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Monica M. Ringer

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By the twentieth century, the "The Woman Question" had been discussed in Iran for nearly a generation.[1] However, in the period between the Constitutional Revolution and Reza Shah's assumption of power, the discussion over the nature of the "Modern Iranian Woman" assumed an unprecedented centrality. This relatively short span of time was a critical moment in the formulation of Iranian national identity, concepts of citizenry, the form and function of religion in "modernity," and the more general reevaluation of culture and "Tradition." Gender and religion in particular were held up to the various yardsticks of imagined "modernities" and judged according to their (in)compatibility and (ir)reconcilability. A look at some of the women's periodicals published in this period affords insight into the nature of the debates at this time.

Introduction

The experience of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran (1905-1911) radically transformed ideas concerning modernization and modernity. The twentieth-century modernizers recognized the impossibility of top-down, piece-meal reform. They understood that modernization was complicated—that there wasn't a "supermarket" for technology and institutions—but that technology and institutions possessed their own cultural and historical context and thus couldn't be simply adopted willy nilly into an otherwise unchanged Iran. For this reason, they focused on the importance of social change at the grassroots level, and on the individual as a social actor.

Iranian reformers were concerned to generate modernity—seeking to telescope the Western process into the space of a generation or two. They were thus primarily concerned with identifying social institutions that would serve as prerequisites, or causal catalysts, to generate modernity.[2] The process of identifying catalysts for modernity also involved a reexamination and reconstruction of traditions and social institutions. Historicism, evolutionism, and empiricism were seriously integrated into the methodological frameworks of Iranian self-reflection in the early twentieth century. The questions were: which social institutions were reconcilable with modernity, which productive of it, and which inimical?

The early twentieth century, sandwiched between the Constitutional Revolution and the authoritarian modernization program instituted by Reza Shah in the 1930s, was unique in many ways. First, the debates concerning the shape of this modernization contained the most sophisticated analysis of social change—of the social context of modernization—to date. Second, for the first time, reformers focused on grassroots social reform as the *sine qua non* of any substantive change, rather than on authoritarian, top-down reforms. Third, this brief period afforded a less censored, controlled, or rigid intellectual climate and a debate therefore more fully expressive of the variety and flexibility of plans for modernity than it had been or would subsequently be.

Two institutions were singled out in particular as crucial to the ability to modernize: gender and religion. Both were seen as central to society and thus necessarily involved in any change; and both were considered for their possible generative qualities of modernization. In other words, both were "Traditions" under reconsideration, as well as potential catalysts for change. In addition to their social functions, gender and religion were also intimately related to each other. Gender and family structure were conceived of as established once and for all by Islamic texts, and Islam was often cited (rightly or wrongly) as validating existing gender construction. The attempt to identify and tease out "true" and "progressive" Islam from the tangle of traditions and customs associated with it was stimulated on the one hand by elements within the religious establishment, and on the other hand by individuals concerned with related issues of women and gender and cultural traditions more generally. Religion and gender were both closely associated with notions of "authenticity," "Iranianness," and "in-

digenous" forms of modernity. The "woman question" was a site of heated debate and intense, religiously-charged controversy. It was impossible to reconsider gender, cultural authenticity, or religious traditions separately; the "woman question," authenticity question, and "Islamic tradition" question were indissolubly connected. Women's periodicals themselves therefore present an optimal source for understanding these debates, and their interrelationships.

The Early Twentieth-Century Women's Press

I have examined two of the most important Iranian women's periodicals from the early twentieth century: *Blossom (Shokufeh)* published from 1913 to 1917, and *Women's World (Alam-e Nesvan)* published between 1921 and 1936.[3] The periodicals were published quarterly and every two months respectively. They were widely read, with a subscription base equal to that of the largest non-women's periodical. In addition to subscription, they were available for purchase in a number of bookstores in the capital. Their readership was the "hoi polloi" of the reformist world. This was an exciting time of politicization and activism, mushrooming of political associations and women's societies, and founding of schools and charitable organizations. Consequently, women's periodical readership continued to grow and broaden into various social classes such that readership was a function of political/social involvement and exposure to activists and reformers rather than of social or economic class per se, although they of course were linked. The few authors who identified themselves were drawn from the upper echelons of this stratum. Most of the articles were published anonymously, however, and probably written by staff of the periodicals. In the case of *Women's World*, a running series of articles on health and hygiene were solicited from American doctors and nurses residing in Iran, or were translated from American journals.

