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GENUS OF SEX OR THE SEXING OF *JINS*

Abstract

In recent decades, Iran has witnessed radical transformations concerning the conceptualization of and procedural standards for changing sex. Psychologists, medical and legal practitioners, law enforcement officials, and scholars of fiqh have debated the advisability (in debates among health and legal professionals) or the permissibility (among scholars of fiqh) of sex-change. This article asks what historical transformations of the concept of *jins*/genus have informed the debates and enabled the contemporary dominant concepts and practices that shape them. How has *jins* come to mean sex and how does this matter? The article first maps out the historical genealogy of these reconfigurations. What were some of the 19th- and pre-19th-century concepts that could be considered disparate precedents to this cluster around sex/*jins*? It then reviews some of the late-19th- and 20th-century reshaping of biomedical knowledge and marital practices that have contributed to the contemporary meanings of *jins*.

In recent decades, Iran has witnessed radical transformations concerning the conceptualization of and procedural standards for changing sex. Psychologists, medical and legal practitioners, law enforcement officials, and scholars of fiqh have debated the advisability (in debates among health and legal professionals) or the permissibility (among scholars of fiqh) of sex-change. In this article, I do not propose to review these debates.¹ Rather, I ask what historical transformations of the concept of *jins*/genus have informed the debates and enabled the contemporary dominant concepts and practices that shape them. Simply put: How has *jins* come to mean sex and how does this matter?

Today, there is a vast generative circulation of discourses in Iran about sex and sexuality that informs concepts and practices of marriage, mental health, social harmony, and individual happiness. The familiar psychobiomedical discourse on gender-sex dimorphism has become interwoven into a religiocultural cosmos.² This discourse is pivoted on a notion of sex that needs a set of sociocultural normative constraints to produce health and happiness. Its naturalness (through affiliation with the hormonal and chromosomal make-up of each person) also provides for possibilities of developmental failure, in which a host of sex-gender nonconformities are rendered diseased abnormalities.

The dominance of this discourse is very recent in Iran. The word most commonly used today in Persian to mean sex, namely, *jins*, acquired this meaning in the early to middle decades of the 20th century. In 19th-century and earlier writings, *jins* was

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used as a general term for categorization. The 19th-century Steingass *Persian–English Dictionary*, for instance, defines *jins* as “Genus, kind, stock, sort, mode; gender; goods, movables, articles, things; grain, corn; crop, products . . .”³ Its infrequent usage in a sex/gender context—for instance, in certain sections of jurisprudential literature (*fiqh*)—was “subject-dependent,” which meant that its categorization under one specific subject (such as inheritance) would not generalize into a universal norm.⁴

Nor was the 19th-century medical discourse on matters that would now be named sexual focused on naming desire as sexual or on categorizing related practices as natural or unnatural. Beginning in the mid-19th century, the medieval Perso-Islamic⁵ philosophical-medical discourse on desires, practices, diseases, and the body was selectively and partially replaced by adaptations of European modern medical treatises.⁶ In this process, important shifts in gender and sexual notions emerged in the course of “achieving modernity.” First, a disavowal of homoerotic desire set in motion seemingly contradictory, yet in fact enabling, dynamics. It marked homosociality as empty of homoeroticism and same-sex practices and, by insisting on that exclusion, it provided homoeroticism and same-sex practices a homosocially masqueraded home. Second, this masquerading move could not but affect homoeroticism itself. The *amrad* (male adolescent object of desire for adult men), for instance, had been a distinct figure, both as an object of desire and as a figure for identification. By the end of the 19th century, both positions of desire became feminized. To desire to be desired by a man, or to desire a man, became positions occupy-able only by a woman.⁷ Third and finally, this gender-dimorphic dynamic emerged in tandem with marking same-sex desire as unnatural.

Yet even as these cultural transformations recoded same-sex desire as unnatural, in Iranian modernist discourse this unnatural desire was seen to be an unfortunate effect of a social institution: namely, gender segregation. It was argued that as men socialized only with other men, their natural desire for women became, of necessity, redirected toward beardless male adolescents who, through an error of nature, looked like women. In other words, everyone was presumed to be naturally heterosexual.⁸ Distinct from what Foucault had suggested for 19th-century European transformations,⁹ this recoding of desire in Iranian modernist discourse was not driven by the logic and biopolitics of the production of “governmentable citizens.”¹⁰ While not linked to a state transformative project, the modernist rethinking of male–male sexual desire and practices was embedded within the larger notions of modern nationhood: such desires and practices became a sign of Iran’s backwardness and a source of national shame, which necessitated a reconfiguration of male–female relations. Modernists argued that if women were allowed to socialize with men, if they were educated and would begin to unveil, this unnatural vice would disappear.

Significantly, an ethicomedical discourse on male same-sex desire as illness was available in classical ethicomedical texts, through the figure of *ma’būn* (an adult male who desires to be penetrated), and in particular in the discourse of Ibn Sina (980–1037) on *ubna* as illness of will.¹¹ The modernist projection of same-sex desire as a derivative abnormality, a deviation¹² forced upon the natural as a consequence of the unfortunate social arrangement of sex–gender segregation, could have produced a tendency to “type” men (and women) who “still” engaged in same-sex practices as stricken with some sort of “illness.” Yet modernists were optimists; they imagined that

sex-gender heterosocialization, in particular the unveiling of women, would redirect men's sexual desires away from young males onto females, and that women, once satisfied by the heterosexualized men, would have no reason to turn to other women. This optimism initially worked against a mapping of same-sex desire and practices onto a minoritization of marked human bodies.¹³ However, the "failure" to produce homogeneously heterosexual modern men and women—despite decades of sex-gender heterosocialization and propagation of the notions of companionate romantic marriage and complementarity of the two now-transcribed as "opposite sexes"—provided the sociocultural space for reconfigurations of desire.

A TRAFFICKING SIGN¹⁴

To map out the historical genealogy of these reconfigurations, I begin with spelling out the different domains that are traversed by *sex/jins* in contemporary Persian (in Iran) discourse.¹⁵ I will then move on to how they are different from their 19th-century precedents.

1. *Sex/jins* is used to differentiate and categorize male and female bodies into opposing body types. This usage keeps *jins* connected with its classical meaning of genus of body, but with an important difference: in that register, the different bodies were not defined as opposite types. Today, across a variety of discourses—marital advice literature and behavioral psychology, as well as theological texts—men and women are said to be opposite (if at times complementary) types, *jins-i mukhālif*.
2. In categorizing men and women as opposite sexes, the typology is focused anatomically on genital differentiation (sexual organs, *ālāt-i jinsī*). In medical texts, additional grounds for the distinction are formed by hormonal (often referred to as sexual hormones, *haurmun-hā-yi jinsī*) and chromosomal differences. In behavioral psychology texts, *jins* is used for differentiating gender behavior (*raftār-i jinsī*) that is naturally (*jinsīyat-i ṭabīʿī*) appropriate for girls and boys and later for men and women.
3. *Sex/jins* is used in a cluster of concepts focused on issues of sexuality: in discussions of desire (*mayl-i jinsī*), attraction (*jazzābiyat-i jinsī*), and relations and acts (*ravābiṭ-i jinsī*, *aʿmāl-i jinsī*). In this context, since the mid-1960s, same-sex desire has been named *hamjins-garāʿī* (being inclined to someone of one's own sex/genus), which is distinct from *hamjinsbāzī*, playing with someone of one's own sex, a word that is considered more pejorative, as it links with earlier sexual practices marked by various hierarchies of age (*amradbāzī*, *bachchah-bāzī*), social status (*ghulām-bāzī*), and ethno-religious differences (*mugh-bachchah-bāzī*, *tarsābachchah-bāzī*).¹⁶
4. It is used in medical discourse, such as in reference to sexually transmitted diseases, diseases of sexual organs.
5. It is used in criminal discourse, as in sexual crimes (*jarāyim va jināyāt-i jinsī*).
6. More recently a category of sexual harassment and violence has emerged in the feminist press, *āzār va khushūnat-i jinsī*.

I note two things here. First, *jins* rarely appears as such in any of these registers. We find *jins* in its adjectival form (*jinsī*, sexual) as modifying something (such as organs, hormones, bodies) that through that modification becomes linked to a differentiation between male and female.¹⁷ Alternatively, in a meaning that comes closer to the English "gender," it modifies behavior, crimes, violence along a masculine–feminine axis. Finally, it occurs as modifier of desire, attraction, acts, relations, in what comes

close to the English “sexuality” (at times *jinsīyat* is used in this context, although in feminist literature *jinsīyat* is also used for gender—sometimes modified as social gender, *jinsīyat-i ijtimāʿī*) and, as in the previous two usages, links these categories to a binary differentiation.

