
Nilüfer GÖLE, *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2015) and *Musulmans au quotidien : Une enquête européenne sur les controverses autour de l'islam* (Paris, La Découverte, 2015).

If there is one concept which runs through Nilüfer Göle's works, that concept is "interpenetrations," which sums up her approach to the relationship between secularism and religion. The term made it to the title of her book published in 2005, *Interpénétrations. L'islam et l'Europe* (Galaade Éditions, 2005). However, it was also there as early as the *Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (The University of Michigan Press, 1996), and it is still the central concept defining Göle's analytical framework in *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere* and *Musulmans au quotidien: Une enquête européenne sur les controverses autour de l'islam*. The gist of Göle's "interpenetrations" is to present a micro-sociology—through interviews or focus groups—of the way that individuals understand themselves in interaction with others and their context, and of the ways they (re)negotiate the boundary between the public and private spheres. Göle tries to capture the transformative power of becoming public in order to (re)reflect upon macro-level binaries such as Europe versus Islam, civilization versus veiling, modernity versus tradition. These binaries constitute both epistemological lines in the social sciences and also set the frame for popular interpretations of significant world events. Her work is particularly crucial for assessing the emerging debates on multiple modernities. Shmuel Eisenstadt, for example, in building his case for multiple modernities,¹ takes Turkey as a critical case and he reads it through Göle's *Forbidden Modern*.

"Interpenetrations" as an analytical approach resembles Peter van der Veer's "interactional histories"². What it empirically uncovers recalls the intertwined and beyond borders imaginaries of Salman Rushdie's protagonist in *Midnight's Children*. It is in fact a common style of critiquing modernity at least in post-colonial studies, using sound empirical work to disqualify the constitutive

¹ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities", *Daedalus* Winter 2000 v. 129. Issue 1.

² Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001).

binaries of Western modernity. The particular binary that Göle tackles is modernity versus Islam. The argument of the *Forbidden Modern* was built on interviews with veiled university students in Turkey. *Musulmans au quotidien* relies on focus groups with various actors convened at several locations in Europe—France, Germany, Bosnia, The Netherlands, Italy, Denmark—for a discussion of issues such as Muslim praying, the building of mosques, speech, the sacred and art, veiling, sharia and halal meat. *Musulmans au quotidien* reads like a return to the empirical micro-sociological style of the *Forbidden Modern*, particularly in comparison to the less systematically empirical, but nevertheless eye-opening and hypothesis generating, theoretical essays collected in *Islam and Secularity* relying mostly on contemporary examples and brief event-analyses primarily from France and Turkey.

Islam and Secularity carries the traces of multiple modernities and Charles Taylor's "social imaginary" in its comparative study of secularism and religion. Its methodological claim is that the current transformation of the religious/secular divide can only be justly described by revising "the taken-for-granted Euroamerican sociological presuppositions in a world in which the distinction between the east and the west, the Islamic and the modern, secular are no longer empirically plausible, where the established boundaries are continuously shifting" [3]. The book focuses on how certain issues—for example, Turkey's candidacy to the European Union, the headscarf issue in France and Turkey, and art—transform the public sphere. Göle calls for rediscovering Europe in its "particular articulations" rather than shelving it as a universal model. She also calls for an articulation of the distinct modernities of non-Western countries. For instance, rediscovering French *laïcité* "as a particular articulation with Christianity" (that is, as "*catho-laïcité*"), and Turkish *laiklik* as "*sunni-laiklik*," and examining how the rising Islamic public presence in Europe and rising political Islam in Turkey interact respectively with these particular articulations. The presence of Muslim politics in Europe provides "proximity in time and space" and presents many examples of "transgressions, confrontations, and mutual transformations," [5] in the public sphere. Therefore, this presence makes possible a comparison beyond certain kinds of modernist approaches which rely heavily on geographical distance, culturalism and historicism in order to guard orientalist theses of incommensurable worlds. *Islam and Secularity* leaves us with a question "Will the European project

seize the opportunity or follow the line of global cleavages? It is an open-ended question whose answer depends on both Muslims and Europeans” [226]. The book’s well-put questions definitely call for more primary source research.

