

REVIEW ARTICLE

CULTURE AND ANTI-CULTURE:
THE SPECTRE OF ORIENTALISM
IN NEW ANTHROPOLOGICAL WRITING ON TURKEY

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CAROL DELANEY, *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society* (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies 11; gen. ed. Barbara D. Metcalf), Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1991. xiii, 363 pp., Selected Bibliography, Index, Photographs. \$42.50/\$16.00.

JULIE MARCUS, *A World of Difference: Islam and Gender Hierarchy in Turkey* (Asian Studies Association of Australia: Women in Asia Publication Series), London: Zed 1992. x, 201 pp., Bibliography, Index, Figures, Tables, Plates. £29.95/£11.95.

JUNE STARR, *Law as Metaphor: From Islamic Courts to the Palace of Justice*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992. xli, 243 pp., Glossary, Bibliography, Index, Maps, Figures, Tables. No price given.

MARTIN STOKES, *The Arabesk Debate: Music and Musicians in Modern Turkey* (Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology), Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992. xii, 248 pp., Bibliography, Glossary, Index, Figures, Map. £32.50.

MORE than forty years have passed since Paul Stirling completed his first fieldwork in a Turkish village and wrote up an Oxford D.Phil. as one of the 'first batch of Evans-Pritchard's mediterranean pupils' (Davis 1977: 243). Although many parts of the region have been studied intensively by later batches of anthropologists from the English-speaking world, of diverse theoretical persuasions, Turkey has been relatively neglected in recent decades. This may have something to do with its marginal position in relation to the conventional regional boundaries of modern anthropology: it is not European, but nor can it quite be considered mainstream

mediterranean or Middle Eastern. Whatever the reasons, since the publication of Stirling's monograph in 1965 it is hard to think of a single book-length study of Turkey that has attracted the attention of a wider anthropological readership.¹ Against this background it is important to welcome four new monographs which complement each other in exciting ways. One can learn a lot from them about the changes that have taken place in Turkish society since the pioneering work of Stirling—and perhaps even more about changes in the themes and styles of anthropological enquiry.

Carol Delaney's book is, like Stirling's, based largely on ethnographic materials from a central Anatolian village. But the similarities end there. Paul Stirling's approach can be characterized as empiricist and positivist. His book can be read as an application of the dominant anthropological paradigm of the period ('structural-functionalism'), but it is devoid of any explicit theoretical agenda. Delaney, as the subtitle of her book indicates, is concerned with topics that were relatively neglected, if not totally ignored, by her predecessor. She is inspired by contemporary trends in American cultural anthropology, particularly in the work of David Schneider, and sets out to test some ideas derived from her background in theology and feminist theory. These differences make any direct comparison between the two books virtually impossible. It is likely that the respective settlements on which they focus resembled each other in many ways around 1950, and they may well be no less comparable today. But just as Delaney does not convey much information about land tenure and economic opportunities in the village that she studied near Ankara, so Stirling was silent about gender symbolism and procreation ideologies in the villages he studied near Kayseri.

On some points, of course, Delaney is able to build on Stirling's earlier work, citing it occasionally in her own. For example, she is in full agreement with him that marriage is a relationship involving economic co-operation, sexual intimacy and the production of male offspring: the 'notion of a successful marriage in terms of personal relations does not exist in the village' (Stirling 1965: 114; cited by Delaney, pp. 109-10). But for Delaney facts are generally less important than

1. This may seem harsh. I am aware that many noteworthy books and articles have been published, but it would be invidious to begin to list them here. Nevertheless, the overall picture seems to me rather thin, certainly in quantitative terms, when compared with other regions of the mediterranean. The relative difficulty of research access is certainly one major factor in this situation. Happily there are other signs of an improvement, besides the works reviewed here. The excellent monograph by Lâle Yalçın-Heckmann (1991) is excluded from this review as it deals with Kurdish rather than Turkish social organization. I am also aware of important recent studies in German by Werner Schiffauer (e.g. 1987) and Gabriele Paleczek (e.g. 1984). Unfortunately I am not competent to review them. Nor am I competent to survey work being conducted by large numbers of Turkish researchers in different parts of their own country.

ideas and interpretations. This is what makes her work original and refreshing, but it also betrays her weaknesses. Her title refers to the villagers' theory of procreation, which is viewed as providing an implicit key to almost everything else in their society, from marriage and property management strategies to beliefs concerning the state and the afterlife. She is surely right to seek central cultural symbols in this domain and shows great ingenuity in tracing their wider significance. These villagers liken the woman's contribution to the production of a child to the provision of the soil (or, more accurately, to the field enclosed by men) within which male seed is planted. The true generative role is played by the seed, which derives exclusively from men.² This folk theory of procreation is linked by Delaney to the cosmology in which it is embedded. Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, for which the story of Abraham is equally salient, is a thoroughly patriarchal religion and its influence is pervasive.

After this statement of the general argument the rest of the book consists of five well-crafted chapters, beginning with gendered bodies and moving steadily outwards through household, village and Turkish nation to arrive finally at the universal Islamic community. Through all this Delaney is concerned not so much with a sociological analysis of male dominance as with a symbolic analysis based substantially on her own insights and intuitions, illustrated by her personal experiences during fieldwork, and supplemented by a wide range of texts. Sometimes the supporting data are apparently drawn from the villagers (for example, it is they who explain that the red colour of the bridal sash is a symbol of virginity), but much of the time they are not. One of the central issues is whether or not a Turkish rural woman can be considered a person in her own right. Even if villagers themselves might wish to answer in the affirmative, 'the logic implicit in their system of beliefs supports the other answer' (p. 279). In exploring this cultural logic Delaney makes relatively little effort to incorporate social and historical factors. For example, she places women's concern with embroidering covers for household objects firmly in the context of a general obsession with the covering of females for reasons of purity. She ignores the possibility that its present form might be a relatively recent development whereby rural women seek to decorate their homes in the styles of their urban counterparts (it is this that lies behind a similar concern with 'covering' among non-Muslim peasants in many parts of the world, including those among whom I have lived in Eastern Europe).

