

Reconstruction¹ half a century earlier would have been apposite, because the same discussion took place then. Both these discourses entailed the same procedure of defining the United States as a land of free citizens and free labour, thereby making the immigrant worker without citizen rights an anomaly, a coolie whose otherness was framed in a racial vocabulary.

Like the Chinese fifty years before, the Mexicans had come to stay despite appalling forms of exploitation. The contracts the workers had to sign charged them for transport, supplies, and accommodation, which often left families in debt after months of arduous work. It was not easy for these workers to get their rightful wages, exposing, according to Mapes, “the limits of ‘free labour’ in the labour contracts they signed” (p. 155). Not surprisingly, the Mexican immigrants could not be confined to the countryside but found their way to the cities, circulating between agricultural and industrial work and belying the idea of their being seasonal immigrants. And thus the sugar-beet industry became the most important employer of Mexican workers in the 1930s.

It was an employer always at odds with the larger political interest of the United States during its period as formal empire and in the course of its devolution to a modern hegemonic power, which was global free trade. The beet-sugar industry has been fighting against free trade ever since the Roosevelt administration began lowering tariff walls in the 1930s. Sugar thus remains a highly political topic, both in terms of the relationship between the US and tropical sugar producers within its political spheres of influence as well as in terms of the immigration of guest workers. Sugar has been in the crucible of American imperial and immigration policies, a unique position for a commodity, as Mapes convincingly shows.

Ulbe Bosma

SPURLIN, WILLIAM J. *Lost Intimacies. Rethinking Homosexuality under National Socialism.* [Gender, Sexuality, Culture, Vol. 4.] Peter Lang, New York [etc.] 2009. xii, 152 pp. € 21.34; doi:10.1017/S002085901000060X

“Some people draw conclusions like curtains”, sang the late Scottish folk singer John Martyn in the 1980s. In that same period, some scholars did the same where homosexuality and World War II were concerned. From the 1970s onwards, a myth about a “homocaust” was cultivated. A compelling narrative about an ever-growing number of homosexual victims of the Third Reich – from 220,000 victims in 1974 to 300,000 in 1978 and even three million victims in the 1990s – followed Heinz Heger’s publication in 1972 of his experiences as an inmate in the Nazi concentration camp Dachau in *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel* [*The Men with the Pink Triangle*, translated into English in 1980]. Heger’s account has been of pivotal importance for the public commemoration of homosexuality and National Socialism because his book was reworked into a play and a film. Martin Sherman wrote the play *Bent* in 1979 and Sean Mathias reworked the play into a film in 1997, casting movie stars such as Jude Law, Clive Owen, and Mick Jagger. The fictional accounts of Heger’s story travelled the world and caused quite a stir, the implicit message being that one was better off as a Jew than as a homosexual under Nazi rule. One of the main characters in these accounts tried to survive the camps by swapping his pink triangle for a yellow star.

1. Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore, MD, 2006); see my review in *IRSH* 54 (2009), pp. 520–521.

From the 1990s onwards, serious attempts have been made to pull the curtains on that history. Eminent scholars including Rüdiger Lautmann, John Fout, Geoffrey Giles, and James Steakley debunked the persisting narratives on homosexuality and the Third Reich. In trying to get the point across that the Holocaust did not provide a useful frame for understanding the fate of gay men and lesbian women under Nazi rule, they delivered a threefold critique. First, in terms of the sheer number of camp-incarcerated victims, the fate of gays and lesbians offers no comparison with that of the victims of the Holocaust. Secondly, the majority of gays and lesbian were spared camp experiences. Finally, National Socialism had not only something against homosexuality but also something with it.

Since the turn of the century, the same has been done for some of the Nazi-occupied territories. In 2002, Michael Sibalis offered a critical reading of the history of the persecution of homosexuality under the Vichy regime, going against the grain of French gay activists demanding official recognition for “homosexual deportations” with his contribution to *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*.¹ In my 2009 Ph.D. dissertation,² I offered a critical reading of the representation of the Dutch history in this regard by studying everyday police and judicial practice in one of the most important court districts of the Netherlands. In addition, Dagmar Herzog provided a useful point of departure for analysing the history of the commemorations of the Third Reich in relation to postwar identity politics in her impressive *Sex after Fascism*.³ All those accounts have to be understood against the background of the flourishing discipline of the history of sexuality, in which ongoing work approaches sexuality and homosexuality as a variable rather than a given.

In this review of *Lost Intimacies: Rethinking Homosexuality under National Socialism* by the British social scientist William J. Spurlin, the question that has to be addressed is whether Spurlin has taken us two steps backwards. First, his work places the persecution of homosexuals firmly within the framework of the Holocaust. Symbolically, the cover shows the pink marble inverted triangle commemorating homosexual victims of National Socialism, superimposed upon “Fallen Leaves” by Menashe Kadishman, located in one of the five voids of the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Secondly, Spurlin’s discursive analysis of the workings of Nazi homophobia and its interconnectedness with Nazi population and racial politics is problematically selective in choosing which concepts are approached historically and which are dealt with as a-historical givens. Spurlin works with “homosexuality” and “homophobia” as self-explanatory concepts.

Furthermore, Spurlin actively silences parts of the history of “homosexuality” and the Third Reich in favour of other elements. Though admitting it to be an undocumented assumption, Spurlin argues that “It is important to note that such instances of homosexuality within the SS and among other high-ranking nazi men were most likely the exception rather than the rule itself” (pp. 71–72). He wants to underscore the point that conflating fascism with homosexuality is problematic because “it reduces all fascists to repressed homosexuals and locates the source of fascism in homosexuality” (p. 72).

1. Michael Sibalis, “Homophobia, Vichy France, and the ‘Crime of Homosexuality’: The Origins of the Ordinance of 6 August 1942”, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 8 (2002), pp. 301–318.

2. A.C.M. Tijsseling-Stek, *Schuldige seks. Homoseksuele zedendelicten rondom de Duitse bezettingstijd* (Utrecht, 2009) [with a summary in English].

3. Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2005).

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