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NOTES AND COMMENTS

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A RESPONSE TO FIROOZEH KASHANI-SABET'S REVIEW OF *THE MAKING OF THE MODERN IRANIAN WOMAN: GENDER, STATE POLICY, AND POPULAR CULTURE, 1865–1946* (*IJMES* 38 [2006]: 142–44)

CAMRON MICHAEL AMIN

Although I am grateful for Professor Kashani-Sabet's conclusion that my efforts are a "noteworthy addition to the literature on women in modern Iran," I believe that her specific dissents from my argument are problematic because at no point does she articulate the thesis of the book: that the "women's awakening" policies of the Pahlavi state from 1936 to 1941 were informed conceptually by decades of public discussion regarding the "woman question" (which are well-recorded in the press). Furthermore, by stretching the definition of male guardianship, the "women's awakening" project helped to set the conceptual stage for the emergence of equal-rights feminism in Iranian public discourse in the 1940s. She argues that my analysis is not sufficiently tethered to "official nationalism" or "other monumental cultural shifts." This is a strange way to characterize a study that locates a state feminism project in broader cultural trends. Indeed, such an assertion is only possible if one neglects mention of my discussion of "modern Iranian womanhood" as a cultural idea—before, during, and after the *nahzat-i banuvan* of 1936–41. The nationalist aspect of "the woman question" flowed quite organically from the sources, and my treatment of nationalism in the book reflects that. Thus, nationalism is most visible in discussions of marriage, education, the veil, and women's suffrage and other issues as they were engaged in the course of the period under study. I stand by that analytical choice and look forward to seeing how others may make use of the results in theorizing about the development of nationalism (Professor Kashani-Sabet's own work on Iranian frontiers and Afsaneh Najmabadi's work on the "erotic *vaṭan*" come to mind as points of departure).

There are five other points in her review that I would like to address. First, I never used the term *tajaddud-i nisvan* analytically or in passing. Second, she objects to my translation of the term *nahzat-i banuvan* on the basis of how the "*majority* of Iranian women . . . consciously viewed themselves [emphasis added]"—something we historians are not in a position to know. The interpretation of *nahzat-i banuvan* as "women's awakening" (rather than "movement") is best understood in relation to Pahlavi propaganda and policy goals (especially if one considers Pahlavi efforts to shut down independent women's organizations in the 1930s and its discouragement of Zanddokht Shirazi's use of the term *inqilab-i nisvan*); whether or not one finds that convincing in the present is irrelevant to the historical context. Third, she suggests that I argue that the "woman question" originated in the press. Although I do think the periodical press is a key source for tracking the public discussions of the "woman question," I *do not* maintain that it originated there but, rather, following Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi's

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lead, I look for its origins in the early 19th-century Occidentalism of Iranian travelers to the West as well as to "woman question" discussions in the Ottoman Empire and Khedival Egypt. In addition, it is important to emphasize that women's agency in shaping the "woman question" is quite visible in the periodical press and resonates with other 19th-century evidence we have of women's agency alluded to by Professor Kashani-Sabet. Fourth, she suggests that the ulama perspective was neglected when, in truth, it was simply not the focus of the book. My book does incorporate the findings of Houchang Chehabi, Mohammad Faghfoory, and others (available at the time of finalizing my manuscript for copy editing in late 2000) and goes further to illustrate the Islamist perspective on the "woman question" by taking into account press sources such as *Daʿvat al-islam* (1906) and *Parcham-i islam* (1946) and other primary sources. I suspect that further research will reveal the ulama and general Islamist perspective to be no more monolithic in the first half of the 20th century than at any other time.

Fifth, and finally, I agree that more could have been said about hygiene and beauty culture. So much so, that I wrote an article, entitled "Importing 'Beauty Culture' into Iran in the 1920s and 1930s: Mass Marketing Individualism in an Age of Anti-Imperialist Sacrifice" (*Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 [2004] 79–95). I am guessing that Professor Kashani-Sabet was unaware of this work as she did not cite it in her article ("The Politics of Reproduction: Maternalism and Women's Hygiene in Iran, 1896–1941," *IJMES* 38 [2006]: 1–29) for the February 2006 issue of *IJMES*. I raise this last point to emphasize that Iranian Studies is becoming richer every year (and perhaps every week!); therefore, it is inevitable that our published work will lag behind the latest research or appearance of fresh sources. The opportunity for the reviewer is to specify the implications of the work being reviewed in reference to the broader academic enterprise. I think that opportunity was missed in Professor Kashani-Sabet's review of my work. Furthermore, she fails to note my use of U.S. State Department records, British Foreign Office correspondence, *majlis* proceedings, and published Iranian archival documents that were available at the time of finalizing the book *in addition* to oral history and press sources. Furthermore, I think my book has cool pictures.

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A REPLY TO CAMRON MICHAEL AMIN

FIROOZEH KASHANI-SABET

I thank Professor Amin for his comments. In response, first, I would like to point out that, in fact, I do cite Professor Amin's writings (as well as the works of others) on the subject of beauty in my article "The Politics of Reproduction: Maternalism and Women's Hygiene in Iran, 1896–1941" (*IJMES* 38 [2006]: 29, Note 157). However, I should emphasize that I had presented a version of my *IJMES* paper at the Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies (2002), where it was read and discussed publicly well before the publication of Professor Amin's recent article (2004). Like him, I recognize that "it is inevitable that our published work will lag

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behind the latest research or appearance of fresh sources." Thus, it is not surprising to me that Professor Amin did not know about this piece.

Regarding my review, it would behoove Professor Amin to remember that I used the following adjectives to discuss his work: "rich," "engaging," "persuasive," "valuable," "thought-provoking," "useful," "judicious," "carefully researched," "noteworthy," "well-written," and "enlightening"—even as I highlighted some points of contention. Unfortunately, none of us is lucky enough to produce a work as flawless as the Qurʾan.

I will leave it up to the readers of *IJMES* and his book to reach their conclusions about Professor Amin's specific objections. I wish Professor Amin well with his future research, and I look forward to his forthcoming publications.

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