Articles concerning health and hygiene, home economics, and the need for women's education and "progress" take center stage in all three periodicals (*Knowledge, Blossom,* and *Women's World*). The issue of religion is not often taken up directly. There are, however, important references to Islam, and one notices immediately that the subject of morality is a dominant one. The nature and function of Islam in constructing an Iranian modernity is considered in light of the women's reform agenda.

Blossom (Shokufeh) (1913-1917) and the Imperative of Reconstructing "True" Islam

Articles in *Blossom* insist on the importance of re-evaluating and reconstructing Islamic Tradition. They present Islam as a necessary basis of the modern state and society, but insist that Tradition be reconsidered in light of the goals of modernization and "progress." Islamic Tradition (with a capital "T") must therefore be relocated, and false "traditions" (with lower case "t"s) eliminated. Islam should serve as a moral and authentic basis of modernity, but not the Islam *as presently understood* and *as presently practiced.*

In an article entitled "The Philosophy of the Veil,"[4] the author makes three different arguments for the importance of maintaining the veil: she marshals statistics and pseudo-scientific data, recalls the actions of the Prophet Mohammad, and draws upon non-religious Iranian culture. The author first argues on the basis of observation that the veil preserves morality and social harmony:

> Everybody knows that if you get rid of the veil you have the intermingling of men and women and the corruptions that result are undeniable. In Europe, for example, they don't veil and there is the mixing of genders and all the problems that result.

The sole example given of these "problems" rampant in Europe is the choice of marriage partners by girls according to their personal *desires* rather than according to the thousands of subtle considerations parents are capable of making. In other words, the veil functions as a guardian not simply of morality (here manifested as the segregation of genders), but of rational social convention. The veil is the champion of "civilized social behavior" over the unbridled irrationality of the individual libido.

The author then argues that the "philosophy of the veil sent for us women was in order to prevent corruption [*fesad*], to keep people on the 'straight path,' and to provide for people's happiness, civilization, and the progress of the Islamic community." The veil is thus portrayed as the necessary restriction of individuals in order for society to function more smoothly. Notice as well that the author legitimizes the veil on the basis of both "people's" happiness, and the community's progress and civilization. The tension between the individual and the larger community's welfare and "happiness" is left unexplored. An array of statistics (!) are then cited to prove that in the absence of the veil, people (or women rather) behave immorally. The article claims that compared to Germany and Belgium, at seven per cent and six per cent respectively, the Ottoman Empire exhibits a much smaller percentage of women's immorality and corruption [*fesad*]—a mere one per cent. Implicitely, therefore, European, Christian, and non-veil-wearing societies, despite their power, have left a key ingredient of civilization out of their modernity, whereas the Ottoman Empire—the most modernized of the Muslim

societies—by maintaining the veil is thus constructing an indigenous, Islamic, and more "civilized" moral version of modernity. The author goes on to say that:

> If we move away from the issue of religion, Iranian practices have prescribed for Iranian women the principle of honor such that Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Armenian women, although they are not commanded to wear the veil, nevertheless cover in the same way on the street and do not throw themselves in the view of men.

It is thus that the benefits of veiling, while only *formally recognized and mandated in Islam,* hold true for all civilized and honorable societies, regardless of religion. The article clearly universalizes the benefits of and the rationale behind the veil. Furthermore, by insisting that veiling pre-dates Islam[5] and transcends Iranian religious divisions, the author intimates that the veil is by nature an Iranian, and not simply an Islamic, institution. Islam is thus authentically Iranian.

