

Nilufer Göle

Two Markets



Nilufer Göle is Professor of Sociology at Bogaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. She had her doctorate degree from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris (1982), where she worked with Professor Alain Touraine on the new social movements. As a visiting professor, she taught at the Institute d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has published articles on Islamist movements, on the gender issue and on political culture in Turkey. Göle is the author of *Modern Mahrem* (Metis, Istanbul 1991; English Translation: *Veiling and Civilization*, U. of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1995; also published in French, German and Spanish); *Engineers and Ideology* (Iletisim, Istanbul 1986, in Turkish), and she contributed to several anthologies including *Civil Society in the Middle East; Turkey and the West; Intellectuels et militants de l'Islam contemporain; Batisseurs et Bureaucrates; Le Sexe du Pouvoir*. – Address: Department of Sociology, Bogaziçi University, Bebek 80815, Istanbul, Turkey.

Adventure

An academic year at the Wissenschaftskolleg, in spite of its high requirements of puritan self-control and interiorized work ethics, does not spare one from an adventurous experience. On the contrary, leaving one's routine, everyday life, spatial habits and affective mode, and finding oneself parachuted into a new space with unfamiliar faces and no past but unconditional presentness joins Simmel's notion of the intellectual adventurer. It is an adventure as a form of extraordinary experience to the extent that it falls outside the continuity and the context of routinized, everyday life, with a beginning and an end, providing by the same token necessary distance and lack of attachment, conditions normally necessary for intellectual work.

Of course, at the very beginning I had no idea that my academic year could have anything to do with adventure, besides boredom. I considered

it a time for retreat and slowing down; retreat from the accelerated history of Turkish society, from all sorts of communication harassments, from public visibility, from over-demanding students, from addictive socializing and from conference travelling. I was preparing myself for a quiet, private, non-mobile (limited to the unathletic use of a bicycle), routine daily life during which, also cut off from the ties linking me to my object of study, contemporary Islamism, I could have at last taken the necessary distance, and cease to run after it and treat it as a living and constantly changing metabolism, stop time and at last carve something meaningful and autonomous out of the bulk of fieldwork material I have had in mind and in hand. Creating an autonomous, enclosed language and knowledge on Islamism required, I told myself, a kind of amnesia with respect to everyday history making. (I stopped reading Turkish newspapers for awhile).

I cannot say that these expectations did not come true, if only to their extreme. My life became so still that I was cured of all nervous restlessness, but to the point of despair. My will to escape the deep currents of the Bosphorus led me to a solid ground-level subterranean apartment where my under-ground existence started to reflect itself upon my face. My longing to distance myself from the external and tumultuous manifestations of contemporary history was reversed into introvert involution and labyrinthine intellectual meditation. I was desperately searching for new sources of stimulation and sensation to trigger my state of "neurasthenia" and hence sharpen my intellectual perceptions and expressions. But, instead of rational efficiency, hectic output, and competitive productivity, I was being led into wearisome zones of vanity.

The text I was writing gave me no pleasure. Narcissistic relation to my own writing was somehow damaged. Misled by the high-culture expectations of Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, I was looking for some kind of more meaningful, sensitive and aesthetic language on Islamism. Books on Islamism did not help me (apart from Aziz Al-Azmeh's article on the issue of "jouissance" in the Muslim paradise) to come to terms with my work, but only deepened my loss of appetite. Before going to sleep, I was rather absorbed by reading Roland Barthes *Les fragments du discours amoureux* (for years I had not grasped this very French amalgam between the aesthetization of feelings and the joy of frivolity), discovering the music of Richard Wagner (that I could not penetrate in an Istanbul environment but only in Berlin, which gave me the impression of having a key to understand this very German tension between cerebral romanticism and rationality of the heart combined with an outburst of carnalism) and at last finding some kind of inner pleasure with Sufi music (Kudsi Erguner's music, but also the qawwali music "cuts me

deep" as my friend Akbar Borkowsky would put it — producer of far music from the corner of Savigny Platz who has the talent to create magic and atmosphere out of the flatness of everyday life), which had a sort of analgesic side-effect on my body and soul. The problem was that my senses were more awakened during my supposedly sleeping hours. I was trying to avoid any self-blame, by telling myself that, after all, sociology has something to do with art and the torments of an artist, as asserted in *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology* by our very role-model Wolf Lepenies.

