

MANIJEH MORADIAN, *This Flame Within: Iranian Revolutionaries in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022). Pp. 352. \$28.95 paper. ISBN 9781478018810.

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Manijeh Moradian's *This Flame Within: Iranian Revolutionaries in the United States* offers an important and timely history of the Iranian Students Association (ISA) during the Cold War era. The ISA was the largest Iranian political opposition group in the United States prior to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and was responsible for educating Americans on the role of US imperialism in maintaining the shah's dictatorship of Iran. This text uses extensive interviews with former ISA members and archival research conducted through newspapers, libraries, and private collections to create an alternative narrative of Iranian migration in the United States. Rather than prioritize diasporic nostalgia for pre-revolutionary Iran and assimilation into the US nation-state, Moradian tells the story of those revolutionaries who turned their backs on becoming "imperial model minorities" in order to stand in solidarity and struggle for the liberation of Iran from dictatorship under the Pahlavi dynasty.

Moradian's main contribution to the fields of Iranian diaspora studies and ethnic studies lies in her theorization of two terms: "revolutionary affects" and "affects of solidarity." The term "revolutionary affects" is used to describe the lived experiences of her interlocutors, specifically "the sensorial material out of which a revolutionary consciousness can later be fashioned and to those affects that attach to and fuel the project of making a revolution" (8). The term makes meaning out of her subjects' difficult stories of living under imperialism, under dictatorship, and in diaspora, as well as its effects on the body and how it drove them to become politically radicalized. "Affects of solidarity," or "the embodied attachments to the liberation

of others,” is used to characterize the ways in which members of the ISA identified with the struggles of communities of color in the United States as well as working and peasant classes in the broader global South (10). Moradian argues that the affects of solidarity lived and felt by ISA members “allowed disparities and inconsistencies to recede in the contribution of a deeply rewarding revolutionary imaginary” (13). However, she notes, these affects of solidarity left out feminist and gay liberation movements that went beyond analyses of the Third World Marxist Left of the time. Ultimately, this analysis of the ISA through revolutionary affects and affects of solidarity provides a framework from which to shape our own current movements in a way that moves us toward commonality and transformation.

Beginning with an introduction that renders affect theory legible to scholars outside of cultural studies, Moradian situates affect and intersectionality as integral components to the study of the Iranian diaspora. Chapter 1, “Revolutionary Affects and the Archive of Memory,” introduces readers to her main interlocutors by recounting their first experiences with political opposition and state repression in Iran. In close readings of these oral histories, Moradian describes how revolutionary affects took hold of these individuals – who, at the time, were just children – and would crystallize into political radicalization once they came to the United States for study. Chapter 2, “Revolt in the Metropole,” explains the ISA’s transition from a Pahlavi-sponsored student organization to one in opposition to the shah’s regime. Moradian helpfully introduces the term “imperial model minority” to describe the function of these Iranian foreign nationals who came to the United States to get a Western education and returned to Iran in order to build the country in the US’s image.

Chapter 3, “Making the Most of an American Education,” moves the narrative into the revolutionary period. Moradian identifies three main topics that the ISA used to educate the US public about Iranian state repression and the nature of the relationship between the United States and Iran. Unfortunately, rather than seeing the ISA as allies in the anti-imperialist struggle, the US public misinterpreted them as a threat to Western liberal democracy. Chapter 4, “The Feeling and Practice of Solidarity,” connects the revolutionary affects of militancy and melancholia with the ISA’s broader solidarity efforts, showing how affects of solidarity among ISA members allowed them to connect the issues in Vietnam and Palestine to Iran’s struggles.

The final two chapters shift to a sustained consideration of gender and women’s participation in the ISA. Chapter 5, “Political

Cultures of Revolutionary Belonging,” addresses the regulation of gender expression in the movement. While “gender sameness” in theory was a departure from bourgeois notions of gender promoted by the Pahlavi dynasty, in practice it was a process of “masculinization” that promoted commitment to the movement above all other considerations. Chapter 6, “Intersectional Anti-Imperialism: Alternative Genealogies of Revolution and Diaspora,” centers gender and sexuality as integral to Iranian discourse around the revolution and the mass mobilization of women in Iran. Moradian’s extended consideration of the women’s uprising in March 1979, through a contrapuntal close reading of the film *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes Iraniennes: Année Zéro*, provides additional context to this moment when women were fighting against both Western intervention and religious dictatorship. The book then concludes with a consideration of the affective legacies of revolution – including “leftist disappointment, failure, and betrayal” – among ISA members who are now in the diaspora (250).

Moradian’s meticulous close readings of her interlocutors – their words, emotions, and bodily comportments – give readers a sense of the weight that this history holds for her subjects. Her ability to access these communities and forms of knowledge is particularly critical to her arguments on affect. The introduction offers insight into her own positionality and the way in which her interlocutors trusted her with these histories due to her own experience with leftist organizing and her father’s participation in the movement. Moradian’s deep respect for her subjects allows their vulnerability to shine through in the close readings, giving readers prime examples of revolutionary affects and affects of solidarity at work in real time. One particularly poignant moment involves an interlocutor recounting the abortion of her first pregnancy as a result of the ISA’s regulations on reproduction and gender roles. These individuals, who had come from primarily upper- and middle-class backgrounds, insert critical nuance into the limitations and possibilities of movement building, both then and now. One aspect of this ambitious text that went underdeveloped was the “methodology of possibility” – or analysis through contrapuntal and nuanced readings of feelings for present and future circumstances – that the reader first encounters in the introduction (25). Given the general orientation of scholarship in queer of color critique and critical histories to the question of futurity, it is not clear what this naming adds to or renders distinct in this consideration.

The timing of this text is breathtaking; it is impossible to read without thinking of Iran's current uprisings that were sparked by the state-sponsored murder of Jina/Zhina Mahsa Amini. It reminds those of us in the diaspora to make sense of our own revolutionary affects, and it implicitly calls on other communities struggling for liberation to act on their affects of solidarity as well. As Audre Lord wrote in "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained. Nor is anyone of you."¹

NOTES

¹ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 132–33.