Musulmans au quotidien is a return to the micro-sociology of the *Forbidden Modern* after *Interpénétrations: L’Islam et l’Europe*.³ *Interpénétrations* seems to have taken a Hegelian turn, because in this book the “interpenetrating civilizational categories” are no longer the expressions of concrete agents—women or ordinary Muslims—, but have attained their own life as real civilizational categories interpenetrating on their own. *Musulmans au quotidien*’s question pretty much resembles that of the *Forbidden Modern*, but it is posed for Europe rather than for Turkey: will civilizational conflict or a new democratic pluralism reign in Europe’s public spaces? For an answer, Göle gives the word to “ordinary Muslims,” to their expressions of their diverse experiences. How the categories of European and Islam are usurped by the far right in Europe beyond the lived experiences of ordinary Muslims is one of the crucial arguments of the book. Her discussion, through a review of the positions of various European public intellectuals of how Islamophobia can be a distinct phenomenon from racism and discrimination, and her well put diagnosis that the public critique of Islam in Europe does not always come from a secular angle but also from a revival of the Judeo-Christian civilizational angle are both engaging. And her diagnosis that Islamophobia is part of the rise of a neo-populism, which crosses left-right cleavage in Europe is crucial. Göle sees this neo-populist new right as against multiculturalism; however, it is also important to note that this new right often appropriates the language and institutions of cultural diversity. Nicolas Sarkozy has followed Tocquevillian politics in building the *Le Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*;⁴ that is, he has subscribed to Tocqueville’s position that “Religion is much more needed in the republic [...] than in the monarchy [...] and in democratic republics most of all.”⁵ Some French intellectuals on the left have defended the teaching of religious facts in public

³ Nilüfer Göle, *Interpénétrations. L’Islam et L’Europe* (Paris, Galaade Éditions, 2005).

⁴ Murat Akan, 2009, Laïcité and Multiculturalism: the Stasi Report in Context, *British Journal of Sociology*, 60 (2): 237-256

⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835 and 1840, *Democracy in America* 2 vols. (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1966): 292.

schools. These examples raise further questions as to where Islamism—or reformulating the question at a different level of analysis, where *religionism*—figures in the public and institutional spheres. The claims on the category “Muslim” are diverse and even counter-intuitive enough to require further conceptualization and theorizing with respect to, or perhaps beyond, “neo-populism.” For instance, in her discussion of the controversy surrounding the Archbishop of Canterbury’s public defense of Sharia courts for Muslims in the United Kingdom, Göle evaluates the content of his expressed public position rather than extending the list of facts. One addition to the list would be the Muslims that in fact opposed the Archbishop. One could ask what such reshufflings of categories, subjects and demands further suggest for the interpenetrations thesis. Similarly absent, and therefore under-theorized *vis-à-vis* interpenetrations is the struggle of a public Muslim elite to establish dominance over Muslim youth. There are also studies on the “making” and “remaking” of the terms claiming to describe the majority—for example, “autochtone” or “souche” *vis-à-vis* “Muslim,” as the other side of rising neo-populism.⁶ Although this line of research is crucial for Göle’s subject matter and argument, she uses the terms “autochtone” and “souche” [95] without integrating their genealogy into her analytical framework.

The welcome return to *Forbidden Modern*’s thicker description in *Musulmans au quotidien* still leaves one pondering the limits of running self-descriptions against macro accounts as a form of critique. There is a contrast between the widely circulating binary modernity and Islam, and the comparisons, deliberations, negotiations, and synthesis between modernity and Islam that the women of the *Forbidden Modern* and the ordinary Muslims of the *Musulmans au quotidien* articulate. In other words, these diverse figures are the central force of this critique, together with a mapping of their unmapped agency in the public sphere. However, Daniel Lerner’s *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*,⁷ perhaps the classic of post-WWII modernization theory, and a book that Göle explicitly poses her critical exposition against in the

⁶ Sandrine Bertaux, 2016, “Towards the unmaking of the French mainstream: the empirical turn in immigrant assimilation and the making of Frenchness”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (9): 1496-1512.

⁷ Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Illinois, The Free Press, 1958).

Forbidden Modern, claimed a focus on “transformation of lifeways,”⁸ and “on the personal meaning of social change”⁹ in each country. It defended “a sharper conception of modernity as a behavioral system, a comprehensive interlocking of life ways,”¹⁰ and also aimed “to locate *these diverse figures* in the modernizing Middle East”¹¹. It did so as a form of critiquing the macro sociological and economic approaches of his time, which maintained that modernization could not travel to the Middle East. It is striking to observe how close some of his language is to the “multiple modernity” discussion of today. Göle has the “clash of civilizations” orientalist wave as a target of her critique; Lerner was critiquing the Huntingtonians of his time. The modernist Lerner who had taken the behavioralist turn moved from the macro to the micro-level, and tried to show that, although modernity has not penetrated the regime or institutional levels in some countries, its potential existed at the individual level. As powerful as they are and as distinct as they are often posed, it is absolutely stunning to note how their style of critique shows convergences. I wonder what this unexplored convergence suggests for the interpenetrations thesis and the future of the public spheres in Europe and Turkey?

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⁸ *Ibid.*, p. viii⁹ p. ix.¹⁰ p. viii.¹¹ pp. 43-44, italicizing mine.