It is interesting to see how the author of this article legitimizes the veil: on the basis of a universal morality, as a civilizing and progressive institution, and as culturally authentic. It is also important to note the connections here between Islam, Iranian authenticity, and modernity. First, both "progress" *and* "moral laxity" were understood to be embedded in Western modernity. Criticism of Western moral laxity was ostensibly the assertion of the necessity of constructing an indigenous Iranian modernity. At its most basic, this meant simply a modernity relevant to the Iranian context—a rejection of simplistic copying. At another level, "moral laxity" was code for cultural Westernization that implicitly contains an element of Christianization. The hue and cry over "cultural authenticity" therefore, really masks the more fundamental debate concerning the reevaluation of tradition. "Authenticity" is a politicized rallying cry and a constructed image, not an independently identifiable set of traditions.

Second, the debate surrounding Western moral laxity reveals a real criticism of Western modernity, *not simply because it is Western or Christian,* but on its own terms. This criticism reveals a conception of Islam as applying universally valid moral criteria for social behavior whereas the secularized West does not—a much more sophisticated argument for the retention of veiling and Islam as foundations of state than simply a constructed "authenticity." The anxiety surrounding claims of Western "moral laxity" thus suggests an "Iranianness" to some extent merged with an Islamic identity—Islam combining morality with cultural authenticity to safeguard an Iranian modernity.

If, then, Islam is to serve as the basis of an Iranian modernity, it must be a reconstructed Islam, purified of superstitions, as well as of erroneous or ossified traditions. In other words, Islamic Tradition writ large must be cleansed of individual traditions. In an article entitled "A Comparison of the Situation of European and Iranian Women,"[6] the author argues that Islam *as presently understood* and *as presently practiced* is no longer consistent with engendering "progress" and the social goals of modernity—such as women's education and social activism. Comparing suffragettes in Great Britain and Sweden with the sorry state of women in Iran, the author laments that, "in Iran, education that according to the Quran is compulsory for every Muslim, is considered blasphemy [*kufr*]." The author continues, bemoaning the fact that:

> We consider our only superiority in the name of a dry and vacuous Islam in which we have no benefit, while at the same time we don't follow any of the traditions of the [religious] leaders. If we tell one of our daughters that the Quranic verses stress that all must get educated, they say these things have gotten old and we have to talk of new things, and if we tell them all the women of the world are busy getting educated . . . they say that they are not Muslims, they are infidels, and then [our daughters] resort to traditions [*Hadith*] of unknown origin to argue that it is [religiously] unlawful [*haram*] for women to be educated.

This quote clearly shows the urgency felt by those desiring to maintain Islam as relevant and foundational to society, to reform it.[7] This reform is understood to be a cleansing, a purification, and the return to the religious texts themselves, rather than to interpretations passed down into tradition. It is important to note first, that the standard against which traditions are measured for accuracy or Truth are the contemporary social goals of "progress" and modernity. Second, this tactic historicizes Islamic Tradition at the same time that it seeks to identify an "essence" or core of this same Tradition that is somehow inviolable. In so doing, it paradoxically rejects the Tradition itself in favor of a conception of religion as an ethical and moral system consistent with contemporary social values.

Women's World (*Alam-e Nesvan*): Progressive Religion and the Importance of Character

Women's World was radically different from *Blossom*—as a periodical, and for its views concerning the nature and function of religion in modern society. *Women's World* began publication somewhat later than *Blossom,* and enjoyed the distinction of being the longest running and most successful of all the women's periodicals published in that time.[8] Most importantly, *Women's World* was founded and published by Iranian graduates of the American Protestant girls' school (*Iran Bethel*) in Tehran,

with the headmistress, Annie Stocking Boyce, acting as impetus, advisor, and overseer.[9] Boyce and other American Presbyterian missionaries played an active role in supervising and training the editors and writers of the periodical, in addition to funding and protecting the periodical itself. American missionaries and doctors associated with the American Hospital in Tehran also contributed articles and translations, providing American cultural notions of medicine and hygiene as well as of family structure, gender relations, and religiosity.[10] In no small part due to its association with the American mission, *Women's World* was very influential—seeking directly and indirectly to advise the Iranian government as it formulated its own women's reform agenda.

At first glance, *Women's World* appears similar to *Blossom* in content. Articles on health, hygiene, education, childcare, and family life predominate. However, the tone of the discussion is markedly different, with a continuous discussion of home economics to the refrain of "organization, determination, and frugality allow one to do more with less."

