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Authentication and Affect: Why the Turks Don't Like Enchanted Counterpublics, *A Review Essay*

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Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space, by John Bowen (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon, by Lara Deeb (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics, by Charles Hirschkind (New York: Columbia University Press).

Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey, by Esra Özyürek (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

THE FASHION SYSTEM

[The mayor of Lyon] explained that every couple [applying for a civil marriage ceremony] is told that witnesses must have their foreheads visible up to the roots of their hair at the moment when they sign the register. "We must be firm, because marriage is an *acte civil*, and we risk being caught up in an endless spiral. Tomorrow, in polling places, women will demand to wear the burka" (Bowen, p. 148).

Anthropological fashion moves in a rhythm unlike the deliberate seasonal cycle of the couture houses that design the foulards the French find so troubling these days. But if gray or green is the new black this season in Paris and New York, *public* has been the new *structure* in anthropology for several long seasons now, and is only just beginning to live up to some of its considerable potential as a design element in cultural analysis, and also to show its age. The advantage of the public sphere as a concept is that—like its predecessor, structure, which can stand against chaos, anti-structure, agency, process, and so on—"public" resides within a rich semantic network in which it can signify a number of oppositions and complements: privacy, secrecy, domesticity, isolation, individualism, sectarianism, market, state. Despite its normative reputation as a concept associated with rational deliberation over the public good, in the hands of John Bowen, Lara Deeb, Charles Hirschkind, and Esra Özyürek,

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the public sphere turns out rather surprisingly to rely on cultivated affect and on sets of embodied dispositions that it shapes in the process of people's participation in it. Like Bourdieu's Kabyle house writ large, the public sphere is an *opus operatum*, a space channeling the interactions that create it, a set of relationships maintained by the interests and capacities it generates.

The specific affective dispositions shaped within public spheres both "religious" and "secular" are complex: anxiety, fear, shock, indignation, humility, attentiveness, attachment, inspiration, pride, love, longing, sorrow. With the partial exception of Deeb's *An Enchanted Modern*, none of these books is a conventional ethnography. Instead, they are conceptual ethnographies, anthropologies of reasoning about symbolic traditions, politics, and public life (Bowen, 4). These modes of reasoning, cognitive while not exclusively rational, embodied while not wholly mute, are shaped by what Deeb's Lebanese informants refer to as *al-bi'a*, or milieu, the social, physical, and moral environment in which particular groups of people conduct their lives. Ethnicity and class relations as well as specific national histories, changes in media technology and market penetration all contour these modes of reasoning and their public spheres in complex ways. As Charles Hirschkind writes in a passage that could serve as a guide through each of these books: "The affects and sensibilities honed through popular media practices . . . are as infrastructural to politics and public reason as are markets, associations, formal institutions, and information networks. . . . This book is a study of the contribution of . . . popular media practice to the fashioning of [visceral] modes of appraisal, and of the religious and political constellations this practice sustains" (9).

LOVE AND NEOLIBERAL LONGING

Each author works with a subset of such affects and modes of appraisal as they are practiced by identifiable if not necessarily coherent publics in France, Turkey, Egypt, and Lebanon. In *Nostalgia for the Modern*, Esra Özyürek examines secularism as a peculiar sort of mass phenomenon, showing how Istanbul's middle classes have privatized the Kemalist ideology of the Turkish state, busily appropriating its imagery in the context of a neoliberal celebration of the market, of individual choice, taste, and consumption. Her examples, ranging from public commemorations of family life to holiday celebrations, corporate advertisements, and interviews with elderly citizens who spent their youths in the glory days of the Republic, illustrate the new ways in which Turks have come to apprehend the significance and source of nationalist sentiment. With changes in the national economy, family ideology, and patterns of political activism, the emotional content of citizenship has changed from one modeled on the asymmetrical bonds of paternalistic love to the egalitarian bonds of conjugal love (67). As one example, since the founding of the Republic in the 1920s, state mobilization of the image of Mustafa Kemal—Ataturk—has emphasized gigantic scale, in which the stern and omniscient gaze of the

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leader surveilled public spaces. More recently, different genres of Ataturk photographs have become popular for small-scale use in private space, while public exhibitions and anniversary celebrations formerly directed by the state in order to demonstrate its transcendence are now put on by private organizations and businesses as a demonstration that the love of the people, rather than the power of the bureaucracy, is what keeps alive the memory of the leader and *laik*, Turkey's unique brand of secularism: "The commodified pictures of Ataturk that decorate homes and businesses today depict the leader not as a stern soldier or a state leader, but as a jovial bourgeois who enjoyed simple but highly marked pleasures such as wearing European outfits, eating food at a table rather than on the floor, drinking alcohol, bathing in the sea, and being in the company of unveiled and stylish women" (94).