Jins also appears as modified with other nouns and adjectives, such as in *jins-i muḥakkār/muʿannaṣ* (male/female sex) and *jins-i mukhālīf* (the opposite sex); and with a prefix (*hamjins*, same-sex), sometimes combined with a suffix, such as *hamjins-garā* (homosexual) and *hamjinsbāz* (same-sex player). To use *jins* as sex without any modifier or modifying work tends to pull it back to its meaning of genus. For instance, if one were to ask in Persian about someone’s preference in sex and used *jins* in that context, it is likely that the sentence would be understood as asking whether one prefers a male or female partner (for sex). In fact, in the context of “doing sex,” the word sex, pronounced *siks*, is used in Persian. For instance, a book on sexual pleasure is subtitled *Siks Zindigi Ast* (Sex Is Life Itself).¹⁸

The second point to note is that *jins* as meaning “Genus, kind, stock, sort, mode; . . . goods, movables, articles, things; grain, corn; crop, products” continues to be in full usage in contemporary Persian. A popular saying, *kabūtar bā kabūtar, bāz bā bāz / kunad hamjins bā hamjins parvāz* (dove with dove, falcon with falcon / those of the same *jins* fly together), circulates the older meaning of *jins* as genus even as its affiliation with the prefix ham- (same) now echoes same-sex. Similarly, *jins*’s prevalent usage as “goods” in commercial discourse (and in nationalist slogans such as *Īrānī: jins-i Īrānī bikhar* (Iranian: buy Iranian products) or as “kind,” as in payment in-kind in contrast to monetary payment, at times has enabled a pun: Paying someone “in kind” can now double as paying in sex.¹⁹ In other words, the nonconfinement of *jins* to sex and its continued circulation in many registers, with their own genealogical affiliations of meaning, affect meanings of *jins*-as-sex and vice versa. The circulation of *hamjins* as of-the-same-genus informs the meaning of *hamjins-garā* as homosexual. *Jinsī* as in-kind contributes to the meaning of *jinsī* as sexual. At the same time, there are some impassable lines of meaning. For instance, one cannot say in Persian, “I had *jins-i khūb*” to mean I had good sex. *Jins-i khūb* continues to mean “of good quality” and its register is in commerce, most commonly textiles. Conversely *badjins* (distinct from *jins-i bad*, meaning of terrible quality) is used as an adjective for people and means naughty or of ill character. In short, an important effect of the diffusion of meaning among these many registers is that *jins* is never just sex. Nor can genus be innocent of sex.²⁰

A FOREST OF GENEALOGIES

What were some of the 19th- and pre-19th-century concepts that could be considered disparate precedents to this cluster around sex/*jins*? Given the work of *jins* between registers of genus and sex, how does one defamiliarize one’s reading eyes that have been trained to see “sex” (*jins*) as a “universal signifier” in several distinct and at times disaffiliated registers—that is, how does one not read back “sex” into *jins* even as one is looking for the emergence of *jins* as sex?²¹

Moreover, as late as the late 19th century, the historian of “something called sexuality” has to turn to a diverse body of texts: medical, theological, philosophical, literary, erotological, among others. But already as I separate these texts into named genres,

I immediately have to indicate that the separation of texts into medical, theological, erotological, and so forth is not only anachronistic but also self-defeating. A continuum of scholars, sometimes the same individuals, produced many of the texts in these presumably different genres. As Dallal has discussed at length, Islamic medical literature, for instance, covered “such subjects as sexual pleasure, foreplay, and the positions of intercourse” so broadly and thoroughly that they “in effect incorporated into their discussions the erotic art of love and its techniques.”²² Indeed, one of the institutional and conceptual challenges that have impeded studies of the deployment of sex and sexuality in modern Middle East historiography has been that within modern academic disciplinary divisions, one has to become at once a historian of science, a student of Islamic philosophy and ethics, a legal/theological studies scholar, an expert in literary studies of erotic literature, and so forth in order to figure out genealogically how and whence the contemporary discourses of sexuality have emerged and what sociocultural labor they perform.

A central task of such historiography would then become bringing out the “border-making/trafficking” work of the emerging category of “*jins*-as-sex.” As these various texts became distinct genres, something named “sex” began to travel among them and connect them. How did *jins*-as-sex contribute to producing this “genre effect” while itself emerging as a trafficking sign, delineating these overlapping discourses into distinct genres through traversing them? In other words, in what ways were the distillation of *qarābādīn* (the pharmakon) into pharmaceuticals and *quvvah-i bāh* (ability for coitus) into sexual prowess effects of related processes? How did the biomedicalization of *ṭibb*, the jurisprudentialization of *fiqh*, the ethics-ization of *akhlāq*, and the pornographication of “texts of pleasure” (among other makings of genres) depend on the “deployment of sexuality”? How did *jins*, which may have done very different work in *fiqh*, *ṭibb*, *qarābādīn*, and *akhlāq*, emerge as a universal category signifying male and female sexes, as distinct bodies, with distinct sexual organs, possessing different sexual desires and prowess, and different sociocultural rights and obligations that became grounded in “sex”?²³

With these challenges in mind, I now turn to four registers—desire, practices, regeneration, and naming of body parts—that provide us with relevant precedent concepts for today’s usages of *jins*.

1. Discussions of desire (*shahvat*, lust)²⁴ in pre-19th-century texts take place in several types of literature, including ethics, jurisprudence, medicine, the *qarābādīn* (pharmaceutical texts on remedial herbs, spices, minerals, and other healing combinatories), and texts focused on techniques, whether penned by the same thinker or not. Lust is often defined in distinction from anger—considered the two most primary human sentiments. Lust is a generic term for desire; indeed, what we would now name sexual desire (in the earlier texts: *shahvat-i farj*, lust for orifices) is seen to be homologous with lust for food and for speech, as well as for eyeing/seeing (and through eyeing, it becomes connected with desire for beauty, engendered by the object being seen). Most commonly, the three primal desires are seen to be, first, lust for food (desire arising from stomach, *shahvat-i shikam*), viewed as an originary lust, as it caused Adam to initiate a chain of acts that led to the revealing of genitals and desire for intercourse. Its remedy: fasting, practicing hunger. Second comes the lust for orifices (*shahvat-i farj*, sometimes translated as the lust for vagina, but *farj* is a general term for orifice) as the most domineering lust, the most difficult to control; its remedy is again practicing hunger

and prayers. Finally, the lust to speak (*shahvat-i kalām*) has as its remedy keeping silent.²⁵ It is lust for orifices that becomes transformed into sexual desire; in this process it becomes disconnected from its affiliation with desire for food, for speech, and for eyeing. Through its naming as sexual (*jinsī*) and its articulation through psychobiomedical and criminological discourses, sexual desire becomes affiliated with (and thought as caused by) sexual hormones and chromosomes, and focused on sexual organs. It also becomes causative of practices, and at times of violence and crimes.

2. Discussions of what we now term sexual practices in pre-19th-century texts cover more conventional topics, such as intercourse (*jamāʿ*, *mujāmiʿat*, *muqāribat*, *muṣāhibat*, later substituted by their Persian equivalents *āmīzish*, *nazdīkī*), as well as the more contentious topics, such as anal penetration (*liwāṭ*), female same-sex practices (most commonly referred to as *musāhiqah* and *ṭabaq-zanī*, literally meaning rubbing and tribadism).²⁶ These variously named practices will emerge under a generalized category: sexual acts and relations (*aʿmāl va ravābiṭ-i jinsī*). In this process, what constituted a literature of techniques (*funūn*), usually instructing a man in how to facilitate orgasm in a woman (thought as necessary for conception), becomes marginal to modernist discourse. Lack of sexual satisfaction (*ʿadam-i irzāʾ-i jinsī*) becomes a hormonal and psychological problem to be diagnosed and treated by appropriate experts.
3. Regeneration (*tanāsul*) is again a topic discussed in a variety of texts, including texts focused solely on this topic. This literature includes discussions of desire and practice, but also such topics as infertility, predetermination of sex/genus of the fetus, pregnancy, and sometimes postnatal issues, including breastfeeding and child care more generally.
4. Last, there is the naming of body organs, a topic that I trace through all the above registers and texts.