Religion, History and Progress

Women's World takes a radically different approach than *Blossom* to the nature and function of religion in society. There is little mention of Islam as a belief system, community organization, Tradition, or worship practices. Rather, religion is presented as a direct and spiritual relationship between individuals and God. Articles are heavily influenced by (Protestant) American notions of religiosity, with faith manifested in moral character, piety, and "good works." There is a tremendous focus on the internalization of religious faith in the name of "progress" and "civilization." It is for love of God, not obedience to Islam and Islamic traditions specifically, that women should strive for the advancement of their own and the country's welfare. Indeed, what Iran requires is a modern, "progressive," enlightened—read Protestantized—religion to spearhead the route to modernity. Rather than seeking to purify or realign Islamic religious Tradition as in *Blossom*, articles in *Women's World* argue for the abandonment of Tradition itself, in favor of a spiritual, privatized, "modern" religiosity.

Women's World approached the problem of generating modernity as a question of social change. Only through the establishment of civilized and civil society can true "progress" and modernity be achieved. Civil society, in turn, depends on individuals imbued with a Protestant (or Protestantized) religious morality—i.e., the Protestant ethic. It is thus the individual that is the catalyst for modernity. Women, no less than men, have a religious obligation to work for the progress of society, and indeed the nation of Iran.

Articles in *Women's World* apply historicism and evolutionism to the understanding of Iranian society in an attempt to explain why Iran is no longer on the path of "progress." Freedom has a history, religion has a history, and so too does the struggle for women's rights.[11] Progress and modernity are not automatic, but are directly and causally dependent on the achievement of "progressive" civil society. There is thus the recognition of social evolution, yet an evolution that is not axiomatic, but rather dependent upon social change. Women's oppression is thus contextualized, with articles going so far as to claim that women's inferiority is, as we would term it today, socially constructed.[12]

"Progressive Religion" and the Importance of Character

Women's World concentrates on the development of women's characters. In the opinon of the writers and editors, the modern individual, or in this case, the Modern Iranian woman, is distinguished by a Protestant religiosity. Nobility of character is thus a function of Protestant qualities of industriousness, piety, frugality, and devotion to progress. The women who march upright through the pages of *Women's World* are the ideal embodiments of piety, morality, selflessness, and unbridled determination. They leave no doubt as to the sort of Modern Iranian Woman envisioned by the editors. Some of the women mentioned include American prohibition activist Frances Willard, Florence Nightingale, and the founder of Mt. Holyoke College Seminary for Women, Mary Lyons. One author declares, "There is no work that an honorable woman can't take on."[13] Frances Willard's words are quoted as a battle cry: "Each woman can achieve her aims through determination and serve her nation and country."[14]

The Protestant ethic and its own construction of nobility stood in direct, and often uncomfortable, contrast with existing markers of Iranian social and cultural status.[15] Female readership is told that nobility is a function of character and piety, not something external that can be measured by social prestige or displays of wealth. Florence Nightingale is held up as an example of a woman who defied social convention and became a nurse, arguing that it was a religious duty and work pleasing to God.[16] Real ladies are abstemious, thrifty, and industrious, not indulgent, spendthrift, and leisured. It must have been unwelcome news to upper class Iranians to be told that ladies should be well versed in cleaning, cooking and so on, so as better to organize and oversee the servants. In a display of the complete failure to understand Iranian society on its own terms, the author of one article declares: "How much better it

is to have one or two hard-working and effective servants, than to have a household of lazy ones!"

Education and the Eradication of Superstition

The centrality of education is a principal focus in the pages of *Women's World*. Education takes two primary forms. First, the fight for expansion of formal education for women and girls. Second, the more generalized battle against ignorance and superstition. Superstition is treated thus as a social problem to be resolved through education. The question of whether or not specific practices were sanctioned in Islamic texts and/or traditions was not important. Indeed, unlike *Blossom* where the goal of distinguishing between correct and false traditions is firmly embraced, in *Women's World* the question itself is moot.

