

MOHSEN MOSTAFAVI MOBASHER, *The Iranian Diaspora: Challenges, Negotiations, and Transformations* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018). 284 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

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Mobasher's volume on the Iranian diaspora offers insights into a variety of diasporic Iranian communities, all in the West with the exception of one study on the Iranian experience in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The book aims to expand existing knowledge about Iranians in diaspora, expanding the field beyond previous studies which were small in number and limited in scope, and thus not generalizable to larger populations. While the chapters of the book are collected in a volume presenting a range of experiences in this particular community, taken together the book offers a glimpse into what Mobasher calls a "unique" identity in which the country of origin and the country of destination combine to form a new way to be Iranian. This new kind of "Iranianness" is in a constant state of construction and reconstruction as Iranians navigate the sometimes precarious social and political landscapes in which they find themselves.

Sahar Sadeghi's study on the sense of belonging and foreignness of first- and second-generation Iranians in Germany confronts segmented assimilation theory, which suggests that by the second generation, immigrants' acculturation to the host country takes on the existing social stratification in their new societies. Iranians in Europe generally have high levels of human capital, including wealth and educational achievement, but this has not led to greater levels of integration in places like Germany, where marginalization from the opportunity networks enjoyed by "ethnic" Germans. Importantly, Sadeghi shows that in spite of high socioeconomic and educational achievement, language fluency, and social integration, the "impact of racialization, prejudice, exclusion, and discrimination" (70) result in similar levels of a sense of belonging and foreignness among second- and first-generation Iranians in Germany. This is not, she notes, a purely abstract notion, but has a significant material impact on

immigrants' quality of life and opportunity networks beyond the first generation.

Halleh Ghorashi's study on Iranians in the Netherlands argues that integration and assimilation are much more complex than can be conceptualized along a simple success-to-failure continuum. Iranians in the Netherlands adapted to their new host society and integrated successfully as a whole, yet this did not result in a "sense of belonging to Dutch society" (76). Orientalist images of the "other" persist in the Netherlands, creating an environment in which no matter how well-integrated Iranian or Muslim immigrants are, even as they attain high levels of education and language fluency, they remain in the public imaginary as fundamentally distinct from the Dutch. Ghorashi relies on a "thick" notion of Dutch national identity to suggest that Iranian immigrants in the Netherlands may, at best, hope to be tolerated.

In their analysis of Iranian immigrants in Great Britain, Kathryn Spellman Poots and Reza Gholami show that in comparison with Iranians in other European countries, those in Great Britain report lower levels of race-based discrimination. Iranian immigrants in Britain are often treated as more or less integrated in society based on perceptions of their secularism or religiosity. Even symbols of Islam in Iranian cultural settings in Britain tend to be presented as more artifacts of Iranian, rather than Muslim, identity. The authors note that "selective inclusion" on this basis sometimes takes place based on historically inaccurate ideas about an irreligious pre-Islamic Iran, many of which are tangled with imperial nostalgia among Iranians. When secular British Iranians "perform" their Britishness to bolster popular perception of their integration into British society, they may do so at the expense of other, more religious elements of the Iranian community in Great Britain. What results is a fracturing of the British Iranian diaspora, which has larger implications for the process of integration and acculturation.

Behzad Sarmadi's study on Iranians in the UAE is unique for two reasons. First, Sarmadi offers a novel examination of the ways in which proximity and impermanence affect Iranian identity for migrants of Iranian origin in the UAE. Second, he presents a unique understanding of the way that, distinct from geographic proximity, the *political* power of the Iranian government in the UAE influences the sociopolitical range of possibilities available to Iranians living there. This reveals new understandings about the nature of identity and its deeply intertwined relationship with political power dynamics on the

societal level. This political element is typically absent in larger studies of racial and ethnic assimilation in diasporic communities.

A strength of this volume is the inclusion of studies on creative cultural enterprises in the Iranian diaspora. Sanaz Fotouhi's contribution highlights the ways that Iranians in Australia co-create a sense of community as they navigate the broader process of integration and assimilation. Particularly, Fotouhi focuses on nonreligious popular celebrations because they cut across a wide swath of various segments of the Iranian diaspora in Australia and thus provide a lens with which to trace shifts in the construction and reconstruction of Iranian-Australian identity. Importantly, Fotouhi's study situates the Iranian experience in Australia in relation to the reaction of Australian society to recent waves of migration from the Middle East in the wake of the refugee crisis. Iranians in Australia have been affected by political events in Europe and the United States as well as negative images promulgated after the 1979 Iranian revolution, presenting challenges for Iranians wanting to "[overcome] their otherness" (167). Creative activities have helped both to create a space of belonging and to influence Australian social perceptions of the Iranian community.

In her chapter on Iranians' literary production in France, Laetitia Nanquette notes that more recent groups of Iranian immigrants in France may be more connected to Iran than those who came as political refugees immediately following the 1979 revolution, because the political activism of earlier waves meant that they could not safely return or retain connections to home. Political affiliation, perhaps more so than class or religion, remains a salient dividing line within the Iranian diaspora in France. Franco-Iranian literary production has been significantly shaped by Iran's political conditions, and has been consistently deployed as a tool for political activism among Iranians in France.

Alice Miggiano reports that like Iranians in other European countries, Iranians in Italy face pervasive Islamophobia and discrimination. This is the case despite the continuity of the Iran-Italy relationship since prior to the 1979 revolution, showing that interstate relations do not determine migrants' social and cultural experiences. Iranians in Italy, as in many other Western countries, are typically well integrated and "can generally be recognized for their high cultural and social status and good socioeconomic position" (209), while also maintaining ties to Iran and Iranian identity. In this context, Iranian-

Italian literary production helps to provide sociopolitical avenues for both integration and cultural expression for Iranians in exile.

Because of the recency of the studies collected in this volume, the book represents an important opportunity for connections and continuity with previous studies conducted in the years closely following the waves of migration accelerated by the 1979 Iranian revolution. The processes of migration and assimilation are highly contingent on global political currents; the extent to which Iranians are accepted in Western countries as full members of society socially, if not legally, is interrelated with geopolitics as well as international conflict.

Mobasher's edited volume is a valuable contribution to the study of the Iranian diaspora. The chapters offer important insights into the variety of experiences of Iranian migrants, and will be of interest to scholars of diaspora, identity formation, and immigration. Though some of the authors, such as Sadeghi and Ghorashi, acknowledge gender differences in the ways that subjects apprehend the challenges they face as they assimilate and acculturate to their new homes, methodologically the studies tend to treat Iranian migrants as an aggregated group in terms of identity formation. Even as some acknowledge that various dimensions of migrants' identities back home in Iran may account for differences in their experiences of integration, it would be helpful to learn how their class status or experiences as potentially marginalized ethnic or religious minorities within Iran may have impacted their experience of assimilation and identity formation in their new homes. This is important both for their own conception of self and the ways that they are perceived in the societies that receive them. If we accept identity and assimilation as inherently political processes, we must take seriously the insights that may be gained from disaggregating the identities of Iranian migrants – or indeed, any diasporic group in a process of transnational migration – in scholarship on diaspora.