How did 19th-century texts begin to differ in these registers from the more classical Perso-Islamic literature and what did this reshaping of knowledge have to do with something named *jins*?²⁷

Classical Islamic thinking on the body is deeply influenced by Greek thought.²⁸ The body is often imagined as a kingdom; different body parts are connected through a series of causal effects that produce harmonies and disharmonies; seasons, foods, moods, and daily practices are all interconnected to minimize disharmony and produce harmony. As Dallal summarizes, “A human body in a state of wellness indicated that the humors were in equilibrium. . . . Thus humors and the forces inherent in them are transmitted to the sexual organs.”²⁹ Medical texts were structured (and structured medical knowledge) around categorizations of remedies. Second: A subvariant genre was organized around the categorization of remedies according to the diseases they cured; these were structured along a hierarchy of body parts, starting from diseases of the head, eyes, ears, nose, face, lips, mouth, teeth, throat, chest and lungs, heart, breast, stomach, liver, pancreas, intestines, rectum, bladder and bowels (with a subsection on diseases specific to women), back, bottom, hands and legs.³⁰ Finally, there were texts focused solely on one topic, such as treatises on procreation.³¹

In the second group, structured along a hierarchy of body parts, there was no clustering of several organs under one title, even if several organs were discussed in the same subsection. For instance, there was no concept of “regenerative organs” (*ālāt-i tanāsulī*, *jahāz-i tanāsul*), a very common concept by the end of the 19th century. Organs were named individually as penis (*qazīb*), vagina (*mahbil*), and so forth. Nonetheless, this type of text in part provided the tradition that starting in the mid-19th century, with some modification, became the new anatomical texts (books of *tashrīh*). The latter initially

retained the organization of medical knowledge according to a hierarchy of body parts. For instance, diseases that later become clustered as “regenerative diseases” (venereal diseases) appear in different places: gonorrhea, impotence, involuntary ejaculation, and *ubna* each appear under the section that discusses the different organs they reference. Yet a clustering of body organs began to emerge, an internal repositioning of the anatomical body parts, based on the presumed function of organs for the body and human life—such as hearing organs, vision organs, feeding organs—in place of individual organs discussed from head to toe. One such clustering emerged around the notion of regeneration and regenerative organs, *ālāt-i tanāsulī*. Penis and vagina were no longer discussed under the section having to do with bladder and urinary organs; they were now clustered under a specific adjacent section named regenerative organs. Mapping the emergence of this clustering (through a refocus of body organs according to their alleged functions) is critically important for understanding the naming of regenerative organs that later morphed into sexual organs. One place where these two different kinds of categorization and naming most diverged was the shifting of the breast from the section on the chest and lung to that on the regenerative organs.

During the same period, an important shift in the conceptualization and organization of medical knowledge was consolidated: from an organization based on remedies to one based on symptoms of diseases. Mirza Abu al-Hasan Khan Taffrishi’s 1883 *Patuluzhi-i Tibbi: Matla’ al-Tibb-i Nasiri* (Medical Pathology) provides a good example of this shift. He explicitly states in his introduction that “these days [*dar īn ayyām*] categorizing diseases has been freed from following the order of organs”³²; chapters follow on fevers, cholera-type diseases, swellings, hemorrhage, diseased discharges (including a discussion of involuntary seminal discharges), hydropsy, and diseases of the nerves. The last of these has a subsection on nervous disorders in regenerative acts (*ikhhtilāl-i ‘aṣabānī-i a’ māl-i tanāsul*), including frequent and involuntary erection (*firismūs*), excessive lust in women (*nanfumānī* [nymphomania]), impotence, and suffocation of the womb (*ikhhtināq-i raḥim*, a favorite topic, taking up over eight pages in this section and then another three pages under madness, *junūn-i ikhtināq-i raḥim*), and so forth.

As important as the entry of biomedical knowledge, training, and practices is to these transformations, there is another significant site of translational transplantations that was critical to the emergence and cultural labor of *jins*-as-sex: namely, texts centered on marriage.

THE HEALTH OF MARRIAGE: FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Modernist texts about the health of marriage were distinct from the classical Perso-Islamic genre of books on *nikāḥ*. An early example of this genre is Sayyid Muhammad Shirazi’s *Bulugh al-Ibtihaj fi Sihhat al-Izdivaj* (Maturing of Joy in the Health of Marriage). Published in Istanbul, most likely in the 1890s, the book’s introduction indicates that it was based on a French book on the “health of marriage.”³³ The original French text, said to have been reprinted 175 times within a short period, sold thousands of copies in Istanbul.³⁴ The book is driven by a concern that was becoming pronounced among Iran’s modernist intellectuals: that the nation’s health was threatened by bad marriages, including marriages that facilitated the spread of diseases. The health of the nation became dependent on the healthy couple, and thus marital health was said to

be a state matter, not a private concern.³⁵ The book, advocating government intervention, begins with a general discussion of marriage and its benefits, and proceeds with chapters on the timing of marriage, followed by a description of what is referred to as regenerative organs (*a'zā-yi tanāsul*), first of men, then of women; chapters on the breast and breast milk; and on increases and decreases in regenerative power (*quvā-yi tanāsulī*) according to age. Subsequent chapters discuss intercourse, conception, sex predetermination in conception, preserving health in general and regenerative health in particular, advice for couples, infertility, impotence, things that strengthen desire (*bāh va shahvat*), pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. It ends with some remedies and a number of illustrations. Like classical texts, *Health of Marriage* uses the words *jins* (and *jinsīyat*) in the context of distinguishing male from female,³⁶ but when referring to body parts, it either uses such expressions as regenerative organs (*a'zā-yi tanāsul*) or specifically names the parts, such as penis (*qaṣīb*), vagina (*farj*), and so forth. It thus bridges the transition between inherited concepts and the more recent emergent clustering of organs in medical literature.³⁷

This genre of literature, driven by the modernist concern with national health as mediated through familial health, and in particular the health of marriage, found a wider audience from the late 1920s, when the newly founded state (under Riza Shah Pahlavi, r. 1926–41) became increasingly invested in the production of healthy nationals and servants of the state.³⁸ An early translated text in this genre was *Rahnuma-yi Shauhar-i Javan dar Marhalah-i Izdivaj* (Guidance for Young Husbands for the Stage of Marriage), a translation of Sylvanus Stall's *What a Young Husband Ought to Know*. The book was translated in 1929 into Persian by Hidayat-allah Khan Suhrab, a major in the Shiraz brigade.³⁹

After an initial discussion of the physiognomy and psychology of men and women, the book turns to advising young husbands on how to take care of their wives, to be sociable, loving, caring husbands. Among other things, this book marks an early moment of the entry of *jins* as sex (beyond differentiating male from female) into Persian. Suhrab translates “Sex and Self,” the series title, as *jinsīyat va dastūrāt-i shakhṣī*, literally, sex and personal directives.⁴⁰ While he continues to use such late-19th-century categorization and naming as regenerative body, organs, and acts (*hay'at-i tanāsulī*, *ālāt-i tanāsulī*, *a'māl-i tanāsulī*)—at times stretching regenerative to include desire and feeling (*shahvat-i tanāsulī*, *mayl-i tanāsulī*, *hiss-i tanāsulī*)—he also uses *jins*, in its adjectival form *jinsī*, in its present sense of sex, in such contexts as sexual affection (*muḥibbat-i jinsī*), sexual desire (*shahvat-i jinsī*), sexual attractions (*injiṣābāt-i jinsī*), moderation in sexual relations (*i'tidāl-i munāsibāt-i jinsī*). Note that, as discussed earlier, when sex is standing alone, as in the series title, *Sex and Self*, it is not *jins* that stands for sex but a related noun *jinsīyat*, which in more recent texts has come to stand for sexuality or for gender. The usage of “regenerative” (*tanāsulī*) as an alternate for *jinsī* (as in *shahvat-i tanāsulī* and *shahvat-i jinsī*) may indeed point to the difficult “birth” of *jins*-as-sex, precisely because *jins* was already embedded in a very wide and dense network of other-than-sex meanings. The translation of “Sex and Self” into “Jins and . . .” would indeed have been a very confusing series title to a Persian reader, who would have most likely assumed *jins* meant goods and commodities. At least in this earlier moment, and given the link between sex and regeneration, the latter (*tanāsul*) carried the burden of translational transplantation of *jins* into sex.

At the same time, the use of *jins* in reference to desire establishes two conceptual bridges in this text. By its use in sexual desire (*shahvat-i jinsī*), simultaneous with regenerative desire (*shahvat-i tanāsulī*), it establishes a bridge between sex and regeneration. It also makes a connection between sex and gender, so to speak; it conceives desire, even if not regenerative, within the context of a marital relation between a man and a woman, connecting it to that concept which had been used for distinguishing male from female. It thus ties desire to a heterosexual distinction.

It is important to point out, however, that the rearticulation of earlier concepts is already a grafting of new ones: while Suhraḥ uses *jins* (in its adjectival form) for differentiating man from woman (*tamāyuz-i jinsī*, *ikhṭilāf-i jinsī*), the distinction is framed within a notion of complementarity of these two distinct *jins*-es, rather than the earlier notions of woman as a deficient, incomplete man. This distinct/complementary status of woman provided a transitional step to man/woman defined as opposite, though still at times complementary, sexes.