In an article entitled, "One of the Sources of Our Misery,"[17] a semi-sociological analysis details the sorts of superstitions that abounded amongst Iranian women. (Men were apparently less afflicted by such faults, according to the author.) The author proffers a three-fold categorization of Iranian women: urban townswomen, village women, and tribal women. She then explains that superstitions current amongst women are a huge impediment to the development of women's characters, not to mention the more tangible goals of furthering women's education and surviving a visit to the doctor's office.[18] Women's misguided belief in fortune-tellers, stargazers, and all sorts of amulets and incantations is antithetical to rational scientific thought and the development of "progress" and "civilization."

> Despite the fact that ... the lying of astrologers has been underscored, nonetheless this train of hogwash continues and is popular. . . people believe that the movement of planets determines the life of mankind . . . these [superstitious practices] have progressed in our country such that women and most men wait for an auspicious hour to bathe, trim their fingernails.

Superstitions described thus as social and cultural impediments to modernity are then blamed squarely on the Mongols, pre-Islamic Arabs, and Jews—suggesting that indigenous Iranian culture is "rescuable" from these foreign adventurers.

Note here some interesting connections between religion, Iranian identity, and notions of authenticity. First, while Mongols and pre-Islamic Arabs were clearly not Iranian, the same cannot be said for Jews, who were indigenous Iranians who had converted to Judaism well before the coming of Islam to that country. By including Jews amongst two other non-Iranian groups, the author implies that they too, are not authentically Iranian.

Second, if the intent of the author is to blame non-Iranians for the prevalence of religious superstition in Iran, it is interesting that she does not simply blame non-Muslims, which would, in addition to the three above-mentioned groups, include Christians and Zoroastrians—both indigenous and long predating Islam. So for this author at least, Islam and Iranianness are not one and the same.

Third, by blaming superstition on foreign intrusion, the solution becomes the re-indigenization of religion through the exculpation of superstitions, and thus the modernization of religious belief. The author takes great pains *not* to point to Islam as a source of superstition, perhaps due to her own religious sentiments, or perhaps as a tactical omission.

The author of the article concludes by saying that superstitions abound most among the urban upper classes because they have the most leisure time to indulge in such nonsense. The solution, as ever, is industriousness. Tribal women are portrayed as the least affected by "foreign" influences and thus are in a sense the guardians of a purer, "indigenous" culture. This is significant given the fact that "tribal women" were not the ethnic and linguistic "Persians" of Iran – the Persians of the Achaemenid and Sassanian Empires – but rather of Kurdish, Arab, Turkic or other origins – and sometimes Sunni as opposed to Shi`a as well. For this author at least, "Iranianness" was not equated with Persianness and the glory days of past empires as it would come to be under Iranian nationalism. Iranianness was more inclusive—ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and even historically.

Women and Social Responsibility

Articles in *Women's World* argue that progress is not comprised of superficial or symbolic change. "Progress is not throwing off the veil ... or shaking hands and saying 'merci'."[19] Rather, progress results from character change and the acceptance of a social and civil responsibility born of piety and religious duty. The Modern Iranian Woman in *Women's World* displayed the power of "progressive" religiosity that should be harnessed to the Iranian cause. God's work, therefore, was interwoven into the national cause: it was a manifestation of piety and godliness that individuals devoted themselves to "progress" and "civilization." Civic duty grows from faith, rather than setting itself up as a secular morality in competition for the souls of the citizens. "For love of God and country" is the typical formulation of this equation.

Indeed, religion is used to justify women's natural and "God-given" rights. *Women's World* approaches the individual as created in nature by God. Natural rights, in the Enlightenment sense, are God-given. Using arguments

of natural rights and religion, women reclaim their rightful place as individual actors, and as social actors. "It is not reasonable that God would create man with all the good qualities and women without. Don't [men and women have] the same intellect? questions one article.[20] In an article entitled, "Women are Actually Superior," [21] the author argues that God made women with the qualities of angels. Yet, the author rallies, "women of Iran are far from civilization and education. We must try to be our original form—angels—and get rid of these clothes of ignorance and lack of education and work smartly." Elsewhere, an article insists that the qualities of God are present in both women and men.[22] Thus, through an emphasis on spirituality, women will regain their natural, God-given essence, ridding themselves of the social and cultural externalia that is oppressing them.

