The Brewing of Islamist Modernity: Tea Gardens and Public Space in Istanbul

Christopher Houston

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The Serendipity of Circumstance and the Peculiarity of the West

In the golden light of hindsight, the concerns of Marx, Durkheim and Weber might be interpreted as the high-water mark of reflection on the specificity of the West, on why it was that only in the Occident was inaugurated a perceived universal-historical process. Here other civilizations, other religions, other cultures were pillaged for their alterity so as to clarify the genius – evil or otherwise – of Europe. Weber admits as much in the 1920 summary affixed to the Protestant Ethic, when he notes that his studies of other cultures ‘quite deliberately emphasize the elements in which [they] differ from Western civilization’ (1985: 27). Yet this self-examination of the West, regardless of the valuation of whatever it is that is elected to be its constituting features, engages Muslims in a similar work, as they debate amongst themselves the same questions. The respective quests for self-definition are interrelated: in his introduction to the 1998 Yearbook of the Sociology of Islam, Georg Stauth notes that it is with Weber that a ‘theoretically informed analysis of the meaning of Islam in the modern world’ (1998: 5) is commenced.

Why with Weber? Because from Weber’s work two general paths diverge: an affirmative modernism that sees the West as giving birth to a definitive breakthrough of rationality, one that casts the Rest, including Islam, into the pit of tradition and re-enchantment, if not simply error – no matter what indigenous sources of rationalism or disenchantment there may have been. Occidental plenitude is clarified by Islamic (and other world

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religions’) indigence. And a second, less well-traveled path, that intuits, to use the terminology of Cornelius Castoriadis, that the ‘imaginary significations’ constituting the rationality of the West are as peculiar in their created values as the ends of any other social-historical institution or society. An unresolved conflict between the two conceptions might be discerned in the work of Weber himself (see Arnason, 1982). The first path is well trodden by postcolonial, secularizing Muslim states and regimes, though some people turn back and try the other for good measure as well. Necip Fazil Kisakürek for example, the modernist Turkish poet who had once been asked to re-write the Republic’s national anthem, was put in gaol in 1943, after his ‘puzzling’ re-Islamization (Mardin, 1997).

Yet bedeviling the field of comparative research in history and sociology in general, and Islamic studies in particular, is the question of whether comparison is undertaken to amplify difference, or embarked upon to establish relative worth. To put it another way: is difference, once denoted, used to signify inferiority or superiority, juvenescence or maturity, retardation or development, particularism or universality? This is related to the practical problem of which particular qualities or aspects of social life will be weighed down with the task of symbolizing the differences between various cultures, religions and/or civilizations. Obviously, any social phenomenon chosen to compare difference, for example the type and organization of bureaucracy, to use a Weberian concern, or ecological sensitivity, or the status of women will favor some particular social-historical formations over others. In this case how would a commensurate standard be devised to evaluate the particularity and ideals of different cultures, religions, civilizations, etc.?

The problem is muddied further by the ambiguous status and character of the culture (or practice) of modernity. Is modernity, as Charles Taylor (1995) argues, best viewed as an internal reform of Christendom, a ‘local history . . . of advance’, in which Western moderns, through the superseding of an earlier social imaginary, gain new possibilities for understanding themselves? If so, to what extent can those informed by their own contrasting religious or cultural ‘visions of the good’ share in the potential gain of modernity? For if the significance of European history lies in its creation of a new historical constellation – and not in its discovery of a culture-neutral reason dissipating the myths and errors of earlier beliefs – the question becomes whether the ethical visions of non-Western cultures and modernity respectively will mutually inform each other, or be mutually estranged. The politics of recognition will need to be pursued by all sides, unless it is claimed, as the construction of the trope of oriental despotism shows, that the signification of openness is particular to the West itself.

Ironically, this is precisely what Cornelius Castoriadis does argue, when he claims that the very possibility of entering into such a discussion is dependent on the prior creation of the imaginary signification of autonomy. Without the ‘Greco-Western’ creation of autonomy – in this case, the ability to render society’s self-institution explicit and hence comprehend its laws as self-posed – the idea of dialogue with the institutions or values
of social-historical worlds different from one’s own is literally unthinkable. True, they can be registered as other: but only within the terms of the imaginary significations of one’s own instituting society. So Castoriadis, when talking about Khomeini’s ‘pajdarans’, goes so far as to say that:

... [their] communication is always already structured exhaustively by the given institution of society in such a way that it is effectively impossible, from the social historical point of view, for the participants to put into question this institution (which they are doomed to reproduce indefinitely) and, by this very fact, to open themselves to the reason of others. (1990: 87, emphasis in the original)

Castoriadis’s imputation of closure and hermeticism to Islamist society rules out by philosophical fiat investigation of the actual experiences of, and contestation over, autonomy in Muslim lives. Contemporary Islamist movements can only be understood as purveyors of nostalgia, or worse, as blind reassertions of heteronomy.

But if we want to remain faithful to the variety of political practices pursued in the name of Islam we need to cease eulogizing the serendipity of circumstance that leads to the terrible peculiarity of the Occident, and to investigate on their own terms those contingencies that encourage the specificity of local and competing Islamist modernities. How can this best be done? It is of some significance that Weber, well read as he was, gleaned most of what he knew of non-Western cultures and religions from the library. Weber himself, in his author’s introduction to the The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, justifies the omission of ethnographic research by making a distinction between the ethics of the ‘culture-bearing’ classes and the classes studied by anthropologists, presumably the bearers of cultures of less influence (p. 30). This methodological division of labor is instructive, at least vis-a-vis Weber’s study of Islam. For obviously what it misses is an interpretation of the quotidian practices of his contemporaneous Islamist actors, from either the intellectual classes or the poor, in understanding the affinity or otherwise of lived Islam with modernity and capitalism. This criticism is not historically anachronistic; at the time of Weber’s research there had been at least three generations of Islamist reformers working their will on Ottoman society.