Delaney's suggestions are most persuasive when they are contextualized and related to changing empirical circumstances. For example, I can readily agree that some men enclosed their womenfolk more drastically after the beginning of urban

2. Delaney makes little attempt to document this thesis ethnographically. The main evidence for 'seed and soil' as a folk theory is taken from Michael Meeker's study (1970) of the east Black Sea region, and the idea can be found in similar form in many other places inside and outside Turkey. Theoretical aspects of the argument she builds from this data to criticize Malinowski and other contributors to the so-called Virgin Birth debate are more fully developed in Delaney 1986.

migration, when previous patterns of reciprocity and complementarity in domestic divisions of labour were lost. However, there is a tendency, inherent perhaps in this sort of symbolic approach, to construct a 'Culture' that loses its moorings in society and in real historical time. Even by the standards of symbolic anthropology Delaney remains a little too fond of Manichaean dualisms. During a discussion of spatial arrangements in the household and village she argues that the entire world 'becomes an icon of gender as constituted within a specific ideology of procreation' (p. 238). She does not convince me on this point, any more than she does in attempts to establish the gendering of meals. Moreover, some apparently plausible suggestions seem to run into contradiction. The purity of women identifies them with the East, but Delaney also argues that:

At another level, however, women can be associated with the West. In their own cultural view, *vis-à-vis* men, women represent the seductive, attractive material aspects of this world, and since these aspects have been associated with the materialism of the West, women can come to symbolise the West. As the seductive attractions of the West are felt to be corrupting their country and must be controlled, so too must the distinctiveness and attractiveness of women be controlled. (p. 278)

She is at her most provocative when she extends her symbolic analysis into the realm of religion. In the last chapter, where the Kaaba stone at Mecca is said to bear 'a remarkable resemblance to a vagina, complete with labial folds and a clitoris' (p. 307), elements of her account might strike many readers as more revealing of the preoccupations of the Western author than of Islam; many Muslims themselves would surely find such an argument offensive.

The detailed discussion of the body and sexuality is certainly a major innovation in relation to previous ethnographic work on Turkey, and at the same time an advance on much of the mediterranean 'honour and shame' literature, though here again much of Delaney's symbolic analysis is open to question. Her claim that the usual position for sexual intercourse cannot be explained functionally but represents the traditional Anatolian plough (p. 49) is typical of a feminism that seems redolent of Frazerian anthropology in its methods. She was apparently able to engage male villagers in discussion of female orgasm, and also discusses such topics as oral and anal sex, relating them to her central themes. She acknowledges the difficulty of gathering accurate information on these topics, but reassures her readers that her account is 'the result of many discussions, many observations, and a certain amount of conjecture' (p. 43). Potentially sensitive subjects such as masturbation were raised by bringing magazine articles into the village as a basis for discussion. The author maintains a very emphatic personal presence in almost every chapter. She frequently illustrates a point by explaining how it emerged during her fieldwork: for example, she was properly able to understand how polluting the village women considered pubic hair to be after taking a bath herself with a local bride at the village laundry house. (It was surprising to learn in this context (p. 123) that some young villagers are now

abandoning the practice of shaving pubic hair, but no explanation for this change is suggested.)

I cannot see that it does any harm for the reader to know that the author has chosen her village as much for its aesthetic and emotional appeal as for its convenient proximity to the capital city (Stirling, in contrast, informs his readers that his choice of village was determined overwhelmingly by practical considerations). It is positively helpful to be told when the fieldwork took place (in the darkest period of martial law following the coup of 12 September 1980); and that Delaney lived alone in the village and, though known to have a young daughter, was known not to have a husband. But I am less sure that the reader benefits from an extensive exposure to the author's personal intellectual odyssey, from Freud and Jung to Geertz and Schneider. The introduction makes it plain that Delaney is primarily concerned with contemporary Western debates about gender. The choice of Turkey for ethnographic investigation is almost incidental. (This would seem to be reflected in her bibliography; scarcely any use has been made of Turkish-language materials.) In any case, Delaney reminds us, 'the point of departure for any ethnographic exploration is always one's own culture; so, too, is the return' (p. 5).

The contrast with Stirling's work in a less reflexive age is strong, and it is apparent again in Delaney's overt appeals to values. For instance, she reports that the local teachers have strong anti-Western views and comments that this is 'disappointing'. (I suspect that for Stirling this would have been treated as a fact, to be reported without any evaluative comment.) Delaney sees the values of Islam as 'a major obstacle to change' (p. 322), and her own priorities for improvement are reflected in some of the suggestions she made to the villagers about how to make rural life more attractive: through increasing inter-village co-operation and improving plumbing and installing showers (p. 262). She is explicit about her refusal to accept what she terms the usual anthropological code of disinterested observation. When she identifies a young girl who merits further education she takes it upon herself to persuade the girl's father, a poor shepherd, to grant the necessary permission (pp. 88-92).³ These and similar episodes, whether or not one agrees with her actions, make the book extremely readable. It is bound to be popular with students, and Delaney has a fluent, clear style of which even Evans-Pritchard might have been proud.

In some respects, of course, it is desirable that an author be open and explicit about the values she holds. Such frankness may facilitate the task of representation and on occasion help the reader to form a different interpretation from that of the author. For example, Delaney is critical of the young village men who would

3. This episode is described in more detail in Delaney 1989. A comparable relationship is narrated in greater detail by Roper (1974). This account of rural Turkey by a Western female with no academic pretensions makes an interesting contrast with the books reviewed here. Delaney seems to be the only anthropologist to have used it, though not in this particular context.

not help her shift her domestic fuel, and of what she terms the general male ideal of passive repose. She comments too on the 'leisurely pace' all villagers seem to prefer when they have to work. This seems to me dangerous ground indeed: it is far from clear that the villagers themselves see their pace as leisurely, and perhaps if Delaney had done such work all her life she would see it differently. She comes close here to reproducing old and regrettable stereotypes of the lazy Oriental peasant (representations that are not born out in her own discussion of homosexuality, where it is clear that male passivity is strongly *devalued*).⁴ Certainly she does not present evidence to support her sweeping judgement that 'cooperation is not a social virtue among Turkish men' (p. 105). If people behaved unsociably towards Delaney herself, the reader might reasonably conclude that this had much to do with her own personality and behaviour, and particularly her strong desire to introduce alien values to the villagers. Perhaps too there are deeper human qualities in many friendships and marriages in rural Turkey than either she or Stirling have reported in their work to date.

