

Although Spurlin stresses the importance of carefully studying discourse to understand past worlds and systems of logic, he incautiously states that the conflation between fascism and homosexuality becomes highly contestable because “those gay men and lesbians who have struggled to be recognized as *Holocaust* victims are converted from the status of victims, barely secured and recognized as such, and potentially put on nearly the same par as the fascist perpetrators themselves” (p. 73, my italics). First of all, the public commemoration remembers this group as victims of National Socialism as *Opfern des Nationalsozialismus*, not as victims of the Holocaust. Secondly, such reasoning may come across as rather offensive to the reader. After all, no intelligent reader would assume all heterosexuals to be enthusiastic supporters of National Socialism simply because some of them were.

Furthermore, Spurlin seems to have chosen his case studies selectively in trying to get across the idea that homophobia is linked to nationalism, no matter where nationalism turns up. Of all the authors who have contributed to the history of homosexuality and the Third Reich, Spurlin counterposes his analysis with the contributions to the field of Andrew Hewitt and Theodor Adorno – who have addressed fascism as a hypermasculine, misogynic, and therefore homosexual phenomenon – while, where the history of homosexuality and the Third Reich was concerned, he should have been talking to at least Rüdiger Lautmann, John Fout, Geoffrey Giles, and James Steakley.

The main problem of *Lost Intimacies*, it seems, is that the author has conflated proving the legitimacy and importance of studying the history of the Holocaust by taking a gender and sexuality perspective (historical methodology) with establishing that the Holocaust was not only an anti-Semitic endeavour but also a homophobic enterprise (historical analysis). Indeed, in his introduction to *Lost Intimacies* Spurlin mentions two eminent scholars in the field of Holocaust studies who have questioned what possible relevance a “political focus” on a topic such as gender could have in the field Holocaust studies. Spurlin’s line of reasoning – and especially his repeating (not documenting) the fact that Nazi homophobia and Nazi anti-Semitism were interdependent – suggests that he has made it his personal quest to convince those two scholars that gender and sexuality perspectives are relevant in studying the Holocaust because the *outcome* of his results shows that the Holocaust was a homophobic enterprise. In essence, this circular reasoning is highly unsatisfactory to an audience that already agrees with Spurlin that gender and sexuality perspectives are a valuable asset in studying history.

Despite these genuine concerns about *Lost Intimacy*, it is important to note that Spurlin’s work contributes to historicizing homophobia within the context of the broader twentieth century by highlighting the “homophobic height” of the postwar era. In doing so, Spurlin helps open up lines of research into the rise of “regimes” – whether dictatorial or democratic – and sexual mores, showing that these two are inextricably bound together.

Anna Tijsseling

ASEF BAYAT. *Life as Politics. How Ordinary People Change the Middle East.* [ISIM Series on Contemporary Muslim Societies.] Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2010. xi, 304 pp. € 39.90; doi:10.1017/S0020859010000611

Asef Bayat published his first book, *Workers and Revolution in Iran: a Third World Experience in Workers’ Control*, in 1987, and in the years since he has been a leading

scholar of working-class activism, social movements, the agency of the urban poor, and the politics of space and place in the Middle East. Bayat is a sociologist by training and his work has consistently been theoretically informed and engaged; much of it has also been strongly comparative, drawing most heavily on his deep knowledge of both Iran and Egypt. A professor at Leiden University, Bayat also served as Academic Director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), established in the late 1990s by a consortium of Dutch universities with the support of the Netherlands Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, despite the obvious importance and high quality of the research it fostered, ISIM shut down at the beginning of 2009 after its funding was cut by the Dutch government, a most short-sighted and regrettable decision.

As a scholar and as a public intellectual, Bayat has throughout his career been concerned to understand and foreground the ways in which the struggles and lives of the working poor and other subordinated groups (including women) in the Middle East have propelled social and political change; as such he has offered an important corrective to the focus of most of mainstream Euro-American political science on (male) sociopolitical elites as the only significant agents of change. *Life as Politics* brings together a set of articles and essays that Bayat originally published in a range of academic journals and edited volumes between 2000 and 2009, mostly in the latter part of that decade, supplemented by an introduction and a conclusion that set forth the book's key themes and locate them theoretically. The book thus provides an excellent overview of the intellectual project in which Bayat has been engaged over the past decade.

Broadly put, Bayat argues in this book that scholars of the contemporary Middle East who have deployed social movement theory, which was formulated largely by Western social scientists on the basis of specifically Euro-American patterns of historical development and sociopolitical contention, have for the most part failed to pay adequate attention to how the urban disenfranchised in the region, "through their quiet and unassuming daily struggles, refigure new life and communities for themselves and different urban realities on the ground in Middle Eastern cities [...] not through formal institutional channels, from which they are largely excluded, but through direct actions in the very zones of exclusion" (p. 5). Bayat has coined the term "social nonmovements" for such "collective actions of noncollective actors" and he contrasts them to organized social movements that typically possess a recognized leadership, a more or less coherent program and ideology, and a capacity for sustained mobilization in pursuit of their demands. For Bayat, these non-movements are the product of practices of everyday life through which "large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations" (p. 14).

Examples of the practices and non-movements discussed in this book include the ways in which the urban poor in the Middle East have sought to cope with the impact of neoliberal economic policies, globalization, and the failure of the state to address their needs by means of what Bayat calls the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" on urban resources and urban space; how, despite limited opportunities for open political activism, Iranian women have nonetheless been able to encroach upon and challenge patriarchal power in many domains; how urban youth have struggled to create space for subjectivities and lifestyles not approved by the state or by Islamist movements; how contention persists over Islamist efforts to suppress popular practices of "fun"; and the ways in which urban public space has become a key arena of struggle in many parts of the Middle East, yielding a "street politics" that requires serious attention and analysis.