The medical establishment, in the same period, was absorbed differently in a public health panic, focused on venereal diseases in general and syphilis in particular. There, the vocabulary and concepts evidence continuity with the late-19th-century discourse that had emerged out of Dar al-Funun medical training and European physicians who trained the new medical corp.⁴¹ Muhammad Ali Tutia's many books on sexual hygiene are good examples. Tutia was a doctor who had practiced for many years in Istanbul and had published a number of books on these topics in Turkish. He established a private clinic in Tehran in the early 1930s, focused on combating venereal diseases, and began to rewrite and publish his books in Persian.⁴² While Tutia uses *jins* in his writings in the sense of distinguishing male from female, he continues the earlier language when it comes to "regenerative organs" (*a'zā-yi tanāsulī*), intercourse (*muqāribat*, *mujāmi'at*), regenerative diseases (*amraz-i tanāsulī*). At times, like Suhraḥ, Tutia stretches the linguistic capacity of regeneration, as in such combinations as: regenerative deviation (*zīlālāt-i tanāsulī*), regenerative passion (*shahvat-i tanāsulī*), corrupt regenerative morality (*fīsād-i akhlāq-i tanāsulī*), regenerative fatigue (*ta'ab-i tanāsulī*), and "unnatural regenerative relations" (*ravābiḥ-i ghayr-i ṭabī'ī-i tanāsulī*). A formulation such as "regenerative relations among the two sexes" (*munāsibāt-i tanāsulī dar miān-i dau jins*)⁴³ provides us with an example in which, while *jins* is used for a categorizing distinction between male and female, what in Suhraḥ's translation had been (and later more generally will become) sexual relations continues to be thought and named in terms of regeneration. Similarly in "natural regenerative relations" (*ravābiḥ-i ṭabī'ī-i tanāsulī*)⁴⁴ regeneration is used for what would have earlier been named as intercourse (*muqāribat*), soon to be replaced by sexual, *jinsī*. In the texts of this transitional period (the late 1920s through the 1940s), *tanāsulī* continued to carry the burden of sexual, as if a shy euphemism.

PSYCHE OF SEX

While the 20th-century *medical* texts, until the 1950s and 1960s, continued the usage of the late-19th-century language, with *tanāsulī* acting as a clustering word that brought together previously distinct concepts (such as organs, practices, desires) into a single group, as we saw, in the early decades of the 20th century, the usage of *jins*-as-sex (as in *jinsī* and *jinsīyat* in Suhraḥ's text) literally popped up in a different domain, that of

marital manners and know-how. This could have been an “accident” of translation, by which I mean the persons who became interested in “sex-and-self” type of literature were not initially from the medically trained emerging doctors’ corps; they had come across the popular “how to” sex education marital advice literature from a different direction. For example, the unfamiliarity (or willed ignorance) of the translator of *What a Young Husband Ought to Know* with existing Persian texts, in particular medical texts, is clear from his leaving the names of bodily parts in English with no Persian equivalent next to them; examples include clitoris, nymphae, scrotum, ovaries, vagina, which is also translated as “woman’s regenerative organ” (*ālāt-i tanāsulī-i zan*), rather than the commonly used word *mahbil*.⁴⁵ Though contingent, the translation issue is not a meaningless accident; it points to the reshaping of domains of knowledge production and dissemination, a parting of ways of domains of modern science and popular urban cultural concerns from domains of traditional medicine and daily practices previously codified through what we now call religion.⁴⁶

Central to the increasing production and circulation of marital advice books was the notion that troubles in modern marriages were caused by sexual ignorance. Husbands were believed not to know how to keep their wives happy, leading to increasing frigidity among women (an inversion of the old anxiety over women’s nine parts of desire) and an alarming rise in divorce rates among the growing urban middle classes. Ignorant parents were said to be producing confused adolescents who turned into failed, abnormal adults, with much ink spilled over men’s impotence, masturbation, and same-sex and other “deviancies.” I imagine that the flare-up of a new kind of sexual education manual may indicate some recognition of the “failure” of modernist optimism on naturalized heterosexuality. Modern men and women did not seem to know how to keep each other happy, sexually speaking. While classical Perso-Islamic texts did not presume natural heterosexuality and had extensive advice literature for husbands on how to satisfy their wives and in particular how to ensure female orgasm, the modernist presumption of natural heterosexuality had largely cut itself off from this earlier literature and left modern men and women to practice sex “naturally.” The translation of marital advice from Anglo-American sources into Persian, from the late 1920s to the present day, is a response to this failure of nature.⁴⁷ These translated texts did not simply appear as cheap books. Many of them were first serialized in popular magazines, such as *Khvandaniha*, before appearing as books. The success of the early translations, such as the *Sex and Self* series, drew the attention of others to this genre. For the modernizing urban middle class, translated texts carried the additional authority of Euro-American science. Particularly successful in this regard has been *A Marriage Manual* by Hannah and Abraham Stone. First translated by Rahim Muttaqi Irvani and published in 1948, it has gone through numerous retranslations and reprints to the present.⁴⁸ This body of advice texts proved to be critical to the consolidation of *jins-as-sex*, a development concurrent with the topically related entry of psychology, and vernacular psychology in particular, into Persian from the early 1930s.⁴⁹ Freud’s initial entrance into Persian was as a theoretician of “lust.”

In 1933, Ibrahim Khvajah-nuri, a columnist (and later a practicing psychoanalytically oriented psychologist), wrote a newspaper article under the title “Psychoanalysis” (the word transliterated into Persian). There he first related an anecdote from a gathering, in which he had to evade a question from a European about the impact of Freudism

on literature in Iran—he was too embarrassed to explain that Freud was unknown in his country.⁵⁰ He was now happy to report that he had recently met a doctor who had returned from his European education with that specialty and was busy writing a scientific book on the topic. Reporting the gist of his conversation with this doctor, Khvajah-nuri warns that this discussion is not without its dangers, since the axis of the theory is lust (*shahvat*). What follows is a brief introduction to talk therapy and psychoanalysis, a method of cure without medicine that takes a long time, thus is expensive, and most people neither trust nor can afford it. This article is possibly the first introduction of Freud in a major newspaper in Iran. After an initial note on the history of psychoanalysis, Khvajah-nuri focuses largely on explaining to the reader that in this theory the concept of lust—later in the article specifically marked as sexual lust (*shahvat-i jinsī*)—is not “exclusively linked with reproductive [*tanāsulī*] acts, but thousands of things we do daily are all done under the logic/force [*bi ḥukm-i*] of sexual lust even though they have no connection whatsoever with reproduction.” The article introduces the concept of the unconscious and of the psyche (“as opposite of the corporeal [*jismānī*].” After a discussion of infantile, childhood, and adolescent sexual lust, Khvajah-nuri suggests that *shahvat* is the Persian translation of libido (which appears in Latin characters in text), and concludes by discussing various “psychoneuroses” (the word transliterated into Persian) that have psychological roots and “at times cause deviation from the natural satisfaction of needs and produce unnatural and strange habits [*‘ādāt-i ghayr-i ṭabī‘ī va ‘ajīb va gharīb*].”

The traffic between regeneration and sex (*tanāsul* and *jins*) continued to inform discussions of “libido” in the 1930s. An article on hysteria, for instance, reported on its psychoanalytical treatment in Europe and invoked the name of the “Austrian scholar [*allamah*] Freud.”⁵¹ It argued that the new science explained this disease as caused by “desires related to regenerative pleasures, especially from one’s childhood.” At the same time, a growing discussion of the social positions of men and women, in the context of state-building initiatives of the 1920s and 1930s, continued to use *jins* in its meaning of differentiation between male and female, now overlaid with connotation of gender-sexual difference.⁵² For example, an article, “Differences between Woman and Man,” argued that sexual and bodily differences between men and women constituted the ground for differences in mental capacities and division of tasks and specialization between the two sexes, and that “Equality of men and women in tasks and duties, history has amply proved, would lead to social revolution (against social laws and regimes) and violent chaos with unknown consequences.”⁵³

While such statements may read as banal old-fashioned misogyny, the causal movement of *jins* between the register of marking bodily differences and the sociocultural register of inequality between men and women is indeed very novel and indicative of the vast discursive changes that I have suggested.⁵⁴ While classical Perso-Islamic thought differentiated between male and female bodies and jurisprudence allocated differential rights and obligations (for instance, the inheritance of a son as twice that of a daughter) one cannot find any connection between the first distinction and the second. In other words, to take one example, in jurisprudential discourse (*fiqh*) a daughter’s lesser share of inheritance was not articulated as derivative from some deficiency of the female compared to the male, whether in body, intellect, or otherwise. Such differences were God-created “facts of social life,” encoded into the Qur’an and the body of what has

become foundational to Islamic jurisprudence, namely the *hadith* (narratives attributed to the Prophet or one of his closest companions) and *tafsīr* (interpretations of the Qur'an). Indeed, when in later literature a logical connection was argued between the two, the line of rationalization ran in the opposite direction: Women were said to be inferior to men on account of the allocation of a lesser share of inheritance. By the 1930s we already witness the movement of *jins* between these two registers, linking the two through a causal argument running from “the natural” to “the social.”