Contemporary Turkish nostalgia for the modern—for the heroic past of the founders of the secular Republic—is a structure of feeling that, along with the accelerating process of privatization, drives a neoliberal ideology "which turns objects, relations, and concepts into commodities and transforms political expression by converting it to an issue of personal interest" (8). In this way, the public domains of national history and identity are transformed into personalized possessions and concerns that can be protected from the corruption of officials no longer seen to be acting in accordance with Kemalist principles. Emotional engagement configured through "neoliberal" notions of market exchange, consumption, spontaneity, and self-expression, rather than through state institutions, is reproducing something of the tone, if not the mechanism through which an older generation of citizens came to feel that "Ataturk is my mother, my father, the water I drink and the earth that I step on" (108).

NERVES OF SOME PHILOSOPHICAL DEPTH

When influential Islamic political movements returned to Turkey in the 1990s, Kemalists felt besieged, particularly since the new Islamic parties had learned to speak the language of democracy and human rights, and to remind the Republic of their devotion to the Ataturk who assured in a 1923 speech, "The veil recommended by our religion suits both life and virtue well" (160). So when, at the other end of Europe, French courts began to issue rulings allowing schools to restrict the wearing of headscarves by French Muslim girls, secularist intellectuals in Turkey took this as a declaration of a universal principle of *laik/laicite* (19).

John Bowen's subtle and perceptive exploration of *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves*, follows Özyürek in using public events, conferences, media coverage, and interviews in schools, cafes, and government offices to construct an understanding of the complexity, genealogy, and public significance of the concept and practice of *laicite*. Blamed for everything from suburban poverty to gender violence, the danger of the voile, or headscarf, had first become a widely publicized issue in 1989. Local schools tried a variety

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of means, ranging from counseling or expelling young women who came to school in voiles, to experimenting with alternatives like bandanas (which cover the hair but can be construed as secular), in order to forestall what seemed like an epidemic of communalism in the "lost territories" of French public space. In 2004, at the urging of two prestigious commissions that heard testimony from all interested parties *except* veiled women, the government instituted restrictions on dress in public schools. One commission recommended, "in schools, middle schools, and high schools, appearances and signs displaying a religious or political affiliation be forbidden, conditional on respecting the freedom of conscience and specific nature of private schools under contract with the state. . . . The forbidden appearance and signs are *signes ostansibles* [ostentatious signs], such as large crosses, voiles, or *kippas*. Discreet signs such as medallions, small crosses, Stars of David, hands of Fatima, or small Qur'ans are not regarded as signs displaying religious affiliation" (Bowen, 123–24).

With this declaration, according to one commission member, France sent a message that "we do not want communalism, that rational thinking exists, that equality between men and women exists, that citizenship exists" (124). Bowen provides a thorough description and analysis of the events surrounding the passage of the law, the attendant media coverage, and something of the historical context in which contemporary Muslim behavior struck "nerves of some philosophical depth" (155), triggering a set of cultural responses honed by memories of the nation's conflicts with the Roman Catholic Church. These conflicts had culminated in early-twentieth-century laws regulating the activities of religious organizations in public life, a number of which, by the late twentieth century, represented the interests of the nation's Muslims.