Delaney has written a long book that offers a mine of useful information about many aspects of modern Turkey. In addition to the attention paid to gender and sexuality, it contains particularly rich accounts of marriage rituals, divisions of labour, various aspects of religious belief and practice, and the 'rhetoric of the nation' and secularist reformism in Atatürk's republic. These are all very important topics. However, Delaney's style also leads to the inclusion of too much trivia. For example, her detailed description of how tea is made and served—'in tiny tulip-shaped glasses set on small saucers with demitasse spoons' (p. 196)—does not seem to add much to any argument, feminist or otherwise. It is true that Stirling also presents a lot of material that is not directly related to an argument. Indeed there is a sense in which he deliberately avoids general argument of any kind. But it seems to me that his attempts to present systematic information about such subjects as kinship organization and land ownership provide readers with solid data that are entirely missing in the subjective stream of impressions offered by Delaney. Finally, it must be noted that she has been very badly let down by her editors and publishers. Almost every other Turkish word cited is rendered incorrectly. Turkish readers might reasonably expect a higher standard, not least when their national anthem is travestied (p. 275).

If Carol Delaney's book were not already a sufficiently hot potato to put in the hands of a male reviewer, Julie Marcus's book raises some similar questions in

4. Curious 'Orientalist' (in Said's sense) associations are also evoked by the poem by Katha Pollitt quoted by Delaney as an epigraph to her book. It celebrates the creative achievement of a (presumably Western) archaeologist investigating 'the heatstruck plains of a second-rate country...the rubbish heap of a poor Near Eastern backwater'.

more uncompromising fashion. In her preface Marcus declares that 'within western knowledge today there is only one real question: that of gender' (p. viii). A little further on she follows this up: 'it is no longer possible to discuss history and the differences between cultures without coming to grips with the serious challenge posed by recent feminist critiques of knowledge that have demonstrated once and for all time that gender is a hidden factor which *always* counts' (p. 29; author's emphasis). Edward Said (1978) is complimented for his basic insights into the politics of knowledge, and into the metonymical conflation of oriental and feminine in the writings of Westerners. But he is also rebuked for daring to suggest that race may be a more important dimension of discrimination than gender or class. In Marcus's view these dimensions are inseparable.

The early chapters of this book are much indebted to Said. Like him, they focus upon literary representations rather than ethnographic data. For Marcus, all empirical realities are open to interpretation and it is an anthropological delusion to imagine 'that by getting ever closer to our data we will somehow know and understand more, and that knowing more is knowing better' (p. vii). It is vital instead to clear the ground by inspecting previous writings about the Islamic Middle East, and this occupies most of the first four chapters. Marcus selectively analyses the work of some of the best-known producers of Orientalist texts to reach some very Saidian conclusions: 'there is a connection between imperial politics, emerging knowledges and the aesthetic forms through which worlds were represented both in art and through the authenticity of the museum and collectors' worlds. Travel was the practice which made it possible and anthropology provided the scholarly face to legitimate it' (p. 36).

This last claim is not supported with evidence. The only anthropologist actually named in these chapters is Paul Stirling, whose work is said to 'epitomise the limitations of traditional ethnography applied in countries like Turkey' (p. 3). He is chastised for 'disconnecting' the villagers he studied from time and place, and both he and other anthropologists (not named) are said to have ignored the specificities of 'Turkish culture'. Marcus locates her own work not in their tradition but in that of the earlier travellers, with whom she has long been fascinated. As a feminist she offers separate chapters on male and female accounts, focusing in both on the use of costume. Such Western male imperialists as Harold Dickson and T. E. Lawrence, who seek ostensibly to construct rational and 'scientific' (Marcus's quotes) accounts of oriental societies, are found guilty, as voyeurs and ravishers, of 'cannibalising the Orient':

The assumption of local dress by imperial males, in its attempt to appropriate the life force, the spiritual essence of the feminised other and the freedom of those living outside the restraint of rationality, is not only to consume their identity and to re-present it through the body of the self, just as some forms of cannibalism do, but is also an act of trickery and treachery. The act of ingestion is presented as an act of identification with, rather than the consumption of, the subordinated but admired entity. It is this that is dishonest. (p. 44)

It is all very different with female Western travellers who dress as men. In the case of Jane Digby the costume is said to signify authentic identification and acceptance, rather than 'the temporary ritual transvestism of the male visitor in the fantastic orient' (p. 51). Such female observers as Isabel Burton are complimented for suggesting that seclusion may have brought Islamic women certain advantages. But power relations are at work again in the actual use made of their data by the imperial Westerners, who place the subordinate status of women at the heart of the Christian European critique of Islamic society. Some of the points she makes about other female observers Marcus cleverly applies reflexively to herself as well; and the reader might apply some of them to Carol Delaney.⁵

The more substantive anthropological arguments are outlined in chapter five, 'Islam, Gender and Hierarchy', where the overlap with the work of Delaney is considerable.⁶ Where Delaney emphasizes procreation beliefs, Marcus stresses 'purity law', but both are concerned to locate Islam alongside the other great monotheistic religions of the region, and both draw on the work of Mary Douglas to give priority to the body and to an inner/outer dichotomy to explain the control of female sexuality. Both see gender separation as the basis for all social organization under Islam. Marcus is the more explicit in arguing that Christian attitudes to the body generate a different logical pattern, in which women are understood as less separate though no less subordinate; she suggests that in some respects women in Christian cultures have fewer resources and opportunities than Muslim women, though she also acknowledges the difficulties of generalization at this level. In her discussion of how 'the inner/outer body division translates into a dichotomous female/male society' (p. 86) Marcus perhaps achieves a more elegant theoretical formulation than Delaney. However, her ethnographical materials are much weaker, scarcely amounting to more than a few banalities about how men are associated with the mosque and women with the household, coupled with the warning that this is not to be confused with a public/private dichotomy. Much more than Delaney, Marcus is inclined to substitute for ethnography with extensive textual discussion. For example, her discussions of purity concentrate on the works of Islamic legal scholars wrestling with the problems posed by a dripping penis or by pus emerging from a boil, with no clue as to whether she actually encountered such cases during fieldwork.