As translations of books of psychology increased substantially from the mid-1940s, the circulation of *jins* for sex became consolidated in vernacular psychology. *Ittila'at* carried an advertisement for a book, *Mayl-i Jinsi dar Zan va Mard* (Sexual Desire in Women and Men), a selection of articles by “Freud, Andre Gide, Dr. Bezançon, Prof. Andre [Alfred?] Binet, Dr. Hirschfeld, and others.”⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter, a review of the book in the “*Ittila'at Library*” column of the daily noted that

Publishing books on sex [*kitāb-i jinsī*, sexual books], which has become common [*marsūm shudāh*] over the past year, is a very good development, so long as some promiscuous [*havasbāz*] youth do not abuse it. In our world in which the foundation of family has become very weak, . . . moral corruption has increased, promiscuity and venereal diseases have become widespread, the only means to preserve the happiness of the young generation is to publish this genre of book so that perhaps some of the complicated problems of life are explicated. . . . Some of the topics that are covered in chapters of this book include: sexual desire, the strength and weakness of sexual desire, love, marriage, divorce, unfaithfulness, venereal diseases, “sexual deviance” [quotation marks in original].⁵⁶

The conceptual/linguistic challenges of this emerging field were explicitly recognized. “*Ittila'at Library*” column reviewed the recently published translation of a book by Stefan Zweig titled *Freud*.⁵⁷ The review described the book as one that

analyzes the character and thinking of Freud, the healer of mental illness, and clarifies for the reader to some extent the principles of psychoanalysis. The significance of Freud's teaching lies in his having based his work on the notion of sexual instinct, which up to that time in the world of science was imprisoned in a deadly silence. . . . This scientist after fifty years of research demonstrated to the world that not satisfying the sexual instinct can affect the fate of mankind drastically and may upset the balance of a person's daily life. Freud proved that sexual instinct is one of the most important human instincts and throughout one's life. From birth to the last minutes of life, it rules over one's fate. In order to stay clear of destructive slips of this instinct and in order to be a virtuous person, one must carefully guide the development of one's sexual instinct so that one is not driven astray from its proper path.⁵⁸

The congratulatory review continued in this vein and concluded by noting that this translation was a new venture and expressing hope that other knowledgeable people would further translate and disseminate Freud's thought.

While in psychology, *jins* was appearing as sex, in a different genre—advertisements concerning increased sexual prowess (increase in one's *quvvah-i bāh*, *nīrū-yi shahvānī*)—the older classical concepts of *shahvat* and *bāh* (and, more “modernly,” *quvvah-i tanāsulī* or regenerative prowess) continued to attract and inform readers' interest.⁵⁹ Despite increasing circulation, largely through vernacular psychology, even in the 1960s *jins*-as-sex had not become universal, or solid; other words were used for sex, while *jins* informed alternative concepts. A 1968 textbook on “Sexology” could not

take the meaning of sex for granted. Hasan Hasuri's *Raftar-i Jinsi bar Payah-i Siksaufiz-iulauzhi* (Sexual Behavior on the Basis of Sexo-physiology), specifically defined as a textbook "for medical students, physicians, and allied professions,"⁶⁰ began by saying: "For the word Sex [typeset in English] we use as equivalent '*jins*.'" ⁶¹ Importantly, *jins* in this textbook is defined not simply as the difference between male and female ("to distinguish male from female in different types of living beings"), but as the basis for a whole host of other human characteristics: "*Jins* is a biological existence or quality on the basis of which sexual identity [*hauvīyat-i jinsī*], that is, femaleness or maleness [*narīnigī ya mādīnigī*], of a being is determined; and ordinarily each individual must be male or female."⁶² Indeed, the project of the book in its entirety is to elaborate on the relationship between sexual behavior and a number of factors that go into the shaping of sex-gender identity, including "physical or bodily factors" (chromosomal sex, gonadal sex, hormonal sex, internal morphology, external morphology, and chromatin sex are referenced in this section) and "psychological and social factors" (sex of rearing and assignment, gender roles, and psychological sex-gender identity are referenced in this category). Having initially entered through translations of marital advice, by the late 1960s *jins*-as-sex had come "to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle . . . sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified."⁶³

CONTEMPORARY CONFIGURATIONS OF JINS

I conclude this article with a brief consideration of how this specific genealogy of *jins*/sex/genus has enabled particular styles of living nonnormative (*ghayr-i muti'ārif*) sex/gender lives in today's Iran. How does, for instance, a trans-friendly *fiqhī* scholar such as Hujjat al-Islam Karimi-nia, conceptualize transsexuality and argue for its permissibility?

As I have already pointed out, the designation of male and female in classical *fiqh* is distinctly related to the observance of subject-dependent rules. These distinctions are not identical to and do not perform the same work as biological sex taxonomies. For instance, a person of ambiguous genitalia can become assigned a "ritual gender/sex" so that s/he would follow the rules of one gender/sex.⁶⁴ In contemporary discussions, the *fiqhī* notion of *jins* travels between two distinct registers: the classical Islamic meaning of *jins* as a taxonomical genus and the notion of sex in its modern sense. The transformation of sociocultural notions of *jins* over the past century has brought into proximity the male/female distinction of *fiqh* with the biological sex taxonomies and social categories men and women. This proximity has enabled the convergence of some *fiqhī* thinking with the biomedical and psychosexological discourse about transsexuality. A second and related translational transplantation, namely, the slippage between psyche and soul that has marked the entry of psychology into Persian-language Iranian discourse since the early decades of the 20th century, has also been critical to this reconfiguration.⁶⁵ While philosophical and scientific debates about the relationship between soul and psyche continue to this day, the implicit certainty of some kind of relationship among *nafs*, *ravān*, and *rūh* enables the contemporary traffic between the new science of psychology and the older sciences of religion (*ʿulūm al-dīn*), and among healers of

psyches and guardians of souls. Such murkiness allows medical professionals to present a psychosexological concept of transsexuality as discordance between gender/sex of psyche and body in a religiously familiar language of soul and body.⁶⁶ It also enables Karimi-nia to translate the psychosexological concept back into gender/sex discordance between soul and body, addressing transsexuality as a psychological condition in Islamic terms.

Shi'ī scholars such as Karimi-nia, however, are also trained to keep these categorical distinctions apart. Karimi-nia emphasizes this point in his book *Taghyir-i Jinsiyat* (Sex-change): “*Jins* in its sense of ‘male and female’ is something that has emerged as a secondary meaning; the primary and principal meaning of *jins* is not ‘male and female.’”⁶⁷ The insistence on these definitional distinctions enables him to argue against those *fiqhī* scholars who oppose sex-change on the basis of opposition to changing God’s work of creation. He argues that the change of male to female and vice versa is not a change in genus of a created being; it is rather a change in his/her *jinsī* apparatus.⁶⁸ As important, *fiqhī* thought is not invested in etiology but instead works in a problem-solving mode. Scientific problem solving has become closely connected with finding the causes of the problem; in *fiqhī* problem solving, the causes have no relevance. *Fiqhī* thought is invested in ensuring that all persons act in a manner that does not break the given rules, nor cross what it considers *ḥudūd-allāh*—the bounds set by Allah for human behavior. Thus the shari‘a rules are subject-dependent; when the subject changes, the rule could be different. On certain issues, changing from the category male to female (or vice versa) changes the subject and thus the rules. Indeed, that is how the genderedness of daily life becomes produced.

A difficult challenge, vis-à-vis “the subject of transsexuality,” arises when “the subject” is in transition. How does one deal with “the discordant subject,” with the “lack of correspondence between gender/sex of soul and body,” as Karimi-nia’s concept of transsexuality would have it? That is, what ritual gender/sex could be assigned to persons who are called (and often refer to themselves as) *bilātaklīf* (in a conundrum), or, as Karimi-nia refers to them, who are in *barzakh* (purgatory)? Does one go by the gender/sex of the body or that of the soul? Here, trans persons insist on going by the soul. This is how many explain their daily living arrangements. It is also what enables their problematic, explicit, and often emphasized disaffiliation—*mā hamjins-bāz nīstīm* (we are not same-sex-players)—from people who engage in seemingly identical sex/gender practices but do not consider themselves transsexual. Karimi-nia, on the other hand, wary of the intrusion of same-sex-playing that haunts *fiqhī* thinking on this subject, leans toward going by the gender/sex of the body.

