality, freedom, and faith with a candor unprecedented in Persian poetry, expanding the possibilities of poetic expression for generations of writers who followed.

Her achievement rests not only upon her lyrical brilliance but also upon her relentless experimentation. Drawing upon the legacies of Ḥāfeẓ, Maulānā, Nīmā Yūshīj, Shāmlū, Hedāyat, and many others, she fashioned a voice that remained unmistakably her own. Rather than merely

¹²⁶ Īraj Bashīrī, "Ḥāfiẓ' Shīrāzī Turk: A Structuralist's Point of View," *The Muslim World*, LXIX, no. 3 (1979), p. 196.

¹²⁷ Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), "Goftogū bā Forūgh" (No. 4), in *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 197.

¹²⁸ Gholāmhossein Yūsefi, "Şedā-ye Bāl-e Barfī-ye Fereshtegān" ("The Sound of the Snowy Wings of Angels"), in Behrūz Jalālī (ed.), *Jāvidāneh Zīstan (Eternal Life)*, Morvarid Publishers, 1997, p. 306.

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inheriting literary traditions, she transformed them—creating poems whose psychological depth, philosophical reach, and formal innovation continue to invite fresh interpretation.

Farrokhzād's legacy therefore extends far beyond her role as a pioneering woman poet. She stands as one of the principal architects of modern Persian poetry, a writer who united the classical and the contemporary, the personal and the universal, the lyrical and the philosophical. Her work remains a testament to the enduring power of poetry to confront inherited certainties, illuminate hidden realities, and imagine new possibilities of being.

More than half a century after her untimely death, Forūgh Farrokhzād continues to challenge, unsettle, and inspire. Her poems remind us that genuine artistic vision demands both courage and vulnerability, and that the poet's task is not merely to describe the world but to teach us how to see it anew.



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