Through claims of religious morality and civic duty, women in *Women's World* reclaim their natural rights to further the progress of the Iranian nation: "Today women have important roles in the civilized world."[23]

> We believe that the foundation and material of the country and the standing and rank of the nation [*mellat*] is mostly due to the existence of hard working girls and educated women. For this reason we wish it not to stay the way it is, but for women to wake up from this false dream and realize that the happiness and prosperity of the rest of the countries have been achieved through women's activism.[24]

Women are encouraged to claim heretofore-restricted spaces. In order to do so, women must reorder the markers of social morality. If the veil is to be abandoned as a marker of morality, other symbolic markers must therefore be presented to assume its function.[25] Authors of *Women's World* propose character as the marker *par excellence* of a new, modern morality and in so doing, reject veiling and "false" claims to Islam. This amounts to a tremendous attack on Tradition, not only in its more theoretical aspects, but also in its common interpretation and social practice. For example, a number of articles challenge the restrictions of women in public space, arguing that this is uncivilized and the product of false morality and honor.

> Truly how miserable are the women of Iran, how simpleminded must we be to believe that [bad behavior towards us in public] is for the preservation of our honor and dignity! No, to the contrary, this sort of behavior puts us to shame and is a source of lack of respect of women. [26]

In particular, *ta'ziyeh* [Shi'a passion play] celebrations, entrance to mosques during the month of Ramadan, and the cinema are singled out as events and places that women have a right to attend, but from which they are unjustly prohibited because of their over-crowding, jostling, and other "unseemly" behavior.[27] In the case of cinema attendance, the government is called on directly to enact specific changes that will allow for women to attend without compromising their morality or comfort. Significantly, these changes protect women from physical proximity to men and/or the lower social classes. [28]

A similar attempt to establish clear markers of an alternative, modern morality is evident in the descriptions of women's society meetings.[29] Much attention is given to describing the women in attendance, the space itself, and the activities as upstanding, moral, and socially desirable. For example, the women are described as clean, neat, and carefully, although very simply, or even plainly, dressed. The women are orderly, respectful, patient, and intelligent. The speakers are described as educated, articulate, and polite. It is even pointed out that no coffee or tea is served on such occasions, lest there be any question about the meetings serving surreptitiously as opportunities for men and women to meet and intermingle. It is not gender segregation per se, therefore, that is renounced with the removal of the veil, but the veil itself as a necessary means of implementing morality and modesty. Women are urged to assert their rights to new political and social spaces, while reformulating "appropriate" gender separations.

The reconceptalizing of spaces also extends to the family. Companionate marriage is promoted on multiple grounds as being the most desirable form of marriage.[30] First, on the grounds of family happiness born of greater intimacy and trust. Second, on the grounds that children benefit from the attention, character education, and daily interaction with both parents. Third, on the grounds that social ills such as prostitution, alcoholism, and drug addiction will diminish as a result of marriages based on intimacy, respect, and partnership. And fourth, on the grounds that companionate marriage affords more (legal) protection for the wife, as well as more independence, and thus fosters responsibility, commitment, and the value of education and character in both marriage partners.

Conclusions

At first glance, one might wonder at the value of comparing periodicals so vastly different as *Blossom* and *Women's World*. Certainly, their approach to issues of religion in society are irreconcilable. *Blossom*, while certainly anti-clerical, is not secularist. It blames the religious establishment for failing to keep pace with social needs, and to protect and safeguard religion from error, deviation. The *ulama* are chastised as having failed to protect the essence of Tradition from the onslaught of traditions. Yet *Blossom* does not call for secularism. Rather, Islamic law is still proffered as the legitimate

religion of state. *Blossom* seeks to protect Islam as the foundation of the state, law, and society by renewing it and making it relevant.

Blossom's call for the return to the "essence" or Truth of Islam has important implications. First, the application of this program of action necessitates a re-education campaign: for Islam to become relevant and compatible with modernity and for the eradication of a mistaken understanding of what Islam really is, the population must be re-educated. This would be made possible by the establishment of a compulsory, national educational system. However, to what extent this project was explicit and backed by the state remains to be investigated.