That the French—like Americans—live in a symbolic and legal universe in which religious signs can be construed as nonreligious in particular public contexts ("In God We Trust" on American coinage, or the French government's ownership and maintenance of Roman Catholic cathedrals), is indicative of the tortured emotional and symbolic nature of secularism in its many varieties. Both French politicians and citizens routinely described the voile as a visual attack or aggression (*cela m'agresse* "it is an assault" [211]), that might account for what commission members described as "unbearable pressure" to support *laicite* by restricting the voile, despite their understanding of the measure's irrationality (124, 128, 168). While thoughtful people understood that the voile's meaning was contextual and complex, French public culture is constructed through "webs of reciprocal promotion" on the part of intellectuals and media producers, which tend to produce "*la pensee unique*" (3), a single way of thinking that yielded widespread public and nearly unanimous political support for the restrictions. Voices providing alternate visions—whether from some Muslims or from the majority of French teachers'

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unions—were ignored. While most young women who took on the voile described their actions as voluntary, speaking of their right to make choices in the light of universal rights of self-determination, the public dismissed their arguments as having been coached by extremists, since they could not possibly have known about or understood these rights on their own. The Ministry of Education's mediator for headscarf cases, Hanifa Cherifi, on the contrary, "looked with favor on a girl wearing a scarf at the behest of her family (a scarf of 'traditional, familial Islam'), and with disfavor on a girl wearing it despite the wishes of her family (a 'fundamentalist' scarf)" (89). Such a stance reverses the normal perception of choice and autonomy as marks of modernity and secularism, and as keys to participation in public discussion. The voile triggered a "moral and aesthetic disturbance" (170) in public space. (And where is this? In the school? The government office? The hospital? The post office? The private workplace? The street?). This made the passage of a law seem necessary to rescue France and its public ethos from ruin.

WOMEN'S JIHAD

Many young Muslim women in Europe and the United States explain that living in these countries allows them to be better Muslims than they could be in Algeria or Egypt or Iran. It gives them the opportunity to discover Islam as a devotional practice disconnected from the traditions of their parents' or grandparent's old-country culture. The sense in which Islam in France transcends the cultural practices of local 'otherwheres,' and allows Muslims the freedom to choose their own way, is often expressed in terms of the importance of acting on the basis of knowledge rather than tradition (Bowen, 74). That these choices might be seen by majorities in these countries as signs of backwardness may not be surprising given, for example, the history of ethnic politics in France and its former colonies, and a global environment made tense by war. But the feeling on the part of ethnic or sectarian majorities that some members of the polity are backward and need remedial help to become modern is restricted neither to the European portions of the Muslim world nor to the perceived divide between laicism and religion.

In the *Enchanted Modern* of Lara Deeb's Beirut, these concerns are configured around axes of socioeconomic class, educational attainment, ethnic defensiveness, family structure, and personal religious belief and practice. Each of these is shaped, in turn, by the feebleness of the Lebanese state and by repeated cycles of foreign military incursion and internal migration and dislocation. Middle class women in the city's southern Shiite suburbs are engaged in a redefinition of piety (*iltizam*, commitment) that includes public social activism. *Iltizam* is part of the development of an enchanted "Shi'i pious modern" in which moral and social progress are judged to be as important as technological progress for the construction of a modern society. As part of this redefinition, they operate a number of *jamìyya*s, social service agencies loosely allied with

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Hizbullah, the Islamist political party formed in the early 1980s as one response to the destruction wrought by the 1982 Israeli invasion.

The agencies serve variously as soup kitchens, food banks, orphanages, schools, clinics, cultural centers, and institutions for the physically disabled, serving the families of martyrs (Lebanese killed during decades of war and civil strife) and others, particularly women and children. For the women who staff these agencies, helping the poor includes both material support and *taw'iya*, consciousness-raising, since poverty causes backwardness by limiting access to authentic knowledge. True religious knowledge depends in turn on its authentication through discussion and critique, coming to understand the "why" of belief and practice, a point first made by Dale Eickelman with respect to Oman. Authentication is a social and intellectual process in which communities of knowledge are developed through explicit discourse about the nature of history, of ritual, of belief, and of everyday activities. Identifying and debating the reliability of information about the proper conduct of prayer, gender relations, veiling, the meaning of weeping during Ashura ceremonies, or even the whereabouts and activities of Imam Husayn's detached head after the Battle of Karbala, are ways of pulling Islam away from the realm of tradition and folklore into the realm of reasoned commitment within a broad framework of social responsibility.