The specific genealogy of *jins* also informs other sex/gender identifications. As far as gay and lesbian identifications are concerned, for instance, the naming of these relationships as “same-sex” remains contested. In part, the ability to name them with non-Persian words is a move that distinguishes them from the culturally abject category of same-sex-playing and its affiliated assignations, such as *kūnī* and *bārūnī*. Moreover, the very distinct roles within these relationships bring any notion of sameness between partners under pressure. As Johnson has observed in a different context:

the very notion of ‘same-sex’ sexuality seems highly problematic in a situation where having the same genitals apparently does not imply same sex or same gender, and where the genitals of the

person one is having sex with are apparently much less important in defining gender, both theirs and one's own, than what those (same) genitals do.⁶⁹

It is this same dynamic that works against the dominant use of generalized terms (such as homosexual) and a strong tendency to reach for its contingent locale and time.⁷⁰ In Iran, generalized terms have taken root in scientific taxonomies and religiolegal policy considerations, but not in anything close to their ubiquitous use in Euro-American identity politics. One does not just reach for a generalizable and generalized term everywhere and at all times as if it is a universal innate sign of humanity. The reach of these general categories has clearly spread beyond their initial time and locale, but not evenly, nor imperially, as is sometimes assumed. Some may appear in medical–psychology texts, others in the legal domain, and still others in journalism. Some may overlap. And nonnormative persons may use them for particular ends in specific sites, to craft spaces of habitation. What one calls oneself generates possibilities for particular living arrangements. Sinnott, in the Thai context, has persuasively argued that becoming “a recognized social category—*toms*” rather than “females who are like men,” a process she dates to the past twenty-five years, has made the formation of “communities and subcultures around them possible.”⁷¹ Becoming known as *tarajinsīyatī*—the newest official neologism for transsexual—has become a similar organizing category for Iranian trans persons.

At issue is not to deny that the increasing self-referential circulation of terms such as gay, lesbian, and so on among Iranians today may indicate a different and emergent conceptual mapping of sexual practices and desires; what is problematic is the privileging of this emergent naming and configuring as intrinsically superior to other modes of living nonheteronormative sex/gender lives. The current internet gay discourse is saturated with such moralizing progressist narratives, defining its own homonormalizing contours against the foil of these “past” and/or oppressive behaviors—in particular against same-sex-playing as frivolous and necessarily exploitative.⁷²

In this context, the shaping of an ambiguous nebula of overlapping and shifting assignments and (self-)cognitions—enabled by trans/same-sex/gender practices of everyday life and the legal legibility of trans as a state/religion/science-defined category—has had the paradoxical effect of reinscribing the abjectness of the homosexual and at the same time providing a space of living a homosexual life within the legal shadow of transsexuality. This paradoxically productive and enabling double work does not have to acquire its resolution through disambiguation and pulling apart identity categories, separating and delineating trans from homo. While that is surely a possibility, other future configurations—in particular, living livable and loving lives within terms of ambiguity and contingent performances of selves-in-situational conduct—remains a powerfully attractive alternative.

NOTES

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¹For these debates, see Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Professing Selves: Sex and Desire in Contemporary Iran* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

²I use “sex-gender” as a hyphenated term in order to indicate its relative non-bifurcation into two categories in Iran, except in the domain of women’s rights activism and related feminist scholarship.

³*Persian-English Dictionary*, P. 0374, <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/contextualize.pl?p.1.steingass.1861001> (accessed 9 February 2006). Its usage in Arabic and Turkish seems to be of a similarly recent origin (correspondence with Dror Ze’evi, 31 July 2004). According to Sara Omar (correspondence, 12 January 2009), in Arabic, “one can date a quasi-attestation to ‘jins’ = ‘sex’ to as early as 1828–29! Ellious Bocthor’s *Dictionnaire français-arabe* (revu et augmenté par Caussin de Perceval) (3rd ed. Paris 1864) lists the following: For ‘sexe’ he first gives the French definition ‘différence physique constitutive du mâle et de la femelle’ and then the Arabic ‘farj’. But under ‘sexuel’ (which he specifies as ‘qui tient au sexe, qui le caractérise’) his gloss is ‘jinsī’! . . . (see page 320). Bocthor is known to have invented/coined a number of new words in Arabic. . . . This maybe one of such words, coined by Bocthor.” Despite this lexical move in the early 19th century, its widespread use in Arabic does not seem to have emerged until the early decades of the 20th century. See Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 158–61; and Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 32, n. 106, 171–72.

⁴In fact, one of *jins*’s earliest modern reconfigurations appears as close to our contemporary race/ethnicity, when Iranian modernists began to write about *jins-i Īrānī*. For a recent discussion of this issue, see Charles Kurzman, “Weaving Iran into the Tree of Nations,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): 137–66, esp. 149. This is an issue that deserves more research, since in the writings of many intellectuals of the 19th century, such as Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, issues of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality were critically interwoven with themes of backwardness and progress. The usage of *jins* as racialized ethnicity has been generally replaced by the later concept of *nizhād*, especially in the pan-Iranist currents of 20th-century Iranian nationalism.

⁵My focus in this research is on Persian sources. While I have checked some related Arabic sources and many of my arguments may be pertinent to the larger Islamic discourse, I generally do not assume so, except when depending on others’ scholarship on this topic.

⁶As Cyrus Schayegh has persuasively argued, while European biomedical sciences were embraced, the embrace involved a national claiming: European scientific achievements were of ancient Irano-Islamic parentage. See Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong: Science, Class, and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900–1950* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2009), chap. 2. For the Ottoman Empire, Dror Ze’evi has persuasively argued that while the classical single-sex model of the human body—with the woman as the imperfect version of man, and a single notion of desire that did not differentiate according to the sex-gender of the object of desire—was dropped in the 19th century, it was not replaced with one determinate model. Dror Ze’evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East 1500–1900* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2006). This was also the case in Iran until recent decades.

⁷For a fuller discussion of this point, see Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005).

⁸The use of nature and natural in this context calls for further historical work. The classical concept of *fiṭra* in this very same constitutive moment became *ṭabī’a*. *Fiṭra* connoted a person’s “born-with” characteristics; it was an all-inclusive category, not divided into physical and mental. *Ṭabī’a* came to mark what we now think of as more physiological characteristics of a person. For example, in classical Islamic discourse, all persons were thought to be born with a Muslim *fiṭra* that would then be corrupted if brought up by non-Muslim parents. The later meaning of *ṭabī’a* came closer to nature as distinct from the social and cultural.

⁹See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁰The Tehran police (established in late 1878), for instance, was only marginally interested in “sex crimes.” The police reports indicate a concern with theft, public drunkenness, and negligence of duty (on the part of members of the new police force itself!) more than any other offense. See Anisah Shaykh Riza’i and Shahla

Azari, eds., *Guzarish-ha-yi Nazmiyah az Mahallat-i Tihiran*, two vols. (Tehran: Sazman-i Asnad-i Milli-i Iran, 1998). While in 1886 public coffeehouses were ordered closed “because of corrupt practices prevalent in these locations,” the dominant “corrupt practice” of interest to the police was female prostitution (*ibid.*, 1:99). Not until perhaps the late 1920s and the 1930s do we have a government in Iran that would be intensely invested in regulating its subjects. See Cyrus Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*. A category of crimes in national law specifically named sexual (*jarāʾim-i jinsī*, as distinct from sinful acts punishable by religious sanctions—*hudūd* and *taʿzīr*) was so named at a much later date.

¹¹See Franz Rosenthal, “Ar-Razi on the Hidden Illness,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 52 (1978): 45–60, which includes a section on Ibn Sina’s concept as well. For a summary, see Ahmad Dallal, “Pre-Modern Scientific Discourses on Female Sexuality” (which is more comprehensive than the title would suggest!), in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, vol. III (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 405.

¹²I am using “deviation” for the Persian/Arabic word *inḥirāf*. Conceptually, it is linked to the notion of the straight path (*ṣirāt-i mustaqīm*) that, if followed, would take a person to the desired destination, thus linking it to an important Islamic ethical injunction. This is a different configuration from the notion of perversion that emerged in 19th-century psychology. See Arnold I. Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), chap. 3. It is this word (with its affiliated chains of meaning) that has now become the word for “sexual deviation,” *inḥirāf-i jinsī*. Thus “sexual deviation” in the contemporary Iranian psychobiomedical register continues its meaning of derailed desire, linked with the presumption of natural heterosexuality of this earlier moment.

¹³For a discussion of minoritization of sexual types, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990).

¹⁴This concept is borrowed from Lisa Tickner, “Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference,” *Gender Studies* 3 (1988): 92–128.

¹⁵The awkward phrase “Persian (in Iran)” signals the limitations of this research; it is focused on material written in Persian in Iran or about Iran. I have no knowledge of what is written in Persian in Afghanistan or Tajikistan, nor have I researched the subject in the many other languages of Iran (Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Baluchi, etc.).