5. Whereas Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was not willing to undress completely in the baths in eighteenth-century Istanbul, as noted above the late twentieth-century reflexive female anthropologist has now crossed this Rubicon (see Delaney, pp. 128-9).

6. The two scholars make negligible reference to each other's work. Marcus's Ph.D. was apparently awarded in Sydney in 1983 and Delaney's in Chicago in 1984. Delaney makes reference in passing to an article published by Marcus in this journal (wrongly named) in 1984. It is more curious that Marcus should be unaware of the numerous articles published by Delaney later in the 1980s (e.g. 1986), and also of articles from the same period by Nancy Lindisfarne and Richard Tapper (e.g. Tapper and Tapper 1987) which explore the very same ground as that investigated by Marcus in the later chapters of her book.

Marcus lets her readers know she is aware that one can only learn so much from texts, a point she notes in commenting on the limitations of Said and others who look only at legal texts rather than at the practical variation in their interpretation and use. She claims that she does wish to address material and social conditions in her work, and the reader therefore enters the final chapters of her book hoping that, with the main thesis now stated, Marcus might feel able to proceed to tackle some social realities. Unfortunately such hopes are almost entirely dashed. A chapter dealing with women's space reverts back to Western representations and 'the potency of harem imagery' (p. 93). Selective use of historical sources concerning elite groups enables her to put forward rather speculative arguments to the effect that the so-called reforms of the late Ottoman period actually had the effect of limiting the previously considerable powers enjoyed by women in the extra-household economy, confining them instead to a private, domestic realm along European lines. Chapter seven then develops an argument similar to that put forward by Nancy Lindisfarne and Richard Tapper (Tapper and Tapper 1987), according to which the prominence of women in Mevlud rituals (celebrating the birth of the prophet) can be seen as the articulation of a female world-view, unbounded, egalitarian and therefore radically different from the male world that is centred around the mosque and market-place.⁷ The author attempts to demonstrate this further in an analysis of pilgrimage, where again the work of Lindisfarne and others would have been relevant (see the essays in Eickelman and Piscatori (eds.) 1990). Finally, the main arguments are recapitulated in a concluding chapter that also spells out more fully her intellectual debt to another male predecessor, Victor Turner, who is also viewed as regrettably gender-blind.

This very inadequate summary cannot do justice to Marcus's work. There are stimulating arguments in most chapters, and you don't have to be a feminist to appreciate them. The main points about power relations are well taken. So too are her reasons for rejecting conventional distinctions between orthodox and popular Islam. Some of the criticisms I have been making are points she also makes herself. But it is not good enough to make the occasional pious remark about going beyond the texts, you actually have to do so by presenting some ethnographic evidence. It is her signal failure to fulfil this basic aspiration of modern anthropology and her occasional suggestion that the ambition is misplaced

7. Carol Delaney disagrees with such an interpretation, pointing out, quite correctly, that Mevlud rituals are held in commemoration of death rather than birth (p. 319). How can the reader evaluate the contrasting interpretations? The basis for Marcus's claim, 'I am certain that it has far greater meaning for women than for men' (p. 127), is not made clear. Simply the observations of a witness? How many times was she a witness or participant, and in what conditions? The reader is given no information of this kind, and the voices of local participants are not heard; the reader is merely asked to accept this feminist interpretation as one possible reading.

anyway which make this the sort of book that is liable to give feminist anthropology a bad name.⁸

Above all it is a missed opportunity. The thesis on which this book is apparently based was called 'Women and Religion in the Turkish City of Izmir'. Thus the reader might reasonably have hoped to find here some materials about contemporary urban Turkish women to complement Delaney's village study. There are no such materials in this book. If they have been left out because the publishers feel that ethnographic evidence is less appropriate in a popular feminist series than autobiography and pseudo-scholarly jargon,⁹ I can only say that for me at least the publishers have got it wrong and Delaney's publishers have got it more nearly right. There is practically no ethnography concerning Izmir, apart from a fragmentary discussion of one shrine; and even this is juxtaposed with the discussion of shrines visited in other parts of the country. There is no integrated account of any one of them, nor any serious analysis of the political context in which they functioned, or of the social and economic characteristics of the women who visited them. In her discussion of the cult of Hizr, stimulated by her visit to the shrine at Sammandag, Marcus condemns the Frazerian style of anthropology that would take the saint out of context and classify him with other 'green men' as vegetation gods. She argues that in consequence of such methods, 'certain people are deprived of the possibility of understanding these aspects of their lives and the truth of their actions is known only to certain western scholars. Such methods have been long discarded, but they seem to reappear whenever the subordination of "oriental" culture is being reinscribed' (p. 142). This is rich indeed considering that the symbolic structuralist account of Hizr promptly

8. It is possible that Marcus does not intend her work to be assessed as anthropology. Certainly it is the feminist theoretical aspect that is emphasized in the blurb, and the book appears in a series called 'Women in Asia', rather than as a specialist anthropology monograph. If this is the case, it should be stated explicitly that this is not anthropology. It would then be more appropriate to compare this book with other presentations by women of travel literature concerning the Muslim world (e.g. Mabro 1991, Tidrick 1989), and not with anthropology books at all. But Marcus wants to have it both ways. In spite of her repeated criticism of the practices and epistemological assumptions of 'anthropology', none of it supported beyond the brief remarks on Stirling noted above, she implies that her own mature feminist analysis has overcome these problems—*within* anthropology. In particular, references back to her thesis imply that anthropological evidence therein provides the warranty for the claims developed in the present volume; whether or not there are such materials cannot be determined by readers without access to the thesis.