Market

Speaking of the senses, Berlin markets, primarily the ones at Winterfeldtplatz and Karl-August-Platz (those visited by more cultured social groups rather than the ones in Kreuzberg or in Istanbul), became my fetish places for Saturday mornings. I thought shopping at least for fruits, flowers, cheese and olives counterbalanced my deprivation from my habitual sensorial pleasures. As if I had the privilege of initiation to the market-places, I forced Christine Landfried to follow me. She overtly preferred for a long time (until Ezra Suleiman joined us with his "cela va de soi" self-assuredness and took over the guidance) the cappuccino ritual that followed the market one, during which we reflected on everything, including our work. I realized only later that this obsession with the market-place meant more than to be in need of connection with oriental habitus or sociological observation on the ways in which alternative green culture had carved a space of its own in the market (with special attention to pillows made of *Hanf* or of *Dinkelspelt* and more generally in the urban landscape of Berlin.

First of all, the year at the Wissenschaftskolleg pulled me out of the daily demands of the market, but also out of competition. Consequently, the more I felt the anxiety of not properly preparing "my place" in the academic market-place, the more I tried to compensate for it in open-air free-for-all markets. As intellectual and sensorial experiences seemed to me quite hermetic with respect to each other, I thought I could have passed from one compartment to the other, uncontaminated and discreetly.

Maybe I am seeking to find meaningful correlation between things that have nothing to do with each other. (Besides, according to Krauer, Simmel's social theory is based on the core principle of the fundamental interrelatedness of the most diverse phenomena, *Wesenszusammengehörigkeit* — Eva Hund gave me the taste to envy these

supercomposed, long and imaged German words). Displacement has freed my mind from my habitual framework of references. My ideas were being more and more composed by free associations, by fragments and sketches of mental images rather than by the totalising structures. I was working on new ways of combining my fieldwork and theoretical approach; how to distil from unique voices, unanticipated profiles, unintended practices, views from the edge, the meaning, the understanding of the totality. Investigating, as Simmel would put it, the possibility of finding "in each of life's details the totality of its meaning". Suddenly I realized. This was the perverse effect of German thought and the Wissenschaftskolleg medium. I was expecting to be structured under the organizational auspices of a disciplined and rational culture, but I was more and more inclined towards descriptions of reality as fragments and visual vignettes. I still do not know if these new inclinations followed my personal trajectory or if they were somehow product of coincidences or even manipulations. How to explain for instance Valentin Groebner's caring generosity, a medievalist giving me this disorienting article from the very beginning on vignettes, if not as a plot?

Anyhow although coming from an "ocularcentric" culture, where there is the popular belief in the "evil eye", in the emotional power of the gaze, and working on the "veiling" issue, I have been ignoring the linkages between sight and language. Maybe this is due to my overexposure to French social science, which gives priority to the totality over the fragments, and shaped, according to Martin Jay, by "the denigration of vision" (a book given to me by Nadia Al-Baghdadi, with whom I share the same taste for distraction). And I was blinded by my prejudices not to expect to establish any linkage between the sensorial and the intellectual through the German intellectual heritage. (Although even the biologists at the Wissenschaftskolleg were working on the natural vision of insects). Now, retrospectively I also find out that my very close friendship with Sevil Sert, a photographer in Istanbul, was not interest-free at all. She always preferred images and I-words and yet we followed a similar trajectory of proximity and distance to Istanbul; although during my year at Berlin, she has preferred Cuba from where she was sending me these huge Cohiba cigars that I was shy to smoke in public (yet I did) and now she is in Berlin filming the Cuban music festival at the Tempodrom and forcing me to assist her as a second camera.