In fact, in his scattered references to Islam, Weber might have profited from a more ‘Weberian’ approach to its study. For Weber assumes that with the consolidation of Abbasid rule and the completion of Islam’s formative stage as the triumph of a status-oriented warrior religion, later Islamic developments in the Ottoman Empire or the Indian subcontinent, for example, are of little importance in modifying the impulses radiating from the tangle of ideas and ethics developed in this formative doctrinal period (Schluchter, 1996). Bryan Turner’s reading of Weber is somewhat different, but assumes a similar repetition: once the patrimonial structure of Islamic society was consolidated by the Abbasid dynasty, Islamic cities thereafter everywhere lacked civic culture and or any other autonomous associations.
(Turner, 1974). It was this same rigid, lasting patrimonial order, in the shape of the Ottoman Empire, which collapsed a thousand years later when confronted by the dynamism of European capitalism and colonialism. In contrast the Protestant ethic (and its elimination of magic from the world) is the outcome of a long line of rationalizing developments stretching back to ancient Judaism (and encompassing Islam). Yet the path of religious rationalization here depends as much upon the circumstantial interests of each generation of political and economic actors, as upon an inner logic intrinsic to the particular religious worldview. Roy’s question might have been directed at Weber: ‘why does Western Orientalism study Islam sub specie aeternitatis, while approaching Western civilization as “socio-historical configuration”?’ (Roy, 1994: 11).

Indeed, Weber’s analysis of Islam reveals an interesting ambiguity in the famous remark that ‘Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men’s conduct. Yet very frequently the world-images that have been created by “ideas” have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests’ (from The Social Psychology of The World Religions: 280). For if we take the simile seriously, we need to consider whether in fact the articulated theodicy of each civilization always does lead to the junction of the present (Tenbruch, 1980), or whether new ideas and new contexts, like added locomotives, might not shunt cultures off their ‘predestined’ tracks? If we assume that the rationalizing theodicies of the major world religions do exhibit an internal inevitability, then the present, as the era of the universalization of Western rationality, is bound to be interpreted as a collision zone between two speeding trains: the train of an indigenous religious ethic or logic on the one hand, and the train of Western instrumental rationality on the other. But this starts to look like the return of a modernization theory, or a repeat of the cultural imperialism thesis. Perhaps the fixed nature of the railway track is not a good image for understanding the creative contingency involved in the internal development of any religious ethic, nor its conditioning by and of the economic, legal and political interests of its carriers.

A partial remedy to Weber’s intimation of a self-perpetuating religious logic (for religions other than Christianity) would be to democratize the notion of the ‘culture-bearing’ classes, to incorporate into the interpretive project the multiple and competing Islamist rationalizations imagined by social actors themselves from all corners of society. In his pioneering study of Weber and Islam, Turner makes a similar point: Weber’s hasty imputing of a utilitarian warrior ethic to Islam is an abandonment of his own verstehen principle, in which interpretation should be grounded ‘in the subjective meaning of action from the point of view of the social actor’ (Turner, 1974: 39). Significantly, Weber attempts to do precisely this in his investigation of Christianity. His extended trip to the United States in 1904 (just after completion of the first section of the Protestant Ethic) was notable for his visiting many different churches and denominations, including attending a Negro service in Washington. Indeed, the ‘problem of the Negro’
interested him greatly: in a letter sent back to Germany he writes, ‘I must have spoken to a hundred white southerners of all parties and social classes, and on the basis of this the problem of what is to become of these people seems absolutely hopeless’ (Marianne Weber, 1988: 296). If Weber’s stay in the New World cannot be counted technically as fieldwork, his experience of the life-forming practices of different religious sects and classes served as ethnographic material for his work.3 Would that he had been able to pursue a similar method for his studies in Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam.

In sum, what is envisioned is the extension to other religious imaginaries of the method informing the composition of the Protestant Ethic, without, however, its debilitating Eurocentrism in which the ethics of the ‘Great Religions’ become grist for the mill of Western exceptionalism. To pursue such a task both the integrity of and fine calibration between interests and ethics need to be traced, in order to note how class and gender interests produce a pragmatic ethic as often as ethical concerns and value judgements produce subjects able to grasp or reject economic and political opportunities. Here the historical co-determinants of any new religious development – like ascetic Protestantism, or Islamist revivalism – need to be presented, including those stemming from the expropriation of ‘external’ cultural sources. To put it another way, ethnography needs to study the constitution – through the long history of its previous articulations in discourse – of a set of practices and beliefs called Islam, including its re-articulation in contemporary Islamism. Indeed, it is in the signifying of such antecedents that their influence over the present is continually revived. Alongside the influence of external shocks, however, the variety of competing Islamisms should also be seen as grounded in the creative transformations and mobilizations of selected practices and ideas historically weighted with the name of Islam, in the context – in the case of Turkey – of a rival state-instituted and -promulgated official Islam.

**Fetih Paşa Korusu and Islamized Public Space**

In the next sections I want to put flesh onto these dry methodological bones by examining the design and consumption of two competing Islamist ‘prodigies’, a new tea garden/restaurant complex sponsored by the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party and its religious rival in the same Fetih Paşa Forest, Istanbul. The first marvel, built after Refah’s 1994 electoral victory for the Greater Istanbul Municipality, involved the restoration and extension of two rundown mansions inside the boundaries of the forest, the larger of them into a restaurant with indoor and outdoor tables and the other into a split-level tea garden. The other prodigy is a private and luxurious Islamist function centre built into the crown of the forest’s largest hill. We will visit these two tea gardens and their biographies as a sweet-smelling way into the brewing of Islamist differentiation in the context of a more encompassing contest between Islamist and Republican modernities.

Because municipalities in Turkey are dependent for the bulk of their
revenue on central state financing (though they do have rights to tax some economic activities), it is probably true that their main intervention into urban politics is ‘through [their] ownership and control of various public buildings, parks and social spaces’ (Çinar, 1997: 30). But this is no mean power: in the production of local and civic identities one office of interior designers is worth a busload of riot police, as Napoleon might have said, under other circumstances. Refah’s interventions in public space should be read, then, as empirical presentations of an imagined social order even as they constitute it.