9. As is so often the case, the word 'structure' is the cause of a significant part of this book's indigestibility. For example, what is one to make of this: 'a moral community symbolically structured by gender and by separation contains within it the option to structure the actual community structures and space according to the same principles. I think that this is exactly what the Turks do' (p. 89)? Compare her claim in the concluding chapter: 'both structural and post-structural forms of analysis are attempts to expose the lines of power through which the fundamental structuring structures of culture are enforced' (p. 174).

developed by Marcus would also seem to owe everything to the Western scholar, and nothing whatsoever to local people. It is beginning to seem that the currently fashionable blendings of reflexive, structuralist, post-modernist and feminist elements are exhibiting some of the most serious deficiencies of earlier styles of anthropological enquiry.

Marcus is also guilty of a speculative and cavalier approach to history. In the chapter that ostensibly deals with the history of Izmir's people, she is scathing in her dismissal of Western readings that have subordinated Turkish accounts. But she presents hardly any evidence to justify her own assertion that 'the break between the classical world and Byzantium may not have been so great, but the break between Byzantium and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is unbridgeable' (p. 28). Whenever facts and evidence might seem warranted, Marcus either explicitly or implicitly seeks refuge behind the claim that the aspiration to 'science' is all a European illusion, based on unequal power relations. Yet many historians have written in either Turkish or Greek about the past of the city that was the subject of Marcus's research. Her lengthy bibliography includes virtually no references to works in these languages, and suggests that more attention has been paid to the ethnography of Oceania than to that of Turkey. Doesn't such a strategy, in distancing and mystifying the 'Other', risk effects similar to those of classical orientalism? The index to Marcus's book confirms this impression: one citation for Paul Stirling, two each for Mary Kingsley and Agatha Christie, four for Edward Said, six for Australia, eight for harem, twelve for fantasy, eighteen for difference, and twenty-seven for sexuality. Since moral critique is one of the strongest threads running through this work, as through Delaney's, it may be legitimate to ask questions of an anthropologist who publishes a book about gender hierarchy in Turkey that (quite apart from overlooking related specialist work by other Westerners, as noted above) makes virtually no reference to a large body of potentially relevant work by native Turkish scholars, and has virtually no space for the voices of the people with whom she worked. Give me 'the limitations of traditional ethnography' every time!

The importance of the legal realm is one of the leading subthemes of Julie Marcus's study, and it moves to centre stage in June Starr's. Again there is some overlap, but this time the views of the two anthropologists could hardly be further apart. According to Marcus (and here I think Delaney and perhaps most anthropologists would agree with her), the apparently dramatic changes in family law that accompanied the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the modern secular republic were not in fact accompanied by many far-reaching changes in social practice. This is because they did not affect the core of the culture: 'the new legislation did not touch purity law. The legislation which so

altered Turkish society thus left the gendered and sexualized basis of the moral community of Islam intact, and in doing so, it left women and men in basically the same relationship to each other as before' (Marcus, p. 88). Starr begs to differ. Her conclusions and the data on which they are based remain essentially as in her earlier study of dispute settlement (Starr 1978). They confirm 'the success of the Turks in developing a legal system that is secular and separate from the religion of Islam' (p. xl). As the title implies, this transformation in the field of law is taken as a metaphor of more general social and cultural transformation. On the whole, Starr seems even more enthusiastic about the cumulative impact of these changes than in her previous book.

The main novelty of the present volume is the detailed historical discussion that takes up the first three chapters, stimulated by what the author sees as a general convergence of interests between anthropologists and historians in recent years. It shows Starr to be thoroughly familiar with the English-language history of the late Ottoman period as well as with the history of law in different European and Middle Eastern traditions. The establishment of a secular legal system dates from 1868, though much confusion remained between the jurisdictions of secular and religious courts for the next half century. Only in 1917 did reformers start to address the field of family law, when *seriat* courts were placed under the authority of the Ministry of Justice. Throughout her careful discussion Starr emphasizes continuities and internal processes of reform: the Ottomans did not simply import European models, and even when Atatürk himself did so in the 1920s, with the introduction of the Swiss legal code, he could still be seen as building upon an authentic 'liberal' Ottoman tradition.

Paradoxically, however, where other anthropologists have identified long-standing cultural patterns persisting at the lower levels of the new nation state, Starr's focus on the legal domain stresses the victory of 'pragmatic secularism' and the virtually complete abandonment of earlier cultural codes. Later chapters seek to integrate the historical account of political and legal changes at the national level with a full portrayal of what she terms 'popular legal culture' at local and district levels. Ostensibly she too works with a Geertzian definition of culture (p. xxxvi), and in a later chapter dealing with district courts she claims that 'cultural ideas about the construction of legal arguments and about purposeful action enter into the judicial decision-making process' (p. 157). Unfortunately this is asserted, rather than convincingly demonstrated through ethnography. Indeed, some of the cases discussed reveal very clearly the imposition of Atatürkist norms on local custom: for example, the case of the parent who is prosecuted for not sending his fourteen-year-old daughter to school, when her nimble fingers are required by her family in the tobacco fields. (Starr is incidentally quite wrong to imply that school attendance is obligatory until the age of sixteen.) Starr believes that during her fieldwork in 1966–68 she observed 'an integrated state legal system at the district level, functioning compassionately and effectively within a well developed and articulated set of legal principles and guidelines' (p. 150). In cases labelled Type B, 'social relationship cases' (as distinct from Type A cases, where there are clear

legal grounds for a disposition), the judges showed extraordinary patience as they attempted to cajole and reconcile litigants. But the judges themselves were a well-educated and well-paid professional élite, and the solutions they achieved were modern and intended to convey 'clear symbols of the new norms of interaction, civility and gender relationships' (p. 169). Thus the secular court system has successfully institutionalized 'universal legal norms of individuality and equality' (p. 19). In this context law has itself been 'an instrument of social change' (p. 90), and Starr concludes that there is no 'misfit' between this legal system and contemporary local values (p. 169). Villagers therefore turn to the courts whenever they feel aggrieved, rather than seek direct or indirect private justice ('self-help').

