

De-hyphenate and De-theorize my voice: “I act, therefore, I am”

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Abstract

The cultural productions of Iranian women scholars, novelists, and even those in the movie industry in Iran have not received sufficient attention from western scholars, more specifically from those in search of an Islamic feminism. The recent scholarship branded as Islamic feminism have homogenized Iranian women, and failed to provide a forum for those Iranian women wanting to express their defiance of gendered laws in a nonreligious and nonwestern oriented voice.

Especially during the past two decades, Iranian women have been active in poetry, novel and short story writing. Their cultural production since 1998 offers a new voice concerning women’s status, rights, roles, as well as their social, political and economic contributions within the existing cultural and social spheres.

In this discussion I explore some Iranian women’s efforts in challenging the dominant culture through their efforts theorized in the slogan: “I act, therefore, I am.” The tenet of my theoretical framework is based on this slogan which shows that it has no ties with any western theories (Islamic feminism included), it is outside of any religion based paradigms, and it is completely detached from any male-oriented theories or movements.

Key Words: novels, Iranian women, culture, Islam, hijab, polygamy, divorce, arranged marriage.

Introduction:

Earlier I wrote that ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, the study of the status of women under that country’s Islamic rulings -- embracing their rights, their clothing, and all the cans and cannots of their daily life -- has become a “career” not only for the nation’s *ulama* (religious scholars), but also for many western and Muslim (even Iran-based) scholars, both men and women (Derayeh, 2006, 2).¹ There, I argued that most scholarship on and about Iranian women fails to represent all Iranian women. I further showed that the scholarship produced on Iranian women since the 1980s, with the exception of a few works (Haideh Moghissi and Shahrzad Mojab), reflected the perspectives of some contemporary Iranian clergymen. Moreover, some scholars based their arguments related to the pro-Islamic Republic on the opinions of select politically, economically and socially influential women, such as Farideh Mostafavi-

Khomeini, Zahra Bahonar, Azam Talighani, and Faezeh Rafsanjani. Consequently, single-pattern voices who owed their privileged status to the Islamic Republic came to be taken as reliable witnesses for the emancipatory and empowering nature of Islam. Similar single-pattern case studies became the bases for scholars to argue for the development of a genuine Islamic feminism in Iran, Egypt and Turkey (A. Najmabadi, 1987, 1997; Z. Mirhosseini, 1996, 2002, 2010; H. Hoodfar, 1993 & 2003; M. Badran, 2001). In the following pages I argue that such scholarship homogenized Iranian women and failed to provide a forum for those Iranian women wanting to express their defiance of gender-biased, shariah-based laws. Hence, I argue that the cultural production of scholars, novelists, and even those in the movie industry in Iran² have not received sufficient attention from western scholars, more specifically those in search of an Islamic feminism.

In my earlier writings I had agreed with Moghissi that the postmodern scholarship on Muslim women tends to offer a universal view concerning issues such as human rights, *hijab*, and family law, a view that is seemingly close to “fundamentalist conservatism” (Derayeh, 2010, 2011, 2012). This universal view, according to Mojab, has lost its particularist (postmodernist) nature, hence its “universalist” perspective (1998, p. 19); and in my estimation it has failed to expose the reality of life and experiences of a number of Iranian women whose voices are silenced by postmodern relativism (2012, p.). Furthermore, the theories developed since the late 1980s on Islamic feminism have also marginalized a number of Iranian women’s efforts at seeking gender equality outside of Islam, for example, the efforts of those Iranian women who adhere to the slogan of “I act, therefore, I am.”

De-hyphenate, and De-theorize my voice:

Since the late 1980s, Iranian women’s resistance to shariah-based gender inequality (in this case, that of the Shiite Jafari sect) is expressed through different channels such as novels, movies, poetry, paintings, social media, and so on, under the slogan of “I act, therefore I am”. This indigenous school of thought has no ties with any religion, Islam included, and in fact it poses a challenge to religion. It is in clear conflict with the apologetic and complimentary justice offered by the Islamic republic, by men of power such as Ayatullahs Mesbah, Muttahari and Sanaei, by the women members of the Iranian parliament, and by previously mentioned Islamic feminist theorists.