Yet the practice of consuming, stylized by convention and conditioned by the demanding art of conviviality, is as much an act of production as the productive process itself. The consumers make their mark on the work of the producers, vivifying, sometimes subverting their intentions in the process. Refah Party’s self-concept may be on display in Fetih Paşa Korusu, as may its vision of the citizenry it hopes to civilized through their consumption of the facility. But in the site’s creative consumption by Muslims themselves, the Manichean boundaries subscribed to by both the wider Islamist and Republican social movements are partially erased. Here the living of Islamist sociability is pursued in dynamic but ambiguous relation to the official Islam of the developmental state. We will trace through such connections in the following pages.

Upon approaching Refah’s tea garden and restaurant from the Bosporus side of the forest the first thing you encounter is the large car park. Though within easy walking distance of Üsküdar, and on countless bus and minibus routes, the expectation that patrons will arrive in cars both assumes a certain prosperity, and celebrates a particular lifestyle. Of course the motor car increasingly determines Istanbul’s urban structure. But the car park casts into relief the way notions of the nuclear family and its sphere of privacy and conviviality are taken for granted by Refah’s architects. By way of contrast, the provision of free buses for poor families to attend weekend summer picnics at green spots on the outskirts of the city by the IETT (Istanbul Electric Public Transport, also under the authority of the Greater Istanbul Municipality) shows Refah’s cognizance of the class differences separating its possible supporters. It gives a clue too to Refah’s targeted users of Fetih Paşa Korusu.

The restaurant and tea garden themselves are bordered with flowerbeds, while the blazing white timber walls of Ahmet Fetih Paşa’s old residence are immaculately maintained. On entering the restaurant the diner is greeted by a formally dressed waiter (black tie, white shirt, black trousers) and ushered to a vacant table in one of the wooden-floored rooms, where couples, families, even single diners may be eating. Thus there is no organized separation of the genders, and no family salon either, though the mansion has many rooms, enough to set aside such a place. The restaurant does not serve alcohol, but they do fill the large wineglasses on the tables with water. European visitors should feel at home, for the interior furnishings are basically French, with high-backed chairs, ornate chandeliers, and
cream-coloured serviettes shaken out by the waiters: the most ‘religious’ things here are the customers.

The music piping softly though the speakers however is non-Western – Turkish Art music (Türk Sanat Müziği) with a dash of Sufi (tasawwuf) orchestration, though a Greek friend assured me that the origin of Turkish Art music was the Byzantine court.⁴ The rehabilitation of Turkish Art music in the 1950s, indeed its rise and rise to being a staple feature of state television, reveals its incorporation within the changing cultural policies of the regime. Its playing in the restaurant promotes then a certain refinement, and gestures as well to official discourses of Turkishness (see Stokes, 1994). Yet perhaps the absence of a certain type of folk (halk) music, one more recently appropriated by leftist and Alevi politics, is telling as well. In this case the restaurant’s construction of an indigeneity against the West (no rock or Turkish pop music here) excludes other potential-localities – the possibility that an unorthodox Muslim creed like Alevism and the music claimed as constituting it could be made to represent Turkey ‘in the competition of civilizations’ (words of Istanbul’s Refah mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the opening of Çamlica, a second Refah restaurant in another prominent tourist site elsewhere).

Fifty metres away, in the tea-garden, a similar style of music (probably the identical cassette) flows from the speakers tied to its trees. The beautifully restored building, furnished in the same simple yet luxurious manner as the restaurant, is surrounded by 40 or more small tables. The long embroidered drapes upstairs are tied back from the windows to ensure the view through the trees and over the Bosphorus remains open. The main difference resides in the back room – there the floor has been torn up and substituted with concentrically ordered black and white pebbles, while its wall has become an artificial cliff-face, wetted at its base by a clattering waterfall. Its chattery all but drowns out the soothing of the ney (a type of bamboo flute). There is nothing particularly ‘Islamic’ about this simulacrum of nature, with its patches of greenery, uneven rock surface and splashing water. ‘Huzur İslamdadır’ (In Islam is Tranquillity) is a slogan often seen around the Islamist tourist traps – perhaps the haven in the forest, and this room in particular, where one can drink and eat in the midst of millions to the sounds not of car horns but burbling water, is meant as an embodiment of such a claim. But similar havens and rooms all over the world suggest a more global dialectic is at work, a dialectic in which the felt need for ‘nature’ as a refuge, a getaway, is understood not as a reaction to the global destruction of a sense of home but as an aspect of its reconstruction. As with the choice of music, the important problems revolve around the clash of ‘interests served by strategies of what [we may] call glocalization’ (Robertson, 1995: 28). Refah’s adoption of some sort of ‘international’ style for its back room may indeed project an air of universalism against other (suddenly) parochial presences. Strategic submission to ‘imperialism’s culture’ can be as politically self-interested as strategic essentialism.

What beverages do the tea garden and restaurant at Fetih Paşa Korusu
serve? Interestingly, both offer Coca-Cola, which has been publicly removed from the menu by Refah at another of its sites, Çamlıca Restaurant. There the Municipality has taken an opposite tack: the mayor of Istanbul, in his speech at its opening ceremony stated that

The Çamlıca premises have been renovated in accordance with the principles of national identity, national culture and national personality. No foreign beverages will be served here, whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Our people will enjoy Turkish beverages and Turkish meals. (Çınar, 1997: 31)

Çamlıca, however, has not been as successful in exorcizing foreign substances from its kitchen as the mayor would have liked. As Çınar points out, the thirsty punter can still order ‘Nescafe’ (generic name for instant coffee) – and this in a country famed for its Turkish coffee! Nescafe is available at Fetih Paşa Korusu too, as is biftek (beef-steak) and krem karamel. ‘Nationality’ obviously does not carry as much weight here. We can probably speak therefore of a genre of renovated public places (Fetih Paşa, Çamlıca, Hidiv Kasrı, Emirgan) in which gradations of ‘authenticity’ are exhibited, both before the tourist gaze (the construction of particularity vis-a-vis the West) and the gaze of Istanbul’s own residents (the construction of universality vis-a-vis the local). ‘Glocalization’ equates then with an obvious hybridity of public space, as socio-political movements selectively indigenize global flows in the context of the struggle for locality.