Not all of Starr's evidence is fully consistent with this analysis, and it is worth examining more carefully the case she makes concerning Islam and gender relations, the areas that are central to the studies of Delaney and Marcus. Starr speaks of the 'decline of the omniscient sacred community of Islam in Turkey' (p. 183), and repeatedly points out that neither the new secular élites nor the villagers themselves invoke Islamic precepts in legal contexts, apparently making Turkey quite different from other parts of the Islamic world. She finds that 'villagers have no conscious knowledge of Islamic solutions to [legal] problems' and concludes that Islam has been 'relegated to the religious sphere only' (p. xi). It is not part of daily consciousness, and Starr speculates that the absence of the 'practical signs' (p. 179) of Islam in this region may have something to do with the nomadic practices of some of its inhabitants in the recent past (she provides no analysis to support this suggestion, arbitrarily citing Barth's study of the Basseri as a possible analogy).

Such an analysis might have seemed persuasive in the 1960s, but since then the rise of 'religious parties' in national politics and a more general Islamic revival in the 1980s leaves little room for doubt as to the importance of Islam in the life of the nation. Starr is aware of these recent trends (she has made short visits to Turkey in recent years) but she has no satisfactory explanation for them. Having argued that by the 1960s there was 'not much left at all' of 'Islamic notions of law and Islamic values' (p. 177), she can only explain their re-emergence by attributing them to the work of urban intellectuals; and the reason the villagers built themselves a new mosque in 1986 was at least in part because they were stimulated by national politicians and by television. Many readers will find it plausible to detect greater continuity of Islamic values and morality in the preceding decades than Starr is here willing to admit.

Such thoughts are strengthened by a close consideration of Starr's materials concerning gender relations and ideologies. She has argued consistently in the past that rural women have profited from the opportunities available to them through Turkey's modern legal codes, for example through being able to initiate divorce proceedings in local courts. This rather contradicts the picture painted by Carol Delaney, who cites Starr's earlier work just once (p. 105), and then only to note that it points to trends contrary to those she herself observed. According to Starr,

even in the 1950s women had gained a new 'psychological space', freeing themselves from the subordination embodied in traditional kinship roles. This is not rendered transparent through any kind of social movement or a new gender ideology, but it is none the less evident in the increasing divorce rate, the greater incidence of nuclear families, and the reduced birth rate. The cause of these positive developments lies in 'the vigor of individual rural women in seeking better lives and the vitality of the legal system as a symbol of reform' (p. 93). Atatürk's purposeful action in targeting women as an oppressed social group was successful and brought about a new consciousness of self-worth. In sum, 'women's use of the courts, along with judicial willingness to decide cases in their favor, tipped the balance in gender relationships toward more equality for Turkish rural women' (p. 112). In spite of these strong claims, it is not clear that such data as those illustrating a decline in household size allow one to infer a radical change of consciousness. Nor is it explained how female access to courts might vary according to class and ethnic background, and we do not learn much about how this affects what is going on outside the formal legal system. For example, it would be interesting to know how many daughters have to accept inequitable property settlements that favour their male siblings, in spite of the law's requirement that they be treated equally. It almost goes without saying that the local élites, including the judges themselves, are exclusively male. And on Starr's own account, in the three cases of alleged wife-beating with which she deals the judges applied pressure to ensure that the plaintiffs dropped the charges.

Many of the unusual features of this study may be explained by its location in and around the town of Bodrum, an area of Aegean Turkey with a substantial non-Turkish, non-Islamic population in the Ottoman period. Like many other districts of western Anatolia (but unlike the villages studied by Delaney and Stirling) the modern society has been formed through the integration of diverse immigrant groups as well as through the sedentarization of nomadic peoples ('Turcomans'). But, although Starr claims at one point that it is 'as typical as most small towns of western rural Anatolia' (p. xxiii), she does concede that the proportion of people using formal legal machinery to solve disputes may be rather greater here than elsewhere. Bodrum was already rather special when Starr first went there in the mid-1960s. It was already beginning to attract Western-orientated artists and writers from both Europe and metropolitan Turkey, including an ethnographer who produced an account (Mansur 1972) that nicely complements Starr's work from the same period. Starr concedes that the model of marriage as a 'companionable relationship', as demonstrated by these wealthy professional immigrants, remained entirely foreign to local women. More recently tourism has brought the invasion of disco culture and the companionable relationships of Mick Jagger and Princess Margaret, among many others. On the face of it, this is no longer (if indeed it ever was) a promising background for generalizations about 'the position of women in rural Turkey'. Starr's comment that tourism 'is a useful comrade to the secularizing élites', as they attempt to move Turkey closer to Europe, might also be oversimplifying an impact that is actually more ambiguous.

The case materials from village and district courts constitute the most valuable feature of the book, even though many of the cases discussed are repeated from earlier publications and the reader wanting more contextualization needs to refer back to her earlier work. We are again introduced to the 'representative' village of Mandalinci (this is a pseudonym, but confusingly it would seem that the real name is also used on occasion). Some aspects of this village do seem to confirm other ethnographers' data, such as the absence of structured 'action sets' in dispute settlement procedures, and the low profile of the *muhtar* (headman) and the council of elders. Some points are not quite clear: for example, we are told in chapter four that the villagers deny the existence of *başlık*, the traditional form of marriage payment, while in chapter five it is suggested that poor boys may have to delay marriage for many years to save the sums required for it; and the sons of the rich have to work for some six to eight years for their parents after marriage to pay off their debts.