¹⁶There has been a lively debate in the Iranian diasporic gay press over this distinction. See, for example, Avaz, “Tafavut-i ‘Hamjins-gara’ ba Hamjins-baz va Bachchah-baz dar Chist?” (What Is the Difference between “the Same-sex-inclined” with the Same-sex-player and Child-player?), in *Homan* 9 (October–November 1994): 27–33. Avaz seems unaware of the emergence of the concept of *hamjins-garā* in the 1960s and 1970s Iranian discourses of psychiatry and criminology, and suggests that *hamjins-garā* is a new expression of unknown origin in Persian (pp. 29 and 32). Indeed, in the 1950s–1970s, several other expressions were employed as well in sexological, marital advice, health, and popular general-interest journals. These included: *hamjins-khvāhī* (desiring same-sex), in *Khvandaniha*, 28 June 1958, p. 26 and 22 July 1967, pp. 41–43 (in the latter article, *hamjis-dūst*, same-sex lover, is also used); *hamjins-juʿi* (seeking same-sex), in *Khvandaniha*, 12 February 1963, p. 40; *hamjins-ṭalab* (desiring same-sex), in *Zan-i Ruz*, March 1974, p. 102. My point is not to criticize the adoption (consciously or not) of the concept from this earlier discourse for one’s own identification, but that the ahistorical consciousness may have contributed to the progressist invocation of *hamjins-garā* against *hamjins-bāz* and *bachchah-bāz*. In Avaz’s essay and in almost all subsequent writings on this topic, relations marked as *hamjins-garā* are attributed all desirable positive adjectives: they are loving, egalitarian, and freely chosen; the others are exploitative and based on disparities of power and privilege. This critique was relentless in the pages of *Homan* and has continued in other gay publications that followed it. The move to make this differentiation, given the overwhelming hostile culture inside and outside Iran that these early gay activists faced, is totally understandable, but it did set from the start a tight normative frame for their antiheteronormative project. See Sima Shakhshari, “From Hamjensbaaz to Hamjensgaraa: Diasporic Queer Reterritorializations and Limits of Transgression,” unpublished paper.

¹⁷I am grateful to Claudia Castañeda for pointing me in this direction. For a similar move, but in a very different context, see Davidson’s discussion of the significance of “pervert” used as an adjective rather than a noun. Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 62–63.

¹⁸Mahmud Iran-panah, ed., *Majmuʿah-i Tan va Ravan: Siks Zindagi Ast: Anhih kih Lazimast az an Bidanid* (Body and Psyche Series: Sex Is Life Itself: What You Need to Know about It) (n.p., 1999).

¹⁹When a severe earthquake hit the area around Qazvin in 1962, the popular storyteller Subhi Muhtadi, who was fundraising in a gathering for the earthquake survivors and was refused by a “good-looking young man” (on the grounds that this was the government’s responsibility), was said to have retorted, “This young

man likes to aid his earthquake-survivor brothers in-kind [*kumak-i jinsī*].” *Khvandaniha*, 15 June 1974, p. 16. The newspaper column, working on Tehrani perceptions of Qazvinis as people who have a proclivity for male–male sex, was occasioned by reports of aid to African famine victims. For a similar column, suggesting that some television personalities could aid the African victims “in-kind,” see *Khvandaniha*, 29 June 1974, p. 17.

²⁰For a full elaboration of a similar approach, see Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, chap. 5, “Styles of Reasoning: From the History of Art to the Epistemology of Science,” where he concludes, “We shall not understand the *concept* of perversion until we examine its rule-governed behavior with other concepts to see what kinds of statements can be made with it. . . . Even the identical sentence need not constitute the same statement. A statement is defined by a ‘field of stabilization.’ . . . This field of stabilization assures the possibility of the repeatability of statements, but also imposes particularly exacting restrictions on this repeatability” (p. 140, emphasis in original). The continued belonging of *jins* to distinct registers works in part against stabilization.

²¹I am taking the notion of sex as a universal/unique signified/signifier from Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, where he argues that the emergence of “*an analytics of sexuality*” (148, emphasis in original) has made it possible “to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified” (154).

²²Dallal, “Pre-Modern Scientific Discourses,” 404.

²³Over a century into these transformations, the work of sex has become so ubiquitous that it has now turned back onto classical texts themselves. In a recent translation of Ibn Sina’s *Qanun* into Persian, *bāh* (coitus) has been translated into sexual instinct (*gharīzah-i jinsī*), *shahwa* (lust) into sexual desire (*ārizū-yi jinsī*), *ihtilām* (becoming overpowered by lust in sleep) into sexual dream (*khvāb-i jinsī*), *shahwa wa-ḥarakātuhā* (lust and its motions) into lustful desire and sexual motions (*ārizū-yi shahvāni va ḥarakāt-i jinsī*), *li-l-dhakar wa-l-unthā* into “in the two sexes of male and female” (*dar dau jins-i nar va māddah*). These examples have been selected from Ibn Sina, *Qanun*, vol. 5, trans. ‘Abd al-Rahman Sharafkandi (Tehran: Surush, 2007), 217–25, and compared with respective passages in *al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*, vol. 7 (Beirut: Nublis, 1999).

²⁴The dominant term classically is *shahvat* (lust); in recent decades, this term has been taken over by *mayl* (inclination, desire)—itself a significant shift in need of further historiographical research.

²⁵The famous prophetic hadith, “gossip is a greater sin than fornication,” makes sense as excesses of homologous passions—satisfying passions in sinful ways are being compared and ranked.

²⁶In books of medicine, there is often a discussion of women who possess too long a clitoris, said not to desire men and to take female lovers. Frequently this diagnostic statement is followed by the recommendation of clitoridectomy.

²⁷I am only at the beginning of this work, so what follows is preliminary and at times speculative.

²⁸There is a huge literature on this topic. See Dallal, “Pre-Modern Scientific Discourses,” for an excellent summary.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 401.

³⁰See, for example, Yusuf ibn Muhammad Yusufi Hiravi, *Kitab-i Tibb-i Yusufi: Mausum bi Jami’ al-Favayid*, a 16th-century text printed in the 19th century, ed. Mirza ‘Abd al-Mutallib Kashani (Tehran: 1285 AH [1868]).

³¹For a rich analysis of Safavid medical texts, with a focus on their differential gender presentation, see Behzad Karimi, “Mauqī‘iyat-i Zanan dar Guftman-i Pizishki-i ‘Asr-i Safaviyah” (Status of Women in the Medical Discourse of the Safavid Era), unpublished manuscript.

³²Mirza Abu al-Hasan Khan Tafrishi, *Patuluzhi-i Tibbi: Matla’ al-Tibb-i Nasiri* (Medical Pathology) (Tehran: Karkhanah-i Karbala’i Muhammad Husayn, 1883), 5.

³³Sayyid Muhammad Shirazi, *Bulugh al-Ibtihaj fi Sihhat al-Izdivaj* (Maturing of Joy in the Health of Marriage). Published in Istanbul, no publisher, no date.

³⁴Shirazi, *Bulugh al-Ibtihaj*, 3. The French text may well have been the 17th-century book *Conjugal Love, or, The Pleasures of the Marriage Bed*, penned by the French surgeon Nicholas Venette, which had already gone through eight printings before his death in 1698. One of the most popular of all the European sex manuals, it had a reputation as “the Bible of the French peasantry,” was often revised, and was translated into numerous languages. My thanks to Pat Simons for this lead.

³⁵Shirazi, *Bulugh al-Ibtihaj*, 21–22.

³⁶Ibid., 5, and more extensively when discussing how a fetus becomes male or female, 101–22.

³⁷I want to emphasize that when thinking about transplanted categories, my concern is not to demonstrate or trace “origin” of transplant. Rather, I ask what does that transplanting, appropriation, and embracing mean for importers? What work do transplanted categories perform in their new habitus and in relation to the many other discursive practices that inform their meaning there?

³⁸For a full discussion, see Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*.

³⁹Sylvanus Stall, *What a Young Husband Ought to Know*, Sex and Self series (Philadelphia, Pa.: Vir, 1897); Hidayat-allah Khan Suhrab, *Rahnuma-yi Shauhar-i Javan dar Marhalah-i Izdivaj* (Guidance for Young Husbands for the Stage of Marriage) (1929). Suhrab’s locations, both in the army and in Shiraz, are significant issues for further research. Several of the early translators of this genre were from southern Iranian cities (Shiraz, Dizful, Ahvaz), which had become (over the previous century, but especially after the 1917 Russian Revolution removed the Tsarist government as a competing influence) an expanding domain of British cultural, economic, and political presence. That English books had become available at local booksellers indicates the commerce in books between southern Iran and British India. Suhrab’s translations included other titles from the same series, *Rahnuma-yi Mardan az Nazar-i Bihdashi va Zanashu’i* (Guidance for Men on Hygiene and Marriage) and *Rahnuma-yi Pisanan* (Guidance for Boys). The second title is probably a translation of the 1909 book *What a Young Boy Ought to Know*. In later decades, more titles from the series were translated into Persian by Nusratallah Kasimi, a physician and a publicist during the Pahlavi period whose translations continue to be reprinted. These include *Anchah Bayad Yik Javan Bidanad* (What a Young Man Ought to Know), (n.p., n.d., at least four reprints, first published in 1937); *Anchah Bayad Har Zan-i Shauhardar Bidanad* (What Every Married Woman Ought to Know), 6th reprint (Tehran: Kumish, 1994); *Anchah Bayad Har Mard-i Zandar Bidanad* (What Every Married Man Ought to Know) (Tehran: Shirkat-i Mu’allifan va Mutarjiman-i Iran, 1990); and *Anchah Bayad Har Dukhtar Bidanad* (What Every Girl Ought to Know), 8th reprint (Tehran: Kumish, 2006 [first published in 1974]).