Who consumes Fetih Paşa Korusu? Low prices, especially at the tea garden, make it accessible to most people, and the restaurant too is good value: a grilled fish at any of the famed Bosphorus fish restaurants costs twice as much as in the forest. In summer, especially at weekends, the facilities are well patronized, reservations being necessary for the restaurant on Saturday nights. Probably the majority of diners are ‘religious’ – family parties of şıKMa baş (veiled) women wearing long coats, and men with çember sakal (rounded beards). In contrast, the café is a haunt for young couples, Islamist or otherwise, older people during the day and groups of covered girls in the late afternoon. Non-religious people too are well represented, the complex being non-discriminatory on grounds of ‘civility’.

Has Refah attempted to create in the forest an ‘Islamized space’, a utopian place in which Islamic social relations (however defined) dominate? Olivier Roy claims this is the distinguishing feature of Islamism once its revolutionary zeal is exhausted or frustrated: a drift into neo-fundamentalism and grassroots activism, in which pockets of Islamized space become bridgeheads ‘with the idea of later spreading the principles on which [they are] founded to the whole of society’ (Roy, 1994: 80).

What are such Islamized spaces characterized by? Certainly by a stress on head-covering for women, but also by the banning of alcohol, and by the organizing of work relations to render conformity to Islamic obligations (separation of genders, daily prayer, fasting during Ramadan, etc.) more convenient. So cafes or restaurants might be closed on Friday
afternoons to allow employees to attend mosque, or a small prayer-room (mescit) provided inside or next to factories and entertainment complexes for the same reason.

Has Refah attempted to create such an Islamized space? The first thing to note in proposing a more specific answer is the setting of the tea garden and restaurant – within a forest which, though cleared of dead trees and litter by the municipality, is not made to conform to a park master plan (unlike a Botanical Garden, which maps the whereabouts and species of every shrub), but grows free within the confines of its redbrick walls. For, as Bauman notes, there has been a long association between the civility of the self and the formality of the garden. ‘Courtesies was an act of adjustment and survival which made the jungle of Versailles inhabitable’ (Bauman, 1985: 7). The courtiers were as carefully cultivated as the hedges were groomed. Civilizing society was akin to ordering the wilderness: both needed a paternal but firm hand to transform the state of nature. Kemalism’s civilizing project, too, required a bedding-down and an uprooting – modern society and ordered parks imply each other, metaphorically and in practice. So Bozdoğan writes that:

Largely unexplored by critical studies of architectural history is the transformation of provincial towns under the modernizing agenda of the young republic, the construction of public buildings symbolic of the administrative and ideological apparata [sic] of the new regime . . . complete with the formal square (Hükümet meydani) and the municipal park (belediye parkı) with their inevitable Atatürk statues . . . (Bozdoğan, 1994: 39 – my emphasis)

Forests, unlike parks, are prone to anarchy: Refah’s choice of a forest setting is revealing of a certain modesty, even self-doubt surrounding the nature of its ‘mission civilisatrice’.

Islamist Spaces in the Domain of the Republic

Refah’s work in Fetih Paşa Korusu, then, clearly involves the opening up of public space to both Islamist and non-Islamist subjects, unlike interventions inspired by official Kemalist discourse, which takes special care to exclude unauthorized expressions of Islam from the public domain. This can be seen not only in the key reproductive sites of republicanism (the university, concert hall, Palace of Justice, hospital, even the stadium) but also in the ‘pristine secularism’ of the ‘official-ceremonial’ zone of state television. Here Islam is carefully stage-managed, presented more as an historical artifact than a contested and hence living, ‘faith’. How lovingly the camera pans across the fineness of the ceramic tiles glittering with tulip bulbs – sonorous flute music in the air – or passes slowly over the façade of the Ottoman Baroque mosque, one more trace of civilization alongside the glorious ruins of Byzantine and Seljuk buildings witnessing to the richness of the cultural heritage of Turkey. On the homogeneous world of state television, living Islam means laic Islam:
Every Friday evening, during a 15-minute ‘religious hour’ the talking head of State Religious Affairs appeared to deliver an edifying message on the virtues of charity, honesty or humility befitting a good Muslim, speaking in standardized Turkish and dressed in secular garb. (Öncü, 1995: 25)

Yet the manicuring of Islam for orderly consumption conjures up at the same time another Islam, deviant, unkempt and unlettered, an Islam from the boondocks that refuses to be put in its place. ‘[L]urking in the interstices of everyday life and practices . . . the other, dark face of Islam has thus been as familiar for Turkish audiences as its visible “civilized” face’ (Öncü, 1995: 24). This Islam is the more to be feared by its inability to be properly enunciated.

With the declaration of Fetih Paşa Korusu as neutral ground by both Islamist and laic subjects however, the ‘dark’ and ‘civilized’ faces of Islam sip tea, drop crumbs and fill ashtrays side by side, sometimes even at the same table. This encounter is transgressive of the strict codes of conduct constituting the utopian orders of both secular modernist and Islamist worlds. The Constitutional Court, for example, has ruled in a recent decision that the wearing of headscarfs to university is contrary to the principles of the Constitution. As the court affirmed, higher education students should be people who:

. . . firstly and above all else adopt as their own Atatürk’s reforms and principles and prove these principles correct in their own behaviour. . . . Students who don the turban or veil, who wear clothes that carry religious connotations, who are opposed to contemporary appearances and fashion are behaving contrary to Atatürk’s reforms and principles. Such students should act according to the duties incumbent upon them [as educated people], in order that their trustworthiness and sincerity are not to be doubted. (Yenİ Şafak, 31 October 1996, my translation)

The policing of the public domain from the side of utopian Islamists is just as determined:

. . . women should not see any men outside the legitimate categories. They should definitely not deal with the water delivery man, milkman or street sellers. They should not become accustomed to going to the market or local milkbar. Shopping should be left to the husband; women should be grateful for whatever he brings home. Lazy husbands load the work of going to the market on to their wives: this is an unforgivable sin. Muslim women should not accede to such a request and should protect their husband from falling into this mistake. Women should go out then only at their husband’s side and only when absolutely necessary. In the street women should cover their heads and bodies with loose and full-length clothing. Muslim women should not visit crowded places, nor spend time with non-religious neighbours and acquaintances. Before going out they should first obtain permission from their husband, and should not overstay the arranged hour. When receiving or giving hospitality they should not wear expensive, luxurious clothes that may
encourage wasteful or envious desires in other women. They should not adorn themselves with jewellery nor go to the meetings of women who do. They should not indulge in gossip or dwell in their speech on topics of a material or worldly nature. When visiting as a family men and women should definitely sit apart from each other. They should not be deceived by Western or foreign influences like other lost and miserable Muslims. (Düzdağ, 1995: 46–7, translation)6

Düzdağ goes on to argue, quite logically, that veiled Muslim women should even leave the political struggle over their exclusion from the university to the men. He recommends that students take precautionary note of an (unnamed) sociologist’s claim that protesting Islamist female students are not merely criticizing the state’s policies when they march in the streets, but are also challenging the dogmas and commands of Islam at the same time. University education is a two-edged sword, and to prevent it cutting both ways the Muslim woman’s field of cihat (holy war), he concludes, is in the home (Düzdağ, 1995: 51).