Some of the characters Starr presents seem distinctly unusual, notably a 'loose woman' called Fatma and her exceedingly tolerant husband. On the other hand, much of her material from the village suggests that informal methods of resolving disputes were still just as important here in the 1960s as they probably had been in earlier decades in the village studied by Stirling. Starr distinguishes usefully between dyadic and triadic negotiations, and shows how the status of the aggrieved is likely to affect his strategy. For example, patrons and other household heads are more likely to be drawn in where there is some inequality of rank. Some disputes, including certain land cases, are just too complex to resolve through informal methods at the local level, hence the general willingness to have recourse to state officials and judges at the district level. In this almost idyllic situation of 'legal pluralism', Starr seems to imply that all law-enforcement agents, including the village-based gendarmes as well as the public prosecutor, the judges and the district governor (*kaymakam*), have the full confidence and trust of the rural population.

Starr's historical and ethnographic exposition is linked to an ambitious but eclectic theoretical argument. Law is approached as 'discourse', and also as 'a metaphor for the struggle between coalitions vying for control of the Ottoman Turkish state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (pp. xxxiii-iv). The most direct influence would appear to be the late English historian E. P. Thompson, who approached law as an arena for conflict and even class struggle. In the Ottoman Turkish case the losers were the traditional gentry and Islamic élites, and the principal victors were the small farmers and women. Starr raises the important question of the relation between legal discourse and the legitimation of social and political orders, but only to insist repeatedly that secular discourses have prevailed over religious alternatives. There is no serious effort to address the class character of the present society. The invocation of an array of scholarly authorities, from Norbert Elias ('a European historian') on the role of élites in state formation, to Marshall Sahlins ('a cultural anthropologist') on the correct relationship between history and culture, does not add up to a coherent overall framework. More than

once I was confused by Starr's use of such terms as 'discourse' and 'symbol'. I was puzzled also by the comparison she makes at the end of the introduction between Turkish experience and the disintegration of the planned socialist societies of Eastern Europe. Most of her work seems to support the argument that societies really can be transformed from the top down by enlightened élites, the legal system providing one of the principal instruments for such secular restructuring in the Turkish case. She certainly does not view it in terms of a simple transplant from the West, for the 'Ottoman way' had undergone continuous reform in response to internal pressures from the early nineteenth century onwards. Nevertheless, in relation to other ethnographers Starr ends up placing more emphasis on discontinuity. She reported in her earlier work that élite values (including 'populism', 'individualism' and 'gender equality') were thoroughly entrenched on the Western Anatolian periphery by the mid-1960s and, if anything, she is even more emphatic in sticking to this line in the present book. Yet perhaps the fate of social engineering behind the former 'iron curtain', coupled with the abundant evidence of religious revivalism in Turkey itself, have begun to sow seeds of doubt. Starr is reduced to an invocation of Plato, proclaiming that 'things are not usually what they seem' (p. xxxvii).

One possible way out of these dilemmas would be to look more critically at the 'centre versus periphery' opposition that, as she notes, has been so influential in Ottoman Turkish studies. A fuller ethnographic account of the interaction between élites and villagers would help correct the impression of a simple, 'top-down' process of managed change. Starr several times points in this direction, for example in arguing that the legal system 'both shaped, and in turn was shaped by rural actors' (p. xli). She invokes Giddens on the subject of agency (only to differ from him in apparently viewing all rules as resources to be manipulated by actors (pp. 173-4)). But she has not yet provided enough information and analysis to fulfil these goals.

The book may prove useful for teaching legal anthropology, an area of the subject which has somehow never really attracted the numbers of students it deserves. But, with no new ethnography reported here, it probably has rather less to offer specialists on the anthropology of Turkey than her earlier book; and the new one is, in some ways, less well assembled, with numerous mistakes and infelicities in both English and Turkish. Nevertheless, one hopes that Starr will return to her evidently rich materials in further publications or, better still, carry out further fieldwork to test and reassess some of her arguments. It is valuable and provocative to find the Kemalist world-view commanding strong support from an anthropologist; and refreshing to find that at least one anthropologist is still able to write about Turkey without getting side-tracked into the analysis of orientalist representations, and yet without herself adding to the library of orientalist works.

Martin Stokes's first book has a sophisticated awareness of orientalist controversies. It also draws on the opposition between centre and periphery. A major novelty here is that his perspective on the latter comes mostly from the sprawling metropolis of Istanbul. As the first British anthropologist to bring out a full monograph on Turkey since Stirling (and like his predecessor trained in Oxford), the first thing one notes is that, unlike the other authors discussed here, he avoids altogether the limitations of a specific geographical focus. He pays relatively little attention to gender, but he does not avoid ethnography. His aim is to give an account of the urban condition in contemporary Turkey through a focus upon popular music, particularly the style or genre known as *arabesk*.

What exactly is *arabesk*? The opening lines of the book are wonderfully evocative:

Arabesk is a music of the city and for the city. It portrays a world of complex and turbulent emotions peopled by lovers doomed to solitude and a violent end. It describes a decaying city in which poverty-stricken migrant workers are exploited and abused, and calls on its listeners to pour another glass of *raki*, light another cigarette, and curse fate and the world.... As well as a musical form, arabesk is an entire anti-culture, a way of life whose influence, it is often said, can be detected as an aura of chaos and confusion surrounding every aspect of urban existence, from traffic to language, from politics to kitsch. (p. 1)

Stokes returns again and again to such evocations of mood. This music is a 'discourse of sentiment', and the sentiments are for the most part melancholic, bitter-sweet, and morbid. But people cannot articulate these feelings, which obviously poses problems for an anthropologist seeking a cultural understanding of emotion. Stokes solves the problem through a variety of techniques. He presents many *arabesk* lyrics in translation, he describes concerts he attended, courses of instruction in which he enrolled, and personal contacts with many of those involved in what has become a major entertainment industry. The evidence comes from his experience of bus terminals and of such institutions as recording studios and the private schools where music is taught to diverse audiences, as well as from the analysis of film.