⁴⁰For a discussion of the significance of translating Self into Personal directives, see Najmabadi, *Professing Selves*, chap. 8.

⁴¹For the significance of Dar al-Funun, see Maryam Ekhtiar, “The Dar al-Funun: Educational Reform and Cultural Development in Qajar Iran” (PhD diss., New York University, 1994).

⁴²Muhammad Ali Tutia’s books include *Amraz-i Zuhravi (Muqaribati)* (Venereal Diseases) (n.p., 1931); *Malish va Tamas* (Massage and Touch) (Tehran: n.p., 1932), on the ill consequences of “unnatural regenerative relations, such as masturbation, tribadism and rubbing [*tabaq-zanī, musāḥiqah*], and Sapphism”); and another on male same-sex practices (*ubna* and *liwāf*). For a full discussion of Tutia within the context of the establishment of medical sciences and practices, see Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*, chap. 6.

⁴³Tutia, *Malish va Tamas*, 82.

⁴⁴Ibid., 83.

⁴⁵Suhrab, *Rahnuma-yi Shauhar*, 159–62.

⁴⁶For a persuasively argued and historically rich analysis of this issue, see Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*.

⁴⁷In recent decades, and especially in the post-1979 period, there has been a new coming together of this popular psychology discourse with Islamic writings on sexual desire, needs of the youth, marital relations, and so forth.

⁴⁸Published by Kanun-i Ma’rifat, a highly respected publisher of the period, which had earlier published *Encyclopedia of Sexual Knowledge* and other texts. For a fuller discussion of this genre, see Najmabadi, *Professing Selves*, chap. 2. At least twelve different translators have retranslated this text. Each translation has gone through numerous reprints, as high as nineteen over one decade, sometimes by different publishers. These numbers are very incomplete; I have compiled them through searching the online catalogue of the National Archives and Library, which made it legally obligatory for publishers to send it two copies of all publications only in 1990. The later editions are translated from a new edition of the English as revised by Gloria Stone Aitken and Aquiles J. Sobrero (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965). The first English edition appeared in 1935. One translation, that of Tarazallah Akhavan (Tehran: Gulsha’i, 1997), which was reprinted at least eight times by this publisher, at least nine times by Arghun, and by two other publishers as well, has been used to produce an audio version for the blind.

⁴⁹I owe the expression “vernacular science” to Tani Barlow. Barlow invokes the emergence of vernacular sociology in China as a field that was discursively productive for and related to how advertisements marketed particular sets of modern girl commodities. She analyzes advertisements themselves as pedagogical texts,

popularizing scientific notions about health and hygiene, skin care, women care, and so forth. See Tani Barlow, "Buying In: Advertising and the Sexy Modern Girl Icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s," in *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 288–316.

⁵⁰*Ittila'at*, 15 November 1933, p. 1, and continued in the next issue, 18 November 1933, p. 1. Khvajah-nuri's many books include *Rumuz-i Ravani-i Mudiriyat* (Psychological Secrets of Management) (Tehran: n.p., n.d.); *Ravankavi: Ganj-i Pinhan-i Darun-i Khaud ra Kashf Kun* (Psychoanalysis: Discover the Hidden Treasure of Your Inner Self) (Tehran: n.p., n.d.); *Ravankavi ya Tariqah-i Sahl bara-yi Shinakhtan-i Ihsasat-i Makhfi-i Khaud va Digaran* (Psychoanalysis or the Easy Way to Know Your and Others' Hidden Feelings) (Tehran: n.p., 1963); *Ravankavi va Darman-i Tars, Tanbali, Kamru'i, Ya's, Hisadat* (Psychoanalysis and Treating Fear, Laziness, Shyness, Hopelessness, and Envy) (Tehran: Ibn Sina, 1957).

⁵¹*Ittila'at*, 7 August 1934, p. 2.

⁵²See Camron Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Women: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865–1946* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2002).

⁵³*Ittila'at*, 25 December 1934, p. 2 and 26 December 1934, p. 2. Quote from first part.

⁵⁴This proposition echoes Thomas Laqueur's analysis in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁵⁵*Ittila'at*, 27 May 1948, p. 2. *Mayl-i Jinsi dar Zan va Mard* (Sexual Desire in Women and Men), translated by 'Abdullah Tavakkul, no date, no publisher, probably published by Kanun-i Ma'rifat.

⁵⁶*Ittila'at*, 9 June 1948, p. 6.

⁵⁷The book, possibly the Freud section of *Die Heilung durch den Geist: Mesmer. Mary Baker-Eddy. Freud* (Leipzig, Germany: Insel-verlag, 1931), was published by Kanun-i Ma'rifat. Earlier its publication was advertised in *Ittila'at*, 11 July 1948, p. 2, and *Ittila'at*, 6 September 1948, p. 2.

⁵⁸*Ittila'at*, 23 September 1948, p. 7.

⁵⁹For samples of such advertisements (the graphics of which deserve analysis) from this same period see *Ittila'at*, 20 April 1948, p. 5; *Ittila'at*, 2 August 1948, p. 3; *Ittila'at*, 11 August 1948, p. 3. Similarly, in academic medical literature until the early 1950s, *jins* continued to be used in its meaning of genus. Hasan Mirdamadi's *Mikraub-shinasi-i Mir*, for instance, translated *antigène* as *pādgin*, explaining in a footnote that *gène* came from Latin *genus* and as such it had common roots with the Persian *gin*, which was used in contemporary language in such words as *hamgin*, meaning *hamjins*. *Mir's Microbiology* (the back of the book has the title in French as *Précis de microbiologie et sérologie*) (Tehran: Raushana'i, 1937), 422; see also p. 428, where *homogène* is translated as *hamgin* and *hamjins*.

⁶⁰Hasan Hasuri *Raftar-i Jinsi bar Payah-i Siksaufiziulauzhi* (Sexual Behavior on the Basis of Sexopsychology) (Tehran: Tahuri, 1968, reprinted in 1973 and 1979). The English title as printed on the back cover is: *A Textbook of Psychophysiological Sexology*.

⁶¹Hasuri, *Raftar-i Jinsi*, 1.

⁶²Both quotes from Hasuri, *Raftar-i Jinsi*, 5.

⁶³See note 21 above.

⁶⁴See Agostino Cilardo, "Historical Development of the Legal Doctrine Relative to the Position of the Hermaphrodite in the Islamic Law," *The Search* 2, no. 7 (1986): 128–70; and Paula Sanders, "Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Beth Baron and Nikki Keddie (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 74–95.

⁶⁵For a fuller elaboration, see Najmabadi, *Professing Selves*, chap. 5.

⁶⁶See, for instance, the interview with Dr. Shahriar Kohanzad, one of the top sex-reassignment surgeons in Iran, in the special dossier in the monthly magazine of the Welfare Organization of Iran, *Mihri naw* 4 (November/December 2009): 23–44 on transsexuality. The interview runs from pp. 40 to 43. The entire dossier is framed by the notion of "contradiction between soul and body" (*ta'add-i rūh va jism*).

⁶⁷Muhammad Mahdi Karimi-nia, *Taghyir-i Jinsiyat az Manzar-i Fiqh va Huquq* (Sex-change from the Perspective of Fiqh and Law) (Qum: Intisharat-i Markaz-i Fiqhi-i A'ammah-i Athar, 2010), 42–43.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 46.

⁶⁹Mark Johnson, *Beauty and Power: Transgendering and Cultural Transformation in the Southern Philippines* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 104.

⁷⁰Sinnott similarly notes, "Thais often use specific terms for homosexual or transgendered individuals, such as 'gay,' 'tom,' 'dee,' 'tut,' or 'kathoe' rather than trying to reach for an overarching term that could

encompass all these categories, such as 'homosexual,' 'third sex/gender.'" Megan Sinnott, *Toms and Dees: Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 8.

⁷¹Sinnott, *Toms and Dees*, 63.

⁷²See the early *Homan* article, referenced above, defining the "musts" of homosexual relationships, but this is now common discourse in many sites. For a critique, see Shakhari, "From Hamjensbaaz to Hamjensgaraa."