We see then that both the state and this particular variety of the Islamist movement concur in the attempt to drive Islamist women out of the public sphere altogether. Likewise, neither of them is backward in formulating a project of control over women’s bodies. The ‘private’ sphere in which Islamist women would be corralled, however, is in both Republican and Islamist discourse constituted and recruited as a key ally in the political struggle for the public domain. Private habits should be redolent of public virtues, and women are vested with the responsibility of ensuring that the imagined communities of nation or ummah are discovered sheltering in the benevolent environment of the home.

**Liberal Islamism and Olive Branch Architecture**

In Fetih Paşa Korusu, by contrast, there is a democratic opening up of space to sections of civil society previously excluded by the evolution of Turkish modernity. In this process Refah has found itself unable to promote the assumed eternal hostility of Islamist and Republican visions of the good society. But neither have the tea garden’s visitors. Veiled girls flicking cigarette ash into the wind, bearded men toting mobile phones, the conspicuous consumption seen in high heels, fashion accessories, silk scarves and new cars – novel Islamists for novel Islamist spaces. The Islamist clothes designer and Tekbir fashion-house owner Cafer Karaduman answers the religious critics of his catwalk shows blandly by saying:

> Am I defending them to you by doubting their unlawful (haram) character? I know that it is a sin for women models to take their place in the fashion-parades. I am unable to give an explanation. But today there are many things that Muslims do that are difficult to explain. (in Çayır, 1997)

Fashion parades and high quality glocal restaurants are just some of the activities that deconstruct, for those with eyes to see, the ‘dark’ face of Islam.
But they deconstruct, too, the claims of other Islamists that appropriate this same ‘dark’ face as authentic Islam. Refah’s work in Fetih Paşa Korusu is simultaneously, then, a competing aestheticization of Islam to the one presented on state television, and a civilizing project aimed towards itself, that is, an internal reform movement. Çayır concludes his article by saying,

I would still probably describe myself as an Islamist (İslamci). But certainly not an 80s Islamist... My modern profession blends into my identity... And I must confess. I am a mongrel (ilikişmiş) Muslim sociologist. One who does not use the word ‘and’... to separate existence into two great worlds, modern and Islamic (mahrem). (1997)

To return at last to our original query, should Refah’s tea garden and restaurant in the forest be analyzed as an ‘Islamized space’? Not, I think, in the sense mapped out by Roy, despite the appearance of several telltale features indicating such a process. True, the facility does not serve alcohol, and the municipality has built a small prayer-room (mescit) next to the restaurant. But in no other aspect does Fetih Paşa Korusu conform to Roy’s model (deduced mainly from the actions of the Algerian FIS, upon their winning the majorities of the large cities). So there is no discrimination against uncovered women, no attempt to encourage women to wear veils or to enforce a ‘modest’ dress code. Sex apartheid is non-existent (the tea garden even had a unisex toilet when it was first opened), and the restaurant and tea garden open for lunch in the month of Ramadan. Friday trading, too, is unrestricted. Lastly, Roy makes the point that Islamized zones are puritanical spaces, often involving the closing down of cafes: ‘neo-fundamentalism entails a shrinking of the public space to the family and the mosque’ (Roy, 1994: 83). Certainly Fetih Paşa Korusu does not fit this bill.

Yet if we accept Roy’s claim that the Algerian Islamists’ puritanical rejection of all worldly diversions is, in fact, a far cry from a certain joie de vivre of ‘traditional’ Islam, Islamization as a process should be defined not by its return to some original Islamic essence but by its relationship to the real relations of power in which it is historically enmeshed. It will thus appear in many forms according to the political context in which it emerges. On these grounds, Fetih Paşa Korusu restaurant and tea garden are an Islamized space, different of course from the ‘liberated zones’ created by the Islamisms of urban Algeria or the warrior/tribesmen of Afghanistan, but equally an amalgam of different sources and influences and their spiralling future trajectories. Much of the drama of national politics resides in the historic, but mutually constitutive, polarization of secularist and Islamist identities in Turkish modernity. Refah’s pronouncement of a cease-fire in the Fetih Paşa Korusu site, its flourishing of an olive branch, is of great importance in creating a de-militarized civil zone. No more (nor less) hybrid than public spaces symbolizing the two other warring parties, the restaurant and tea garden (along with the Municipality’s other restorations) proffer a third way, a way wooing the constituents of the Islamist movement itself. If, as Çınar concludes, Çamlıca restaurant’s valorization of ‘indigenous’
culture signifies the ‘rejection of the West within’ (1997: 25), then Fetih Paşa rejects the inner East with equal measure.

Islamist Populism, Social Distinction and Class

Jean-Paul Sartre tells a story somewhere about a man sitting on a park bench, halfway up a hill. The man looks over the scene, at the ducks swimming in the pond, the dog straining at the leash, the strolling lovers. The sun warm on his back, God in his heaven, the gentle breeze; and the world below him all his, object of his gaze, its activities given a meaning by his presence. The park is centered, granted perspective from where he sits. The man yawns, stretches, glances casually up behind him. He freezes, aghast. There higher up the hill sits a man on a park bench, surveying the scene . . .

