

of Antioch sought in 1659 to reduce the tax payments owed by the Christians of Damascus (p. 92).

ASEF BAYAT, *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2017). Pp. 308. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9781503602588

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For Asef Bayat, the Arab uprisings of 2011–12 are revolutions without revolutionaries. In his book of the same title, he compares them to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran as the culmination of revolutions *with* revolutionaries typical of that earlier time period. Bayat was a keen participant observer in the Islamic Revolution, so he explicitly sets his analysis of the Arab Spring in systematic comparison. According to him, the new Arab revolutions are distinctive because unlike the Iranian case they lacked radicalism, simultaneously displaying “dissent and deradicalization” (p. 20). Because they did not have “any associated intellectual anchorage” in traditional notions of nationalism, socialism, or Islamism, they resulted in “no fundamental break from the old order” (p. 11). They were “*revolution as movement*” through widespread mobilization, but not “*revolution as change of the outcome*” (p. 13, emphasis in the original). Liminality is their striking feature, but it is liminality in itself and not as the trigger to revolutionary political reconstruction: “Half Revolution, No Revolution!” as one protester’s placard displayed (p. 147). Indeed, Bayat chooses the term “refolution” to describe how the Arab uprisings were such half-revolutions, surprisingly without any reference to Timothy Gordon Ash, who first explicated this specialized term to mean a combination of reform and revolution after the collapse of Communism in 1989.

What set the Arab uprisings in motion was not any focus on the political, as manifested in radical political ideology espoused by an organized party, but “radical impulses to the social,” as Chapter 9 emphasizes. The protagonists of the social in the Arab Spring were varied, and their concern with the social was clustered at the two ends of the spectrum, ranging from the liberal demands of youth, women, and the insurgent poor, to those of pious Muslims, including the Salafis, who were, by implication, predominantly male, not young, and not poor. The upsurge of the social appears as the counterpart to the disavowal of radical ideology in what Bayat describes, here and in his other works, as post-Islamism. Such is the great strength of this work. Bayat is an urban sociologist known for his work on the ordinarily quiet encroachment and everyday politics of the urban poor—now interchangeably and ambiguously called the “subalterns.” His forte has always been the detailed analysis of the transformation of “subaltern politics”—or how various informal groups and social networks with divergent goals coalesce in a moment of revolutionary enthusiasm. This book characterizes this impulse well, and the microanalysis presented is illuminating.

Bayat’s macroanalysis in this book, by contrast, is vitiated by his constant invocation of “neoliberal globalization” as the explanatory *deus ex machina*. Bayat’s attribution of the Arab Spring’s deradicalization of dissent to the impact of neoliberalism and the structural adjustment imposed by the IMF and the World Bank is unconvincing. It is not clear what “the old social contract” that collapsed was, or the “right to the city” that “all but vanished” under the impact of neoliberal policies, if they ever existed. Are we to think of the Circle of Justice in the age-old theories of kingship that were Islamicized after the Muslim conquests or of the ephemeral Arab socialism of the 1960s that bankrupted Egypt? How, in this period of massive urbanization, can “the growth of the middle-class poor” be plausibly attributed to neoliberalism? Do we find “taxi

drivers, fruit sellers and street vendors” only in the “neoliberal cities” as “victim of the ‘urbicide’ of the global elite” (p. 101)?

This reviewer believes the puzzle of revolutions without revolutionaries can be solved much more simply in the broad historical perspective, and has nothing to do with neoliberal globalization. The key to this simpler solution, hinted at within Bayat’s analysis of post-Islamist orientation (pp. 146–52), is the expiration of the modern myth of revolution: revolution no longer serves as a social myth with mass appeal promoted by organized revolutionary professionals. Bayat shows brilliantly how the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran was the last of the so-called Great Revolutions motivated by that myth. What he is not able to accept himself as a former Iranian revolutionary is that the modern myth of revolution, rich as it was in perpetuating old theories of revolution, finally expired in the decades between the Iranian and the Arab revolutions. The generals are always fighting the last war. For instance, Bayat convincingly demonstrates in Chapter 2 the strength of the revolutionary Left in toppling the Shah of Iran, describing how the Iranian Third-Worldist and Marxist-Islamist, ‘Ali Shari‘ati, retooled the idea of revolution for the establishment of a “divine classless society” (p. 34). Bayat invokes this Leftist conception uncritically, and by using it as the basis for his analysis of the Arab Spring argues the latter to be the anomaly. Being reluctant to recognize the utopian character of the Leftist view of Iran’s Islamic Revolution, which I call the modern myth of revolution, he disparages the dystopian nature of fundamental political transformations in the decades after the Islamic revolution as atypical and normatively unacceptable.

However, the Arab uprisings of 2011–12 are an anomaly only if Iran’s Islamic revolution of 1979 is the norm. There are different types of revolution in modern history, both within and outside the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Within the MENA region, we find revolutions that did not bring about a fundamental break with the old order in the first decade of the 20th century, namely the constitutional revolutions in Iran and the Ottoman Empire, and these certainly invite comparisons with the Arab revolutions—much more so than Bayat’s comparative mentions of Nicaragua and Cuba (referenced over a dozen times each) or Vietnam (mentioned four times).

Still, this weakness should not detract from this book’s great contributions. Excise the redundant *deus ex machina* of neoliberalism from its analytical framework, and the result is a brilliant comparison of the two major revolutions of our epoch in the MENA by an eyewitness sociologist. It is unreasonable to expect more.

LAURENCE RAW, *Six Turkish Filmmakers*, Wisconsin Film Studies (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017). Pp. 232. \$79.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780299315405

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In recent years, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have been open to approaches and narratives once considered outside the norms of classic academic writing and research. We experiment with these narratives, at times personal ones, in order to engage readers and especially students to think critically, not only about the subject at hand, but also about themselves and their place within the larger context of the transcultural societies we live in today. In *Six Turkish Filmmakers*, Laurence Raw attempts to combine “the historical, personal, and political” in order to “rediscover the real purpose of cinema” in addition to encouraging an “ontological reflection both on oneself and on other people’s relationship to the world” (p. 14). This can be, idealistically,