As some women have begun to define social service activities as a new pillar of the faith that is as important as prayer and fasting (207), programs of community activism overlap with programs of personal spiritual development. This linkage is strengthened by changes in the way the Prophet Muhammad's granddaughter Sayyida Zaynab is understood as a focus for emotional identification and a model of practice. During Ashura commemorations, the community's "backward" populations emphasize Zaynab's unspeakable and disabling grief at the loss of her family at Karbala, while the "enlightened" hold her up as a model of emotional mastery, compassion, and the courage to speak up for revolutionary action against oppression. Lessons of commitment, hard work, and self-improvement follow from the reformulation of her legacy, constituting a women's jihad to improve the world. The dilemma, of course, is that the younger generation growing up in a transformed environment do not experience *iltizam* in the same way their mothers did, as a sometimes difficult set of personal choices. The new *bi'a* of public piety has become traditional in turn, leading some women to worry "that if the younger generation's piety did not necessarily stem from within, but instead emerged from a desire to conform to the normative moral order around them, they would be more likely to feel restricted by their religious duties" (227).

THE DOOR OF HELL

Cultivating a pious self through the engagement of rational capacities to understand and practice authenticated Islam is an unending process of

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self-betterment, which takes place in part through the cultivation of an ethical community discourse (Deeb, 118). In *The Ethical Soundscape*, Charles Hirschkind examines how this process engages with the acoustic element of the complex urban environment, looking at the development of the moral economy of the cassette tape sermon in Cairo. As in Deeb's Beirut, members of Egypt's *da'wa* movement are constructing a counterpublic, a space,

> in which deliberation and discipline, or language and power, are regarded as thoroughly interdependent . . . Within this context, public speech results not in policy but in pious dispositions, the embodied sensibilities and modes of expression understood to facilitate the development and practice of Islamic virtues, and therefore of . . . ethical comportment. For contemporary Egyptian Muslims who participate in this sphere of dialogic engagement, the definition and articulation of . . . ethical norms and their embodiment as practical aptitudes are critically dependent upon the communicative practices and discursive convention of this public arena (Hirschkind, 106–7).

The young men with whom Hirschkind worked to understand the form, content, and transformative potential of sermon-listening apprehended contemporary sermon tapes as forms of entertainment comparable to music, as political expression, and as powerful technologies of self-fashioning ("A great tape. Terrifying! . . . This tape will put the door of hell right in front of your eyes the next time you think about disobeying God.") (193). Circulating through personal networks and mosque lending libraries, as well as through the market, cassette sermons are used in developing modes of attention, bodily and cognitive dispositions, and affective responses in their audience that will repair the defective hearts and impaired hearing of alienated modern subjects, allowing them to discern both the meaning of the sermons and the nature of correct ethical judgment and response more generally. Key to this moral development is the cultivation of a properly conditioned attentiveness to the tapes: "This is what can happen," explained one of his friends, "This is the opening of the heart, the tranquility that makes you want to pray, read the Quran, makes you want to get closer to God, to think more about religion. . . . You remember that you will be judged and that fills you with fear and makes you feel humility and repentance" (68). An authenticated Islam is being fashioned in which people are not merely moved to tears by the fear or gratitude or humility an effective preacher has allowed them to feel, but in which that weeping is given explicit purpose so that, as in the Shi'i pious modern of Lebanon, they "know why they are crying" (90). In the broadest sense, this knowledge is the result of public discussion of religious duties and values. But whether in conversation with live interlocutors or in the restricted context of tape audition, this knowledge is the result of activity on the part of the listener more than on the part of the speaker. The preacher on tape is regarded as merely a mediator between God and the individual. It is the listener who is responsible for developing his perceptual skills, his affective responses, and his intellectual perspectives to create a successful communication of truth.

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Inspired by Talal Asad, Hirschkind writes that judgments about social and political good "are not the product of rational argumentation alone but also of the way we come to care deeply about certain issues, feel passionately attached to certain positions, as well as the traditions of practice through which such attachments and commitments have been sedimented into our emotional-volitional equipment" (30). Although talk of passions and sedimented commitments and fear brings to mind the worst sorts of stereotypes of mediated brainwashing, Hirschkind argues that when approached correctly, sermon-listening is not a matter of indoctrination. Instead, along with practices of explicit argument, criticism, and debate, it is part of the development of ethical dispositions that allow participation within the arena of the *da'wa* movement and a broader Islamic counterpublic.