A year or so after Refah’s restaurant and tea garden were opened for business in Fetih Paşa Korusu, a huge hole appeared almost overnight in the crown of the park. Concrete was poured, the steel struts of columns pushed into the air, and soon an imposing new structure was lurking over the rooftops of surrounding suburbs and beyond, that could be seen even from the waters of the Bosphorus. Bigger and better, a luxurious restaurant/function-center now graced the scene. ‘It took dominion everywhere’, as Wallace Stevens said of the jar in Tennessee (Stevens, 1990: 76).

Like the man in Sartre’s fable, Refah’s prodigy has been trumped by the Diluba Restaurant, reducing its ability to control the production of its own meaning as unique. Put less negatively, Diluba has clarified the range of possible interpretations able to be sustained in any reading of the new site, now understood as encompassing the two areas. At a passing glance, Diluba and Fetih Paşa Korusu restaurants share a family resemblance. Both have been designed as repositories of ‘localness’, and both are political practices assaulting secularist assumptions that repress open or unofficial expressions of Islam in a de-Islamized public domain. But Diluba’s organizing of some of the same signifiers to construct a rival presentation of national culture for diners to savor along with their food is more explicitly an intervention of class power: Diluba is concerned to spice the cuisine produced in its ‘authentic’ Ottoman kitchen with a taste or civility that will enable patrons to separate themselves off from those who cannot appreciate such pleasures. This is not just performed through the restaurant’s decoration, atmosphere and musical genres; the prices alone are intimidating to the poor. To sup from the groaning tables of the smorgasbord breakfast provided on Sunday mornings would cost a small family US $50, while main courses are three times more expensive (and exotic) than at Fetih Paşa Korusu. For the extra money diners listen live to the same style of Sufi music that crackles out of the speakers down the hill. Like a rich uncle, Diluba is what it is only in relation to its poor relatives.

In the process of constituting themselves as a more exclusive (Islamist?) middle class, what do consumers of Diluba’s locality experience? Unlike the black trousers and bow ties of the waiters at Fetih Paşa
Korusu, Dilruba’s waiters wear ‘genuine’ Ottoman uniforms, the designs being copied, according to the chief steward, from the dress of people in old photographs. ‘Ottoman’ in this sense denotes late 18th- or early 19th-century Ottomanism, an Ottomanism already impregnated for three or more generations with ‘Westernization’. Interestingly, only the waiters wear the orange blouses and red sashes wound tightly around their waists; the man cooking the pizzas beside the blue Iznik-tiled open-oven in a corner of the room is draped in a white apron. The function room, too, is expressive of an Ottoman nostalgia, its ceiling embellished by geometrically precise cream squares, its centerpiece a painting of a flower arrangement on one of the wooden panels.

The owner has also appropriated public land in order to build beside the restaurant a mescit (prayer-room) with separate entrances for men and women. Like the restaurant, the mescit too is topped with somewhat angular-looking cupolas (kubbe), similar to the roofs of many mosques. Though there is no gender segregation in the restaurant, the complex does provide it for those who ask – one wedding I noted had the groom and male company seated in the restaurant and the bride and women in the function room.

Rather incongruously a large nomad’s tent has been erected on the complex’s lowest garden, complete with wooden stools woven from straw and round metal trays for the waiter to place the food brought out from the kitchen. Next to the tent in a prominent position on the grassy knoll is a village ayran-maker, a cigar-shaped steel-banded barrel hanging on two chains connected to a metal tripod. The barrel historically was swung back and forth to make a salty drink from yogurt and water. Like the pots and pans swaying above the public brazier (ocak başı) inside the restaurant, these signs of rural life are more works of art (sculpture) than functional implements. Unlike at Çamlica, where köylü (village) women make and sell gözeleme (savory pancakes) in the garden, diners at Dilruba do not need to interact with any flesh and blood peasants while waiting for their food.

Dilruba’s ambience is created, then, by the site’s invocation of, and gesturing towards, three different discursive formations: Ottomanism, Islamism and Anatolianism. Constituted by their particular ordering of a network of signifiers, none of these three political visions is so settled that its signifiers are not liable to be broken off and grafted onto another discourse as a key sign. Indeed the symbols constituting the discourse of Turkish-Ottomanism are prone to appropriation by Islamist re-interpretation, and vice versa. Signifiers are always polysemic; it is their very indeterminacy that makes them useful as foot-soldiers in the production of identity. An ayran barrel perched on the lawns of a five-star restaurant in Istanbul carries a different meaning from its display on the cover of an Alevi journal. In the same way, a rearrangement of the importance of the various signifiers constituting a discursive formation allows for the multiplication of political interventions made in its name. Anatolianism (anadoluculuk) for example may be split between Turkist and multiculturalist tendencies, that privilege different signs in a similar chain of signifiers. Disputed discourses
can themselves become shorthand signifiers in competing projects of state or civil society formation.

Dilruba’s genius consists in its harnessing together representatives of three different (but related) imagined communities to legitimize not merely its squatting on public property, but to de-politicize each of their universal claims. By re-inscribing them within the context of Dilruba’s production of a class to whom nothing, once commodified, is foreign, the site reconstitutes a class difference bridged for a period by Refah’s populism in Fetih Paşa Korusu. In contrast to Fetih Paşa Korusu and Çamlıca’s opening up of public space, and the corresponding widening of the bounds of citizenship to encompass groups historically unwelcome to the prime sites of modernity, Dilruba entails a closing-off of such possibilities. The restaurant owner Abdurrahman Iraz admitted as much in an interview in the paper:

We want to enlarge the restaurant from one cupola to four. To the increase in diners we will give the answer of a larger kitchen. This will be the type of kitchen that the customer will be able to enter and inspect. Unlike at Çamlıca, we want this to be a place where those [donkeys] who have just slipped their tether [i.e. peasant riffraff] are unable to come. (Burası da Çamlıca gibi ipini koparamın gelemeyeceği bir yer olsun istiyoruz) (Cumhuriyet, 3 May 1996, my translation)

In this process the pursuit of profit, according to Abdurrahman Iraz, is of little importance. The aim of the restaurant was to ‘win’ for Turkey its most modern and best decorated (donanımlı) kitchen. For this reason (presumably) the people who opposed the development were described by Iraz as ‘traitors’ (vatan haini). This of course is a nice irony, as Iraz had already made it clear that Dilruba’s aim was to provide a ‘cultural service’ (Cumhuriyet, 3 May 1996) for an elite: are the interests of the nation and those of its elite so synonymous that to oppose one is to betray the other?