All this can be considered as a rediscovery of something already there (doxa), but establishing links, discovering hidden threads — that is learning — takes time, as Albert A. Angehrn has taught me, it is not instant and neutral to emotional experience or independent of the catalyst effect of a medium. It was time to put two markets together, the

intellectual and the sensorial, and to reorient my writing towards the "Snapshots of the Islamist *Erlebnis*".

A snapshot of the Islamist *Erlebnis*

The difficulty of grasping Islamism stems from the very ambiguous conception of time it cultivates and experiences. On the one hand it carries a sense of mythical continuity with the ancient past and claims for an immutable and timeless concept of religion (this search for eternity, as the most significant resistance to modernity, can almost seduce even Stephen Greenblatt, who by his fascination for hidden meanings and phantom existences liberates me from my last remnants of secularist positivism); on the other hand, Islamism is a new, contemporary phenomenon, instigating a discontinuity with time, traditions and the past.

I was writing all this confidently until a problematic turnaround took place between me and the Islamists. I suddenly realized, not without anxiety, that Islamists were not only my contemporaries, but they have entered into a zone of time dimension more discontinuous, intensified and accelerated than mine. In short, they were more adventurous. For an incurable modernist as I am (very typical of Turks), this was the most unforgivable intrusion into my territory. I have not minded too much that Islamists use the latest model of Macintosh computers, that their books are best-sellers, that they were becoming part of the political and cultural elite, winning elections, establishing private universities... but competing in the area of time and adventure was a different matter. In the same time-span, they were undergoing more rapid changes than me. I have decided to go faster than them, fix my gaze on them, capturing their adventure in "momentary images", in snapshots (following Simmel's advice that the fragmentary nature of phenomenon can be grasped only by a fragmented mode of knowledge, that is as *Momentbilder*).

Without further complication, an article written by an Islamist (a former student of mine), entitled "In the state of mind and soul of an Islamist sociologist", published recently in an Islamist daily newspaper, offers an illustration.

The author tells us about his personal trajectory, moving from political Islamist to end up becoming a sociologist. The article is an account of the ambiguous relations of the Islamist, and of himself with modernity, that is with the difficulty in his daily life, in his professional aspirations and in his self-definitions to totally reject modernity in the name of political Islamism.

His article is built around the polemic that my book on the veiling has triggered among Islamist intellectuals. A very well-known Islamist intellectual, Ali Bulac, has written a review article in which he has fiercely refuted my thesis of the critical interaction and hybridation between Islamists and modernity. To make clear the demarcation between the two worlds, Bulac has proposed to change the title of my book and add the word "and" which would mean to separate Islamist women from modernity. At the beginning, the young Islamist writer tries to follow his advice. But he is torn between his Islamist ideal, which calls for purity, and what he observes around him and his own life practice. He is perplexed by Islamic fashion shows, by his own interest for films, theatres and his newly acquired taste for summer vacations. But, he tells himself that there are many things that Muslims can no longer explain to themselves. As a "candidate to change the world", his article will now praise "thought as the strongest action" and call for "self-analysis". He tells us he is no longer frightened by the word "modernity". He does not believe in the radicalism of the revolution, nor in the possibility of a total withdrawal as a Sufi. Consequently he writes that he "loses his purity" as he "interacts with so many diverse people and worlds". And instead of doing "Islamic sociology", he finds himself doing the "sociology of Islam". He would end up his article writing: "My modern profession (that is sociology) blends into my identity. I confess that I am a cross-breed; I am a Muslim sociologist who does not use the word "and" to demarcate between Islam and modernity".

This can be taken as an illustration of the experience of modernity, not as a mere concrete and external one but one critically becoming an "individual lived experience" (*Erlebnis*). Yet keeping in mind with Benjamin that the key to secrets of social life is the dialectical juxtapositions of the new and the unchanging, fragments and totality, modernity and myth.

This is also an illustration of how my students let me know about their transformations, reflected upon by themselves, almost declaring their autonomy from me. Time to go back.