This new wave of feminist thought and activities in fact mirrors the history of Iranian women’s resistance to gender-based injustice, which also shows no connections with religion. One finds individual calls for justice, such as in Mahasty’s (1118-1157) poetry. In her poems, Mahasty attacks institutions such as the *hijab* and the *haram*. She writes: “We cannot be kept by elders // We cannot be confined in depressing cell (*hujrah*)// One who has hair like a chain // Cannot be confined at home in chains” (cited in Derayeh, 2006). On this point I must also mention that Iran mothered three prominent liberated women in the nineteenth century: Zaynab Pasha, Tahereh Qurrat-ul-Ein, and Taj-al-Saltaneh. They expressed their individual feminism with both their fists and their pens.

During the protest against the Tobacco Concession of 1890 in Iran, for instance, women were in the front lines of demonstrations and protests. Some women in the city of Tabriz marched under the leadership of a woman called Zaynab Pasha, a farmer and a widow who was oppressed and discriminated against not only because of her gender but also because of her social and economic status. Her struggle against oppression and discrimination earned her the male title of *pasha* (general) in a patriarchal society (Derayeh, 2006, 111-1140). And in 1848, Tahereh Qurrat-ul-Ein, during the Babi movement’s³ first convention in Badasht, Iran, gave a public speech and took off her veil (For more on Tahereh see Derayeh, 2006, pp.103-114). It is also alleged that Tahereh was a Babi follower, yet her demands were not religiously rooted. To

many Iranian women, be they Zoroastrian, Muslim, Bahai, Christian, Jewish, or completely secular, she was a lion-hearted woman (*zan-i shirdel*) and a pioneer of Iranian women's emancipation. Years later, Taj al-Saltaneh (b. 1883) the daughter of a Qajar king⁴ became the author of one of the earliest extant women's memoirs and she wrote: "[The] veil is a source of [much] moral decadence and an obstacle to progress and development" (Derayeh, 2006, 108). Tahereh had voiced what for the time was a very radical stance: "Therefore, if this system would be replaced by another system, I will choose socialism... My policy will be communist" (110)

Therefore, neither women such as Tahereh in 1848 or Taj al-Saltaneh sixty years later, nor those women who appreciated the unveiling decree in 1936, nor even those who have shown their resistance to the forced veiling decree of the Islamic Republic since March 1979, saw the hijab as a means of providing mobility for Muslim women (Milani's argument, 1992), or as "a catalyst and empowering agent" (Hoodfar's stand, 2001, 2003). Still less did they view the hijab as a sign of identity (theories offered by Joppke, 2009; Najmabadi, 2006). In fact, many Iranian women have expressed their resistance to the forced wearing of the *hijab-i Islami* by their unsuitable-hijabi appearance (*bad-hijabi*) in public, showing their bangs and covering the rest by a flashy and colorful head scarf, hence defying the forceful hijab decree and often facing harsh consequences at the hands of the Islamic authorities.

I am fascinated to see that most scholars recognize the politicization of the hijab institution, and indeed many have been preoccupied with establishing a convergence between the ban on *hijab* in public governmental institutions (France and Turkey) and the violation of human rights (Ezekiel, 2006; Hamdan 2007; Kllian, 2003; McGoldrick, 2006). Interestingly, however, these scholars have conveniently avoided considering the pressure exerted on Muslim women to veil by political regimes (Iran, Saudi Arabia) as a violation of women's human rights. Moreover, they argue that existing women's rights violations in sharia family law, the law concerning inheritance, and those in the criminal and the civil codes are the result of the foreign influence (L. Ahmed) or the "oppressiveness of Islamism" (Badran). Ziba Mirhossein, echoing the statements of Ayatullahs Madani, and Sanaei, Hujjat al-Islam Saidzadeh, and even of the "modernist" Abdul-Karim Surush, for instance, argues that a more progressive reading of the Quran and the sharia or an Islamic feminist gender discourse within Islam (a dynamic jurisprudence) would establish gender equality. Mir-Hosseini's 2010 interview with Yoginder Sikand in *Countercurrents.org* amplified Islamic feminism as being an "emancipator project for Muslim women and a new contextually-relevant way of understanding Islam." She further stated: "I believe that Islamic feminism is, in a sense, the unwanted child of 'political Islam'. It was 'political Islam' that actually politicized the whole issue of gender and Muslim women's rights". Badran, basing her argument on a single-pattern case study and an interview with Sibel Eraslan (where Badran identifies Eraslan as "a feminist without a label"), states that blame for the existing gender inequality should be laid at the doorstep of the "oppressiveness of Islamism" and not that of Islam. Failing to formulate her own definition of Islam, Badran suggests that there is a trend towards an Islamic feminism among Turkish women. She further suggests that Islamism is different from Islam, failing again to give any clear explanation or argument as to where this difference lies.