Last, we should note Iraz’s claim that he intends to turn the existing garden next to the restaurant into a Botanical Park, where swans will swim among newly planted water-lilies inside the ornamental pool paved with special stone quarried at Antalya. The reference to botanical gardens reminds us of civilizing processes, processes pursued, like the planning of a botanical park, in the light and name of science and rationality, complete with balanced representations of flora from all the varied eco-niches of a particular environment. Outside, a Botanical Park, and inside, a Cultural Garden – Dilruba Restaurant has selected and displayed the finest examples of ‘tradition’ from different civilizations for the gaze of the connoisseur. Civilizing processes remind us, too, of the Turkish nation-state, which has long been the driving force in introducing a selective ‘civilizing’ (Westernizing) of Turkish society. Dilruba reveals both a ‘de-étatisation’ (Göle, 1996: 34) of the civilizing project (as it is appropriated by civil society), and a widening of, and struggle over its aesthetic characteristics – fashion ‘à la franca’ (in the European way) is no longer unquestionably accepted as the sole criterion of civility. That is, in the struggle for the accumulation of
symbolic capital, Islamic, Ottoman and Anatolian discursive signifiers are aestheticized in Dilruba to produce an Islamist counter-elite. Islamism, in this sense, ‘is the formation of the Muslim subject and agency which has been excluded from modernist [Western] definitions of civilization and history-making’ (Göle, 1996: 26). Dilruba is, in short, the expression of a civilizing will migrated to civil society, a civilizing will that disputes that mastery of Western culture is the only legitimate basis for a social distinction which it, too, is coveting.

Conclusion

If Fetih Paşa Korusu is Refah’s answer to the Dr Jekyll of the state’s official Islam and its antithetical Mr Hyde in the ‘dark’ face of the Islamist movement, its civilizing intent is directed towards modifying the extremes of both. Dilruba restaurant, however, is not exercised to educate recalcitrant Islamists. Indeed it would, quite openly, prefer them to stay away. Unashamedly elitist in reply to the self-regard of Istanbul’s secularist elite, Dilruba’s hope is to prove Islam fit to enter the stakes in the competition for high culture. It is scarcely surprising that working-class Islamists are not very sympathetic to the construction of a bourgeois Islamist ‘distinction’ that locks them out a second time.

The clinkling of the tulip-shaped tea glasses and the soothing tones of the ney present in both establishments thus only partly muffle the differentiation making up the Islamist movement. Dilruba shows how increasingly difficult the project to construct an Islamist counter-culture is, one held together as much by its alienation from a presumed homogeneous Westernized elite as by its structuring according to shared discursive ideals. It also contradicts Mohammad Nafissi’s neo-Weberian claim that contemporary Islamism everywhere seeks to apply codes and practices based upon the Shari’ā (Nafissi, 1998).

The specificity of Turkish modernity resides, then, partly in the abrasive contact between the competing civilizing practices of Islamists themselves. Competing civilizing Islami̇sms take the heat out of the so-called culture wars or clash of civilizations between Islam and the West, especially when that struggle is portrayed as one between a fundamentalist anti-modernism and a liberal modernity. For, very often, as the olive branch of Refah’s Fetih Paşa Korusu shows, it is the secular elites who are the least wedded to democracy and inclusivity in Muslim-majority polities.

More importantly, an awareness of Islamist differentiation allows for a more nuanced reading of the plurality of Islamist politics, according to which Islam’s compatibility with democracy (or with capitalism, to gesture to a Weberian concern) would be as open a question as the various practices of the different groups that pursue politics in the name of Islam. It alerts us too to their creative pillaging of the treasury of texts, memories, rituals, etc. found in the historic Islamic intellectual caravanserai in order to construct rival historiographies and practices to those of the secularizing state’s. See here, for example, the reinterpretation by Kurdish Muslims of the
plurality of the Islamic legal tradition to call for an ‘Islamic’ society constituted by a variety of Muslim (and other) identities (Houston, 1997).

The democratization of Weber’s ‘culture-bearing’ classes reveals the plurality of interests seeking shelter under the universal ethic of the Islamic ummet. It reveals, too, the varying imagined Islamist communities both pluralizing and particularizing that ethic. For this reason, Islamic modernities, and even the local specificities of Islamism, should become the interpretive focus, rather than the modernity – or otherwise – of Islam. This to negate a Weberian tendency to take the ‘inner’ cultural principles of Islam as the formative framework within which the contemporary experience of Islamism is then straitjacketed, as it continues its reactionary adjustment to the inequities of global capitalism.

We need, then, a more adequate comparative anthropology; one in which competing Islamist visions might be interpreted as partly inspired by the various imaginary significations of modernity itself. ‘Utopian’ Islamism’s desire for a radical autonomy, whilst refusing to countenance any fragmentation of its expressive wholeness, reveals an eminently modern sensibility (Ambrose, 1999). Or recall the massive revolt against European modernity and the turn to the ‘primitive’ by the avant-garde Parisian artists of the 1920s and 1930s (Kurasawa, 1998). How different is certain Islamist groups’ celebration of their own exotic selves in their appropriation of orientalist categories? In brief, understanding Islamism as in part inspired by the contending cultural orientations of modernity allows us to better perceive those newly created aspects of Islam sparked by its alliance with modernity. Likewise, Islamism’s co-option, as a cultural resource for its own ends, of the ‘imaginary significations which . . . conflict in the constitution of the modern world’ (Arnason, 1989: 326) reveals unexpected dimensions of the ambiguities and tensions of modernity. Together, both processes undercut polemics predicated on an assumed mutual opposition between Islamist revitalization and the modern.

Notes

This article is based on fieldwork funded by a Commonwealth of Australia scholarship and carried out in Istanbul between the years 1995–6 and for a shorter period in 1998. The ethnographic sections have been published in revised form in Houston, 2001.