GETTING OVER THE "COUNTER"

Egyptian critics of the burgeoning Islamic environment complain about the "assault on the ears" of mosque loudspeakers announcing the call to prayer, and the cacophony of cassette sermons booming from taxis, shops, and apartment windows. The *da'wa* movement's discourse of truth is perceived not merely as noise, but "as the violent imposition of religious discourse onto the nonreligious space of public life. . . . [T]he experience of the soundscape created by amplified Islamic oratorical performances is deeply visceral" (Hirschkind, 125–26). As with the voile in France, differently developed perceptual dispositions and semiotic frameworks generate different affective responses and cast public actions in different lights. Hirschkind sees Egypt's Islamic counterpublic as "a fragile and unstable accomplishment . . . because the practices that constitute this arena are continually subject to rival and more powerful discursive framings that are tied to the market, the regulatory institutions of the state, and conditions of governance more generally" (108). Fine-tuning the soul and thereby helping to develop an ethical society—difficult propositions in the best of circumstances—are challenged not only by economic stress and political pressure, but also by the tendency of other media forms to hijack consciousness and pull their consumers into states of unthinking reaction or passive listlessness.

The "counter" in counterpublic is Hirschkind's response to what theorists like Michael Warner or Isaiah Berlin see as the normative image of the public sphere as a self-organizing space of open debate, and to the binary way in which popular media forms have been analyzed in contemporary scholarship either as mechanisms allowing for such open deliberation, or as disciplinary instruments meant to shape consciousness in predetermined ways. Hirschkind argues that the *da'wa* movement is not simply what we normally understand as a public sphere, in which Islamic symbols predominate. Nor does he see it as what Nancy Fraser calls a counterpublic, and what authors like Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine have labeled an "alternative parallel

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public sphere," in which minorities within broader social formations debate and develop their own understandings of the public good in response to hegemonic majority positions. The *da'wa* counterpublic is instead a distinctive arena that is simultaneously deliberative and disciplinary. But given his broader argument, that public deliberation more generally presumes and incorporates affects and sensibilities nurtured within particular complexes of media and social process, his use of the prefix "counter" is somewhat puzzling. He uses it to differentiate normative public spheres understood internally as self-organizing neutral spaces in which independently existing public opinion is formed and expressed, from those understood internally as hinging on the interdependence and mutual constitution of deliberation and discipline.

But the notion that the operation of the public sphere requires its conceptualization as neutral space for expression is an artifact of scholarly analysis, or perhaps of a particular kind of contemporary psychological reading of human desire and personality, rather than an assumption necessary for its function. Particular kinds of discipline, especially formal education, have long been among the explicit conditions of possibility for public deliberation. Shortly after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, for example, a British Parliamentary observer recorded doubts about the extent to which "a public opinion may be said to exist in an Oriental country" precisely because so few were seen as qualified to enter the debate, possessing the necessary experiences of school-based discipline and knowledge. According to the British ambassador to the Ottoman court, even local elites, if placed within preformed structures of parliamentary democracy, "would simply prove an uninstructed and unmanageable mob, with a very low level both of character and intelligence, incapable of discussing public business."[1] Clearly even being able to grasp the idea of public business was taken to depend on the cultivation of particular kinds of intellectual and ethical skills.

Each of these studies illustrates some of the characteristics Hirschkind attaches to the *da'wa* "counter"public. The listlessness of the overwhelmed average Cairene media consumer, like the anxiety of the French intellectual, the devotion of the Kemalist, and the perseverance of the pious Lebanese social worker, is an affective reaction as well as a political stance. While its ontogenesis and its character are different from the sensibilities deployed by the preacher and his committed audience, this should encourage us to think about subtler sorts of discipline and deliberation, however manifested in individual and collective conscience. In Turkey, for example, older citizens

[1] This paragraph's first quote is from a letter by Noel Temple Moore to Lord Dufferin, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, in "Correspondence Respecting Reorganization in Egypt," in the British House of Commons *Parliamentary Papers* vol. 83 (1883), 26. The second is from Lord Dufferin to the Earl of Granville, in "Further Correspondence Respecting Reorganization in Egypt," *Parliamentary Papers* vol. 88 (1883), 230.