It appears that those spreading the slogan of the liberating nature of Islam have failed to consider that first, there are about 83 verses of the Quran that consign women to a disadvantaged situation and that second, the Quran is quintessentially Islam -- one cannot separate the two. One however, can place Islam in the domain of the private and suggest that Islamism locates Islam in the public domain. Furthermore, when Islam comes to the public domain and in some cases, such as in Iran and Afghanistan, enters into the constitutional law, the criminal law and the civil code, those 83 verses come to play a crucial role in

determining women's human rights. Consequently, such Islamic feminism cannot address gender inequality no matter how far it stretches because it finally comes up against the ultimate authority, the Quran.

Since the early twentieth century, Iranian women have been active participants in the movement for a constitutional law based on a parliamentary system and the establishment of an independent judiciary. The same trend was exhibited in a few Muslim countries such as Egypt and Turkey. Deniz Kandiyoti (1996) grounds women's active participation in this era in the nationalist oriented revolution and anti-colonialist movements; hence she theorizes a hyphenated feminism, calling it "First Wave: Feminism and Nationalism" (pp. 8-10). I, however, suggest a de-hyphenation process is necessary in order to avoid locating women's goals and their active participation in the periphery of a national awareness movement, thereby defining them as mere followers of newly awakened anti-colonialist men. William Morgan Shuster's 1912 report (Shuster, an American, being at the time Treasurer-general of Iran by appointment of the Iranian parliament) provides a useful basis for revisiting hyphenated feminism in the case of Iranian women in the early twentieth century. Shuster wrote: "The Persian women since 1907 have become almost at a bound the most progressive, not to say radical, in the world. That this statement upsets the ideas of centuries makes no difference. It is the fact" (complete quotation in Derayeh, 2006).

A closer examination of the independent women associations, their organizations and weekly publications established during 1899-1927, would also consolidate my point in crediting women's collective efforts as an independent stance, hence de-hyphenated from any male-oriented schools of thought.⁵

Hear my voice: `I act, therefore I am`:

Determined and persistent, Iranian women have for decades collectively struggled to carve out equal space in the political, economic and social life in their country. Fatemeh Adib al-Zaman Farahani (b. 1860) talked about knowledge and empowerment, and wrote: "My greetings to you women of the homeland//Your knowledge can rescue the homeland. Get education, you, daughters of the homeland//Become authorities of knowledge, you, mothers of the homeland." Interestingly, almost one century later, some Iranian women novelists and those in the movie industry also called for women's education, relating it to empowerment, this time under the slogan of "I act, therefore, I am," and again their stand was independent and not grounded in any religion. Moreover, in both cases these calls challenged Islamic law and patriarchal society. Tahmineh Milani (1999), for instance, shows in *The Two Women* how her protagonist does not give up her education despite the fact that she is forced by her husband to quit university. She constantly borrows books from the library and reads them secretly. In the end, she de-victimizes herself and becomes both the "savior" and the "saved." She is ready to begin the life of a single parent, be her own person, saying she has "much work to do" and asking "if there is any book she could consult," she acts, hence she exists.

In the medium of popular culture, movies directed or produced by women boldly challenge the status quo in general and Islamic family law (polygamy, unilateral rights of men to divorce, father's and paternal grandfather's undisputable rights to custody of children) in particular, awakening women and giving a voice to Iranian women who are unable to speak (Derayeh, 2010). Niki Karimi⁶ is one such woman director, having dealt with polygamy and its religious and cultural roots in her 2003 motion picture *One Night*. The dialogue between her protagonist Negar and the middle-aged man who offers her a ride to her destination and starts making advances to her is emblematic of the existing gender inequality grounded in religion:

Negar: "Excuse me, but you are married and you have children."

The man: "You sound like you don't live in this country. Men are promiscuous. Polygamy is men's right. God and his prophet have allowed it. What's the problem? You know, every flower has its own smell."

Negar: "What about your wife? Shouldn't she be promiscuous too?"

The man: "Listen lady, I am sensitive about my wife. Please stop talking about her."

Negar: "And, I am sensitive about myself. Stop the car and let me out."