1. In The Imaginary Institution of Society, as well as in other works, Castoriadis uses two intersecting terms, the radical and the social imaginary. He argues that the imaginary is not an image of something, but more the ontological cause of the ‘unceasing and essentially undetermined . . . creation of figures/forms/images on the basis of which alone there could ever be a question of something. What we call “reality” and “rationality” are its works’ (1997: 3). The social imaginary might be seen as a more particular expression of the radical imaginary, responsible for the self-creation of any given society in its instituting of values, symbols, even a certain world-order. For Castoriadis, society’s creation of its own existence is not a functional response to any prior universal needs; society ‘makes use in each case of the rational lines of what is given, but arranges them according to and subordinates
them to significations which themselves do not belong to the rational order . . . but to the imaginary’ (1997: 149).

2. In later work (post-Said’s Orientalism) Turner is less convinced of Weber’s perspicuity, arguing that Weber used an accounting system in which ‘the Orient simply lacks the positive ingredients of western rationality. Oriental society can be defined as a system of absences . . .’ (Turner, 1991: 22–3).

3. See, for example, Weber’s mentioning of the sermons he had listened to as evidence for his argument; or his comment in the footnotes of The Protestant Ethic that ‘except for the negro churches, and the professional singers whom the Churches now engage as attractions (Trinity Church in Boston in 1904 for $8000 annually), in America one also hears as community singing in general only a noise which is intolerable to German ears’ (1985: 272).

4. This theory, though I am not sure if my friend was aware of it, was first propagated by Ziya Gökalp, the leading ideologue of the early Republican period, in his 1923 Principles of Turkism. Here, according to Tekellioğlu, Gökalp made a distinction between Eastern music, taken from the Byzantines, and folk melodies, the tradition of ancient Turkish music (Tekellioğlu, 1996). Music in fact was harnessed to the civilizing project. ‘Turkish’ Art music and religious music were even banned from the radio in the 1930s for a period, as the state sponsored the teaching of Western polyphony in the new conservatories of music. According to the official position, Turkish folk-music alone represented the genius of the nation, and was notated, scored in accordance with Western harmony and recorded in the 1920s and 1930s, a decade or so after Vaughan Williams was ‘retrieving’ the lost traces of ploughmen’s songs and shepherds’ tunes in pre-Great War Britain. Bela Bartok too was part of this great upsurge of interest in folk-music as the bearer of national identity, although his collecting of folk-tunes with Zoltan Kodaly in places as far afield as Algeria and the Edirne region of Turkey suggests a different political logic at work (Kahn, 1995). Turkish folk-music, as collected and classified by the Turkish State Radio researchers, was in fact often Kurdish – but this of course was contrary to reality as announced by the state.

5. Sporting events, too, are girt for the nationalist mill. Fenerbahçe (one of Istanbul’s most famous football teams) carried a banner around the field before its match against Ankararşitii proclaiming ‘Atam Her Zaman İzindeiz’ (My Atatürk, we are always in your footsteps) (reported in Yeni Yüzü, 8 October 1996). Physical education for girls in the public sphere of the co-ed school, university or stadium is an affront to certain Islamist sensibilities in other Muslim-majority societies too. In the 1972 Egyptian film Pay Attention to Zuzu, the Islamist student leader chants ‘stadiums [girls running in shorts] lead to cabarets’ (see Arnbust, 1996: 121).

6. I have chosen Düzdağ’s book because it is published by İz Yayınevi, one of the biggest Islamist publishing houses in Turkey, who also bring out the most intellectual and liberal of the Islamist newspapers, Yeni Şafak. Their simultaneous printing of material implicitly or explicitly critiquing Düzdağ’s interpretation indicates just how multifaceted Islamist positions on gender are. Tarikat Islam (religious communities gathered around a teacher or mullah, whose authority is commonly inherited) is often far more restrictive vis-a-vis the opportunities given to women than are political Islamists, who ascribe a more activist role to women in the struggle against secularist regimes. Olivier Roy, helpfully in my opinion, labels this difference as one between neo-fundamentalism and Islamism, though one should be sensitive to the slippage between the two, as well as to some of their shared
assumptions. See Ačar (1991) for a comparison between the space made available to women in the discourse of three different Islamist journals.

7. Çınar argues that the Greater Istanbul Municipality’s prohibition of alcohol in places under its jurisdiction is the one policy that may be thought of as an expression of Islamization. But she goes on to note that Refah’s restrictions are made not in the name of Koranic stipulations, but as part of a policy combating discrimination, to enable access to public places for people whose beliefs do not allow them to attend functions where alcohol is served. Refah’s logic problematizes, of course, the assumed neutral character of the public sphere. But the same objection could be employed by an Islamist Municipality to regulate, say, the length of dresses: mini-skirts could be inscribed as an obstacle to the ability of pious Muslims males to enjoy public places. This has not happened. Indeed, it is the state that enforces a dress code for both its male and female employees. Accordingly, the Republic has long been accused of de-sexualizing the women it emancipated. ‘Kemalist women’, says Ayşe Kadoğlu, ‘were expected to relegate their sexuality to an insignificant realm and focus on their public visibility as emblems of modernization’ (Kadoğlu, 1994: 659). State feminism, then, was a form of gender ‘syndicalism’, made subservient to the greater good of the nation. The wearing of suits (and the abolition of the fez) were part of the state’s production of masculinity — gender syndicalism applied to the making of ‘national man’ too. The display of Atatürk’s clothes, his suits, top hats and tails are prominent in the museum next to his tomb.

8. ‘I placed a jar in Tennessee./And round it was, upon a hill./It made the slovenly wilderness/Surround that hill. //The wilderness rose up to it./And sprawled around, no longer wild./The jar was round upon the ground/And tall and of a port in air. //It took dominion everywhere./The jar was gray and bare./It did not give of bird or bush/Like nothing else in Tennessee’ (Anecdote of the Jar).

9. Ottoman modernization (Tanzimat) is usually dated from 1839, the year of the Imperial Rescript of Gülhane [Park].

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Christopher Houston is a lecturer in social anthropology at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, and has recently published a book on Islamist and nationalist identities in Turkey, titled Islam, Kurds and the Turkish Nation-State. He is currently doing research on Turkish provincial cities and the changes in built environment fostered by the Republican State in the single-party period.