Second, in calling for religious Truth to be measured by contemporary values and ideals, *Blossom* elevates society and accepts the social construction of "Truth." As a result, *Blossom*'s position on religion ends up being an ethical bottom line, not so very different from the "progressive religion" envisioned by *Women's World*. Both accept contemporary society as the yardstick with which to measure religion, and for whose benefit religion should work.

Third, *Blossom* should certainly not be viewed as "traditional" or socially reactionary. *Blossom* embraces modernity, but a modernity centered on Islam. The simultaneous promotion of women's rights and status alongside an Islam understood as a system for the greatest community or social benefit necessarily introduced some implicit tensions into *Blossom*'s arguments. For example, what exactly are the rights of individuals over and against "social benefit" and how is this measured? Similarly, in terms of family values, how is mothering to be measured against women's other activities? Certainly, *Blossom* exhibits a degree of Islamic-based corporatism in direct contrast to the strident individualism that pervades the pages of *Women's World*.

Women's World, unlike *Blossom*, does not base its program for social regeneration on the renewal of religious tradition. Rather, it takes an evolutionary position towards the nature of religion, positing that religious traditions that *Blossom* is at pains to renew and safeguard have become outdated, irrelevant, and merely an obstacle to modernity. *Women's World*'s position on religion allows for, indeed proffers, a secularist stance – with religion privatized and secularized. *Women's World* thus is *anti-Tradition, not just anti-traditions.*

Second, *Women's World* promulgates a religious policy of pluralism, whereas *Blossom* does not. Although the journal is heavily American Protestant in orientation and content, this is not to say that these ideas didn't gain currency in Iran, particularly given the periodical's readership and public visibility. In fact many outward aspects of its platform, secularism and pluralism for example, were to some extent adopted into state policy. Yet Islamic law was never fully displaced where family law was concerned. The question remains whether the state wished to integrate both corporatist and pluralist/secular visions of modernity into the state, or whether it was obliged to do so for reasons of exigency.

It is clear that there were a variety of ways that religion was being integrated into modernity, whether from a secular or anti-secular perspective. It is not the case that religion is excluded from modernity, or somehow simply disappears in this period. Moreover, there was clearly no consensus about the relationship of religion to Iranianness, or authenticity. Articles in *Blossom*, seeking to preserve religion's relevance, are at pains to present Islam as authentically Iranian. Yet the authors of *Women's World* are more confused about the issue of religious authenticity, perhaps given their Protestant education and not wanting to exclude Christians from the parameters of Iranianness. One mustn't accept as given or inevitable the construction of Iranian nationalism as it would emerge in the 1930s, or the fiction of religion's absence from this equation.

Although *Blossom* and *Women's World* differ significantly in their approach towards the role of religion and gender in a "modern" Iran, they nevertheless belong to the same world. As such, they represent a spectrum of responses and solutions to similar questions of Tradition, religion, gender, national identity and the like; i.e., while their solutions might radically differ, they are both posing the same questions. Moreover, they exhibit similar methodological approaches to these questions. Society as a field of inquiry is identified and analyzed from a historical and contextual perspective. It is this methodology—the acknowledgment of historical context and the social construction of knowledge—that I believe marks the early twentieth century as the threshold of modernity in Iran.

NOTES

[1]I am grateful to the many scholars whose work has influenced my understanding of women's issues in this period. In particular, I would like to note Nikki Keddie, Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, Afsaneh Najmabadi, and Deniz Kandiyoti. I would also like to thank Holly Shissler for the many fruitful discussions we have had on the issues presented in this paper.

[3]*Blossom* was briefly preceeded by a periodical entitled *Knowledge* (*Danesh*). I read both, but *Danesh*, unlike *Blossom*, did not provide sufficient material for the topic of discussion of this article. For a pioneering work on the official and non-official woman's agenda in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865-*

1946 (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002). See also Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For an in-depth study of *Women's World* in its political and social context, see Jasamin Rostam Kolayi, "The Women's Press, Modern Education, and the State in Early Twentieth-Century Iran, 1900-1930," Ph.D. diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 2000.

