

## 5.6 Mirror Mirror (1999)

Hello false friend, familiar face.  
We've had a drink or two.  
I'm so at ease with you –  
can we get closer to myself through you?  
See through this dull unanimated eye?  
Vis-à-vis with any other face,  
so intimate, there'd flow  
a certain electricity: if only I  
could look afresh,  
see something I had never seen before –  
I even find my head inclined  
as if to catch me unaware.  
But that's not it: I have to search  
for clues to what goes on behind, to focus  
on the self behind the brain behind the eye.  
This mask is something interposed,  
this barely navigable map – which we have come to use  
to read and write  
our subtlest messages, to kiss,  
to laugh, to fear, to dominate –  
is just a living interface,  
a compact box of pathways  
to and from the brain, a mobile  
interactive, multi-medic set – no more.

If I could only set aside this mask,  
strip bare the intellect,  
if I could watch the pulsing brain  
and see if that would help me understand – of course  
it won't: it has no tools,  
we cannot comprehend the unexpressed  
however much we know it's there. And  
even if I could I know that's  
just a front as well – the  
master, atman, self resides behind:  
his coachman cracks the whip  
to drive the steaming horses on:  
behind the curtain atman secretly conducts  
his dialogue with brahman –  
God – yes! – is in my head  
and in my understanding: he doesn't sit outside,  
he knows, as David said,  
my downsitting and my uprising,  
he understands me long before,  
because he's part of me. In short,  
however hard I try,

I'll not discern the smallest clue to all of this  
behind that interface: I'm  
handicapped, my power to penetrate  
and see behind is neutralised.  
I slowly come to realise  
that subject, object both are compromised;  
I'll find out nothing new about myself  
this way, however much I am  
at ease with you, my useless friend.  
Begone, turn out the light!  
Goodnight.

Boston – December 1999