The man: "All this equal rights is nonsense. It is rubbish. Since the day God created Adam and Eve, He created women for men. That was the essence of creation. If you disagree with me, you can always read the works of religious scholars on this issue."

The questions for those who advocate Islamic feminism are: How far can Islamic feminism be stretched in order to justify the unilateral rights of men to divorce their wives, men's rights to polygamy (and in the case of Iran and according to Shiite Jafari law their rights to unlimited temporary marriages), fathers' and grandfathers' undisputed right to custody of the children, and husbands' rights -- on the authority of verse 4:24 -- even to beat their rebellious wives? This is a reality that Iranian women have faced for centuries, and they have at last come to the realization that justice and gender equality cannot be materialized under the rule of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian women and their cultural production since the 1990s amplify the incompatibility of Islam with women's unconditional rights and gender equality.⁷ Iranian women's cultural production offers a new voice concerning women's status, rights, and roles, as well as their social, political and economic contributions within the existing cultural and social spheres.⁸

Iranian women's novels may also be considered as evidence of this trend due to their prevailing feminist narratives. Talatoff (1997), grouping Iranian women's narratives chronologically as pre- and post-revolution literary works (and this despite considerable diversity in the cultural production), argues for example that although pre-revolution literary narratives (i.e. the works of Simin Danishvar, Furugh Farrukhzad, and Simin Behbahani) address social and political themes, they fail to deal with women's issues as a separate paradigm. For this reason he does not consider them to be feminist narratives. To this he adds that feminism is present only in the works of those he identifies as "the new generation of women writers" (p 532) (i.e. Munireh Ravanipur and Sharnush Parsipur). Much has been written on the literary works of Iranian women such as Danishvar, Farrukhzad, Behbahani, Ravanipur, and Parsipur, mainly focusing on their literary style. Perhaps this is because of the difficulty of defining an Iranian woman feminist writer. Clearly, it is not easy even for Iranian women writing in Iran to express overtly any feminist sentiments in their works or to identify themselves as feminist. Even those seen as Islamic feminists by observers in the west such as Monireh Gorji, Nayyereh Tohidi, Nahid Muti'ei and Zahra Rahnavard avoid being branded as feminist. I argued earlier that Gorji is mainly concerned with Quranic interpretation and campaigns for the recognition of women's religious powers, such as the right to issue *fatwas*. Tohidi, Moti'ei and Rahnavard have, for their part, a more negative agenda, consisting mainly in the denunciation of feminism. According to them, feminism as an ideology or belief will lead women to adopt an unethical way of life and they praise the complementary gender status proclaimed by Islam, supported and justified by the ayatullahs, hujjat al-Islams and advocates of dynamic jurisprudence (Derayeh 2006, p. 186-187).

According to Nushin Ahmadi-Khurasani, in a patriarchal society such as Iran, "women are considered as an ethical issue; hence feminism is analyzed in an ethical spectrum."⁽⁴³⁾ Notwithstanding, Iranian women's cultural productions (novels included) are essentially based on the slogan "I act, therefore, I am." In the words of Shahla Lahijijn:

Iranian women are expressing their individual and cultural identities through efforts they put forward as an action or a reaction in areas such as academic research,

literature and art. Their works are a true and honest reflection of Iranian women's lives and the conditions they experience. They acknowledge their presence in the form of; I act, therefore, I, am. We should inquire into their reasons. We should recognize their reasons by writing about them. (Interview with Saboori, videotape, *I act, therefore I am*)

In support of this claim let me cite some recent novels that discuss matters formerly considered as private and taboo. The stories (*Shalizeh*, by Tavakoli in 2005; *I am a Woman* by Ahmadi in 2006; *Nasrin*, by Ghadiri in 2010) boldly discuss women's desires, their experience under patriarchy, their quest for recognition as human beings, their challenges to the identity imposed on them by their religion, their culture, and their family, the pain and frustrations they go through in a misogynist family, and so on. Moreover the fictional women characters in these novels present a new reading of events in contemporary Iran, while the social novels paint a realistic portrait of Iranian society and its dominant patriarchal religion and culture, leaving readers with a new perspective on constructed female identity, women's inequality under family law, men having the right to choose their place of residence, women needing their husbands' or their fathers' consent to travel outside of Iran, and so on.