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sometimes complain that the country's troubles began with the introduction of multiparty democratic politics, which encouraged the furthering of selfish and individual interests rather than collective interests championed by the Republican state (Özyürek, 56). For Özyürek, the institutions of the market and of electoral politics are clearly disciplinary formations as well as avenues through which individual self-interest might be expressed. As she shows, the motivations, affective responses, and conceptual predispositions nurtured by the market differ from those nurtured through other, older forms of social practice, but they still involve shaping oneself to structures of feeling and perception that underlie the constitution of particular kinds of publics.

In France, incisive criticism, open opposition, and sometimes shatteringly brilliant satire did irrupt into the "*pensee unique*" of the headscarf debates. "A scarf worn by a Christian girl will be accepted, as long as she is not a nun," read a parody Education Ministry directive circulated on the Internet, "and the same for a turban worn by a Jewish pupil and a Sikh's large cross. . . . A registry will be kept of each pupil's religion to make clear which signs each may not wear" (Bowen, 143). But these did little to change the debate's outcome, since politicians of all stripes supported the proposed law, even those who thought it stupid. Ignoring or dismissing the voices of veiled Muslim women—a silencing attributed to their voiles and their communities while actually resulting from the operation of the institutions and media of the French public sphere—was a way of constituting the assumptions and affective responses of laicism as requirements for entry into public debate. The discipline effected in the French case—an inculcation of fear of being shunned, of being seen as a traitor to the cause of *laicite*—was every bit as effective, and probably quite a bit more durable, than the self-conscious cultivation of the fear of God that is the goal of the fragile Egyptian *da'wa* movement. Durkheim smiles in his grave.

SECULARISM AS PIETY, PIETY AS CITIZENSHIP

Much is being undermined and reversed in these books. In France and Turkey, laicism appears as a popular mass phenomenon combining the enthusiasm of a revival with the rigid sartorial minutiae of a drill inspection. In Egypt and Lebanon, those legendary cradles of agitation and violence, on the other hand, individuals of conscience quietly exercise their choice to work at self-improvement through earnest discussions of truth and evidence and careful practices of self-discipline. Secularism exists as an overarching public environment, while religious endeavor is conducted close to home. This apparent difference is, in part, an artifact of field technique. Hirschkind and Deeb identified local networks and institutions in which to work, while Bowen and Özyürek ranged more widely over public culture, while not necessarily ignoring the intimate. Each reveals in their own case study some of what is missing in the others: the links between local and national developments, the relative

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size of movements and networks, the internal organization of institutions of cultural production, the way media are consumed on a micro level.

The religious or secular "content" of the various public spheres examined by these authors is more or less irrelevant. Although public Islam and the public secular are loosely global patterns of attribution and desire, each framing itself as an explanation of the inadequacy of the other, they are less alternative philosophies than they are alternate techniques of calculating the nature and extent of the community in which moral and affective relationships should exist. Public contests between Islam and *laicite* as symbolic systems are not contests between obligation and freedom or equality and subordination, but between different understandings of historical connections, cultural boundaries, and the symbols that need to be deployed to mark membership in particular communities. The mayor of Lyon's insistence, quoted at the beginning, that a bare forehead rather than a covered one is an indispensable marker of public piety, reminds us of the traveler Gulliver's puzzlement over Lilliput's violent dispute with its neighboring kingdom Blefuscu, which turned on whether dissenting minorities should be allowed to open their eggs at the large end when both law and custom rule that eggs should be opened at the small end. In its near-parody of secularist taboos, his concern both demonstrates the hyperbole with which a modern media-driven politics operates, and propels us straight into the heart of a comparative anthropology of self-fashioning. Reading these works might usefully sensitize us to how our own affective engagements in particular forms of interaction and personal discipline lead us to the point where particular sights and sounds can be perceived with shock, surprise, or horror, and how particular manners of living shape our visceral apprehension of what it means to be modern and virtuous.

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