[4]"The Philosophy of the Veil," *Blossom* 2:24 (1331): 92 and continued in 2:24 (1332): 95. Unless noted, all authors are anonymous.

[5]The Persian epic *Shahnameh* is cited in this article as a source for evidence of pre-Islamic veiling practices.

[6]"A Comparison of the Situation of European and Iranian Women," *Blossom* 2:24 (1332): 95-96.

[7]The idea of the *shari'a* as prescribing a protective morality essential for rearing children properly is also discussed in the article, "Safety is in Observing Religion," *Blossom* 2:20 (1332): 145-146.

[8]For reasons behind its long publication, see Rostam-Kolayi, "The Woman's Press."[9] On Annie Stocking Boyce and her role with *Women's World* see Michael Zirinsky, "A Presbyterian Vocation to Reform Gender Relations in Iran: The Career of Annie Stocking Boyce," in Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin, eds., *Women, Religion and Culture in Iran* (London: Curzon Press, 2002), 51-69.

[10]It was a typical feature of American Protestant missionaries working in Iran (and elsewhere) to implicitly connect civilization and progress with American cultural paradigms.

[11]"News of the Progress of Women," *Women's World* 4:2 (1302): 22.

[15]See "Nobility in Life," *Women's World* 1:3 (1300): 2.

[16]"The Skill of Nursing in Iran," *Women's World* 1:3 (1300): 1-2.

[17]"One of the Sources of Our Misery," *Women's World* 1:3 (1300): 35-37.

[18]On the danger of following doctors' prescriptions, see also "The Way We Will Deliver Women From Their Misery," *Women's World* 2:2 (1300): 38-39. Children are threatened with ideas of "wild animals and doctors" in an article entitled "Habit," *Women's World* 1:6 (1300): 10.

[19]"Now I Understand," *Women's World* 1:6 (1300): 37.

[20]"Who is a Mother," *Women's World* 2:2 (1300): 24.

[10]"Who is a Mother," *Women's World* 2:2 (1300): 24.

[21]"Women Are Actually Superior," *Women's World* 1:4 (1299): 30-32.

[22]"Qualities of God are Present in Man," *Women's World* 2:3 (1300) :37-39.

[23]Badr al-Moluk, "A Useful Story," *Women's World* 1:3 (1300): 34. See also, "What is our Duty?" *Women's World* 1:6 (1300): 37.

[24]"Note from the Editor," *Women's World* 4:1 (1302): 3.

[25]On the replacement of "traditional" symbols of morality with new ones, see Deniz Kandiyoti, "Some Awkward Questions on Women and Modernization in Turkey," in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 270-287.

[26]Articles challenging the contemporary division of public spaces and women's exclusion from them include: "Going to the Movies," *Women's World* 5:3 (1304): 3-4. In the article "Why Haven't We Made Progress?" *Women's World* 4:5 (1303): 25-29, the author calls on men to defend Islam's honor (*namus-e Islam*) by protecting women and respecting their right to enter spaces in which they currently feel uncomfortable.

[27]"Going to the Movies," *Women's World* 5:3 (1304): 3-4.

[28]See in particular "Why Haven't We Made Progress?" and "Going to the Movies".

[29]"Going to the Movies," *Women's World* 5:3 (1304): 3-4.

[30]A description of a women's society meeting occurs in "Now I Understand," *Women's World* 1:6 (1300): 35-39.

[31]Articles on the desirability of companionate marriage in include: "How Can We Progress?" *Women's World* 1:5 (1300): 3; "Participation of Men in Homekeeping is Necessary," *Women's World* 1:6 (1300): 11-16; "Father's Duties," *Women's World* 4:1 (1302): 19; "The Greatest Present Need of Iran," *Women's World* 3:6 (1305): 1-3; "The Greatest Need of Iran," *Women's World* 3:6 (1305): 26-27; "Mrs. Macdowal, The Perfect Husband," *Women's World* 3:6 (1305): 29-39; "Wives and Husbands," *Women's World* 7:11 (1306): 437-440; and "Behavior in the Family," pt. 2, *Women's World* 9:1 (1307): 17-20.