Belqays Sulaimani's novel *Bazi Akhare Banoo* (Banoo's last game), published in 2005, depicts the changes imposed on the protagonist Banoo by a patriarchal society and under Islamic rulings. Sulaimani's book begins with a short poem: "O my night companion; life is not just to be// In the green vein of life; there is no place to decay// Life is a river, a folded river, life is to become." Sulaimani clearly transforms the slogan of "I act, therefore I am" into the poem and later in the book by having Banoo transform her life from a state of utter passivity, performing only what is expected of her. She watches her mother help to bury a baby born out of wedlock, never asking if the baby was dead or breathing when she was buried, never questioning who made the decision that death is a better fate than being called illegitimate. Eventually she accepts an arranged marriage to a man decades senior to her, and even begins to believe that people were right and that she was very lucky to be the second wife of this man. She tries "to be" a good wife, and performs what is expected of her. She does not therefore understand why things change after giving birth to her son. Why was she arrested? Why was she accused of being involved in anti-revolutionary activities? Why didn't her influential husband intervene and free her from prison? All her questions are answered when her jail-mate Massoumeh tells her the story of her own great uncle whose wife was barren, took a second wife and as soon as the second wife gave birth to a baby boy, the uncle accused her of adultery, kicked her out, kept the baby and raised him with his first wife. Banoo realizes that she had been used as a surrogate to produce an heir. Banoo says:

I feel I am like the mare of Mashadi Norouz. In our village, when someone wanted to purchase a colt, Mashadi Norouz used to take her to Mr Mohammad's bay to procreate a horse and when they wanted a mule, he would take her to Reza Palanchi's donkey. (193)

The next day she was taken to the revolutionary court. She was told she had been divorced by her husband (Islamic law) and her son would remain with his father (Islamic law). Out on the street she questions herself:

Where should I go? To my mother's home? No! I cannot bear people's rejoicing at my misfortune, I cannot bear my mother's questioning eyes. I should go to Rahami's (ex-husband) home. I will find an excuse. I'll say I wanted to see my son. I must see Rahami, stare at his eyes and tell him; life has ups and downs. He will see the downs too. I must see my baby. This is my

natural right. What natural right? The law says something else. I must see him. I must spit in his face and tell him I am not Mashadi Norooz's mare. I must tell him I will take revenge. (197-198)

Finally Banoo decides to go to the library, where before her marriage she always experienced tranquility and peace. The librarian informs her that she passed the university's entrance examination and has been accepted to Tehran University in the department of philosophy. Her life, that folded river, is now unfolded. She cannot remain silent anymore, she questions the unquestionable, she experiences a transition from the stage of being what she was expected to be to the stage of becoming what she desires to be; she acts, therefore, she is.

Shalizeh by Vakili, on the other hand, uncovers the inner feelings and desires of her protagonist Shalizeh for her best friend. Shalizeh does not know why she wants to keep her hair so short, why she has no feelings for boys, why she only wants to be with her girl friend. Although the author is very cautious not to place any specific brand on Shalizeh's different sexual orientation, she nevertheless discusses the sexual orientation within a feelings paradigm. In a country that imposes capital punishment for any act of homosexuality, Vakili boldly shows to her reader that sexual orientation is not a social construct, it is not a style of fashion that may come and go, and it certainly is not a choice or a preference for Shalizeh.

To reiterate, I am not suggesting that these works should be branded as feminist thoughts, or hyphenated under one or another school of feminism. However, I find that they cover issues that are of fundamental concern to critical feminism. Questioning existing self-identity, the reconstruction of the past through education, the need for a voice, and a future based on women's own definitions and choices are the main points in all these stories, and in all of them the feminist component is completely divorced from Islam. **On the other hand, the new genre of postmodernist, cultural relativists and Saidian orientalists (H. Afshar (1995), E. Fernia (1997), H. Hoodfar (1993), N. Jawad (1993), C. Joppke (2008), Z. Mir-Hosseini (1996), A. Najmabadi, 2006, N. Tohidi (1994)), the pioneers of Islamic feminism, have judged quite a number of Iranian women and their quest for equality not worthy of consideration, offering instead impetuous and general theories concerning the plight faced by women in Iran.**

Summary:

One can cite a number of reasons why Iranian women's thought and writings have been collected under the single umbrella of Islamic feminism. One reason is that research has often been limited to a few single-pattern cases, and that some scholars misread and misinterpreted Iranian women's participation in the revolutionary events against the Pahlavi regime as being directed towards the formation of an Islamic Republic. On the contrary, I have argued before that during the revolution many Iranian women with different political affiliations and positions-- feminists, human rights activists, lawyers, judges, physicians, teachers and students-- came out into the streets and marched and fought in support of the revolution. They all covered themselves in black veils as a sign of solidarity regardless of their political and personal beliefs concerning the hijab (Derayeh, 2006). Two decades later in 2009, during the presidential election, these same women (this time with their daughters besides them) dressed in green and occupied the streets of Tehran and major cities demanding justice and democracy. I must also mention that Iranian women human rights activists, led by Shirin Ebadi, Simin Behbahani and Nooshin Ahmadi-Khorasani, launched a campaign for equality following a seminar on The Impact of the Law, held on 28 August 2006. This campaign, which soon became known as the One Million Signature Campaign, received immense support from every segment of society, from people of all religious, and from secular men and women. In their petition they demanded equal gender rights in the divorce law, abolition of

polygamy and temporary marriage, equality in inheritance, raising the age of accountability of women in criminal cases from 9 to 18, as well as equal rights under the criminal and the civil codes.

Let me state here that the cultural productions of Iranian women bring forth a new reading of the events in contemporary Iran and depict a realistic picture of the Iranian society and the dominant patriarchal culture. It leaves the audiences and readers with a new perspective concerning women: they act, therefore they are.

Also, I must acknowledge that this work has given a public forum for the voices, thoughts, works and experiences of only a handful of Iranian women story-tellers. I would like to end by quoting Nancy Goldberger who said "Stories are theories and storytellers are the theorists." There remain many women who should be heard and many others whose works should be translated in order to bring recognition to Iranian women "storytellers." I invite my esteemed colleagues to help them tell their stories.

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Endnotes

¹ I have borrowed the term "career" from Edward Said who initially borrowed it from Disraeli, who stated in his novel *Tancred* "the East was a Career." Said clarifies Disraeli's statement, arguing that "to be interested in the East was something bright young Westerners would find to be an all-consuming passion; he should not be interpreted as saying that the East was *only* a career for a Westerner."¹ Edward Said (1978) argues that Orientalism does not represent the real Orient.

² For example: scholars such as N. Ahmadi-Khorasani, 1999; 2003; N. Bayani, 2003; B. Hejazi, 2005&2006; novelists such as S. Ahmadi 2005; N. Ghadiri, 2003, 2005&2010; G. Ghazinoor, 2001; F. Golboon, 2000; N. Lari, 2003&2009; M. Mohebali, 2009; M.

Noori, 2005; B. Solaimanpoor, 2005&2009; S.Tavakol, 2005,2006&2009 , and women in the movie production such as T. Milani,1989,1990, 1999, 2003,2005&2006.

³ Babi movement was a religious fraction within Shiite mysticism. Its founder Babullah was a theologian, philosopher and a *Sufi*. He claimed he was the disappeared Imam of the Shi'i Twelver and informed his followers that a new prophet would come. Later, Bahaullah (1817-1892) brought a new religion that was based on the spiritual unity of humankind. This religion was never recognized by any government in Iran and the followers of this faith have always been persecuted.

⁴ The Qajar regime was the continuation of over two thousand years of various authoritarian governments in Iran. The founder of the Qajar dynasty, Aqa Muhammad Khan was of Turkomen origin. He defeated the Zand dynasty in 1794 and established a powerful and dictatorial regime which lasted until 1924.

⁵ For example: the Association for Women's Emancipation in 1899, Society of Ladies of the Homeland in 1900, Invisible Union of Women in 1907, The Blossom Association in 1914 (with a 5000 membership in 5 weeks), Women's Committee of Tabriz with a branch in Istanbul, Turkey in 1907, and the Women's Association of Isfahan to name a few.

⁶ Niki Karimi was born in Iran in 1971. She is internationally known as an actor. However, she is also a filmmaker, screenwriter, photographer, English/Persian translator and she has directed two movies (Interview with the author, Richmond Hill On. September 2006).

⁷ By 1998, 140 women had obtained publishing permits. Shahla Lahiji, the first woman to publish since the revolution, says that forty-five percent of these women are actively publishing

⁸ Since 1991 three translated collection of some short novels are published: *Stories by Iranian Women since the Revolution* by Paknazar & Sullivan in 1991, *In a Voice of their Own* by Lewis and Yazdanfar and Mohammad Mehdi Khorami's and Sholeh Vatanabadi's *A Feast in the Mirror: Stories by Contemporary Iranian Women* in 2001.