Life as Politics is an important book and well worth reading. It is particularly valuable for its insistence on foregrounding dimensions of urban social life and the everyday struggles and agency of ordinary people that rarely receive serious attention in the social-science literature. Perhaps inevitably for a collection of previously published essays, there is a fair amount of overlap, even repetition, across the chapters; but taken as a whole the book shows what can be gained by deploying a broad (and spatially-informed) definition of the political, attending to the specificities of the evolving patterns and dynamics of Middle Eastern urban life, and paying serious attention to what urban subaltern groups are doing even when they are not in the streets protesting or participating in organized political activism.

At the same time, questions can be raised about aspects of Bayat's analysis and the categories in which it is grounded. For one, he uses the term social non-movements to encompass a very broad and diverse range of phenomena, from the ways in which migrants from the countryside take over urban space and ignore or defy government strictures on how it is to be used, to Iranian women's persistence in evading official control of their behavior and their attire in public, to the fact that some Egyptian youth engage in premarital sex, to the parties that Iranian young people throw behind closed doors. All of these phenomena (and the many others that Bayat discusses in this book) certainly merit serious attention, but what they have in common with one another is not always evident.

By using the term "nonmovement" for the cumulative impact of what can happen when numerous individuals (or families) separately act in a similar way, Bayat seeks to move beyond the specific forms of agency and activism that are the central concern of social movement theory. But one might ask if he is not thereby lumping together too many different things that are constituted by distinct social-structural contexts and dynamics, manifest class, gender and/or ethnic/racial relations in very different ways, and bear quite different cultural meanings. What, for example, do the use of public space in Cairo for unauthorized housing or informal markets and the practice of *wrfi* (informal or customary) marriage among young Egyptians have in common, other than that neither fits what a certain body of theory might characterize as a social movement?

Bayat explicitly rejects the characterization of all lower-class agency as resistance; as he notes, some scholars have fallen "into the trap of essentialism in reverse – by reading too much into ordinary behaviors, interpreting them as necessarily conscious or contentious acts of defiance. This is so because they overlook the crucial fact that these practices occur mostly within the prevailing systems of power" (p. 55). But this valuable insight about the pervasiveness of "prevailing systems of power" in inflecting social practice is too often absent from Bayat's rather celebratory depictions of quiet encroachment and street politics. As Bayat notes, the urban poor encroach on public (and even private) space because of the state's egregious failure to provide for their housing and employment needs; but (for example) the contractors who put up unauthorized (and often disastrously shoddy) housing often (always?) do so in complicity with venal officials, and one suspects that vendors in informal markets must routinely pay off the police in order to operate.

Similarly, Bayat cites (pp. 57–58) the private tutoring which a great many Egyptian schoolteachers provide to their students – now widely regarded as a necessity if one hopes to achieve a high score on state examinations and thereby gain admission to a desirable university program – as yet another instance of quiet encroachment, because it enables teachers to supplement their inadequate government salaries. But these private lessons constitute a huge economic burden even for middle-class families and signal the growing

privatization and commodification of education in Egypt, suggesting that the “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” may not be an entirely adequate way of grasping this development and its imbrication in power relations. Finally, we need a fuller discussion of the ways in which Bayat’s non-movements can function both as safety valve and as (actual or potential) loci of opposition to the state and the elites which dominate it.

These questions do not detract from the book’s importance; rather, they illustrate how rich and thought-provoking a study *Life as Politics* is, and the important avenues for further research that it helps open up. By powerfully demonstrating how productive a broader and more flexible definition of the political can be and how crucial it is to explore what the urban masses are doing in order to survive, Asef Bayat has made a signal contribution to scholarship on contemporary urban social life in the Middle East. But his work also helps scholars and activists alike understand more fully the ongoing struggles of the region’s peoples for a better life, in the face of terrible socio-economic conditions and of neglectful, incompetent and/or brutally oppressive regimes whose chief priority is holding on to power at all costs.

Zachary Lockman

RAY, RAKA and SEEMIN QAYUM. *Cultures of Servitude. Modernity, Domesticity, and Class in India*. Stanford University Press, Stanford (Calif.) 2009. xiv, 255 pp. Ill. \$65.00. (Paper: \$22.95; E-book: \$22.95.); doi:10.1017/S0020859010000623

In the past two decades numerous studies on the increased employment of domestic workers have appeared. Modernization theories had in fact envisaged the end of paid domestic labour; clearly, those have been proved wrong by events. In many contemporary societies around the globe paid domestic labour is essential to keep the economy running. Most studies of the increased use of paid domestic labour focus on advanced industrialized societies in the North, where women’s increased labour-force participation has led to a crisis in the organization of care.¹ As a result, middle- and upper-middle-class families have become increasingly dependent on migrant labour for cleaning and caretaking tasks.

Ray and Qayum’s *Cultures of Servitude: Modernity, Domesticity, and Class in India* diverges in a number of ways from the dominant body of scholarship on paid domestic labour, as they themselves mention (p. 9). Firstly, they focus on a country in the global South where the practice of domestic labour has a long history and is not linked to the increased labour force participation of women. Secondly, unlike countries in the North, where mainly foreign women are employed as domestics, in India local people perform domestic labour. This makes it possible to analyse their position regardless of their immigration and citizenship status. Thirdly, while in most other countries only women are employed, in India both women and men work as domestics. Yet there is a clear shift

1. See, for example, the studies of Filipinas in Los Angeles and Italy: Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, CA, 2001), and of Latina women in the United States: M. Romero, *Maid in the USA* (New York, NY, 1992), and P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadow of Affluence* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).