But in addition to its emotional appeal to the individual 'heart' (*gönül*), this music generates intellectual and political emotions as well. To a much greater extent than is ever likely to occur with any popular music genre in a North Atlantic country, *arabesk* is embroiled in ideological debates that strike at the rationalist essence of the modern republic. Basically, it has been uncongenial to the Kemalist state, which views this culture as degenerate 'Oriental'. The forces that control this state, like modernizers elsewhere, have attached great importance to music and used it for nationalist legitimation purposes. Stokes perhaps makes too little of the virtually total suppression of traditional Ottoman classical music in the early decades of the republic, a suppression that cannot be fully compensated for by the carefully controlled revival that has been tolerated under more recent governments. He describes in detail how the *bağlama* (a long-necked

fretted lute, also known simply as *saz*) has become the national instrument; and how distinctive regional musical styles, such as the *kemençe*-based music of the east Black Sea coast, have been undermined by centralist homogenizing forces. Just as the precise boundaries between 'folk' (*halk*) music and the classical 'art' (*sanat*) music of the Ottoman high culture are in practice often rather difficult to disentangle, so the emergence of *arabesk* (from obscure origins in Egyptian film music) is seen as making available new cultural resources, effectively expanding options for musicians and audiences alike. Stokes does not employ the term 'discourse' in its rigid Foucauldian sense and is not deceived by the sharply antagonistic rhetoric sometimes used in critical debates. He is concerned with a complex, messy, practical world, in which boundaries are fuzzy and frequently crossed, for example by performers whose ideal may be to combine a career at the dominant state television corporation (TRT) with a lucrative private commercial network of *arabesk* recording. He is sensitive both to the powerful commercial interests that dominate the industry and to the political context of 1980s Turkey, in which the Özal government was accused by its detractors of breaking with Kemalist traditions through its open encouragement of *arabesk*.

It is made clear that 'official' musicians, who are expected to be open to Western influences and to be prepared to experiment with polyphony, are nevertheless, both for their own 'career' reasons and because of 'the belief that the Turkish people would never approve of any ideas which had their origin outside Turkey' (pp. 86-7), not at all so 'progressive' in practice. They must have been relieved to discover that this particular Westerner was more than content to respect the monophonic language of local tradition, the musical culture that draws together the diverse genres of *sanat*, *halk* and *arabesk*. This highlights the question of the fieldworker's status, which is in some ways even more problematic in this ethnomusicological study than in the community studies discussed above. Without ever allowing his own presence to become obtrusive, Stokes makes it clear that he was attracted to this music as an enthusiast. He clearly became highly proficient as a performer, but in the course of his research he inevitably came into frequent contact with representatives of officialdom who expected him to share their values (a dominant ideology?) and to condemn *arabesk*. This he could never do, believing the music to be an entirely legitimate popular response to the impositions of the state and industrialism upon urban society. Often asked for his views as a foreign 'expert', Stokes confesses to 'worries in my own mind about the role I was playing in changing the experience of the culture I was trying to study' (p. 17). Nevertheless, he seems to have been able to negotiate his own modest pathways, until he reached 'a position to survey, from an ethnographic perspective, a range of musical activity in the city, from discussions of cultural policy at the highest levels of the State Conservatories and TRT to domestic *muhabbet* and musical sessions' (p. 19).

Perhaps the most controversial chapter in this book is the final one, in which Stokes explores an affinity between *arabesk* and another, still more powerful discourse of opposition in the modern Turkish republic, that of traditional Islam.

(Why do Western ethnographers of Turkey tend to postpone their main discussion of Islam until a final chapter?) A detailed analysis of language and syntax identifies a 'common fund of symbols and metaphors' (p. 225) and makes the case for viewing *arabesk* as a modern variant of the established Sufi practice of *sema*, an ecstatic form of music and dance. The analogy would be rejected by official Islamic institutions, just as Sufi practices have attracted the opprobrium of the orthodox in the past. They disapprove thoroughly of all the obvious secular habits encouraged by *arabesk*, not least the consumption of alcohol. But although Stokes himself acknowledges that some of his arguments remain speculative, they constitute a powerful conclusion and a very valuable addition to other recent writings on Islam in Turkey (cf. Mardin 1989, Tapper (ed.) 1991, Toprak 1981).

Two of the book's seven chapters (numbers three and six) may be somewhat heavy going for the reader who (like this one) has no ethnomusicological training, but even these offer rich rewards to those who persevere. The clarity of the text is admirable throughout and I noted only one instance of incorrect Turkish spelling (*kadrolo sanatçı*, p. 82, should read *kadrolu sanatçı*). A fuller glossary would have been helpful. My only other quibble would be the translation of *yönetmen* as 'director', when surely 'producer' is the usual English term in the context of the recording studio. But overall, in spite of occasional self-deprecating remarks about his 'shaky' command of the language, one has greater confidence in Stokes's linguistic skills than in those of Delaney, Marcus or Starr.

There remain, however, some more fundamental issues raised in Stokes's work that leave me with doubts about the general interpretation. As the author explains, the stereotypes of Western orientalism have been deployed by Turkish critics of *arabesk* music. Stokes, of course, disapproves of such representations. Not only the musicians and producers of *arabesk* culture, but also the varied audiences that consume it are seen by him as agents, actively engaged in negotiating their identities. But (echoing one of Delaney's themes) he shows that the ideals expressed in the music (particularly clear in the film summaries in chapter five) are those of repose and passivity. What is not finally clear to me is how Stokes can uphold a view of *arabesk* as an anti-culture without himself risking an endorsement of the distortions of orientalism. His concluding sentences are as follows:

arabesk provides a focus for the despair of an urban society on the periphery of world economic systems, in which nearly everybody is faced with social and economic forces over which they have no control. Where this despair can be rendered meaningful and shared in song and ecstatic dance, some form of transcendence is always possible. (p. 227)

Music and dance are clearly powerful forms of communication, and the fact that young children and an extraordinary assortment of 'gender benders' are prominent among *arabesk* performers is evidence that for some this music may be associated with the transcendence of conventional male sexuality. On the other hand, some of the most popular figures also fit into the familiar Western category of 'working-

class hero', and their career paths (well known through the national media) simply the sort of 'rags to riches' narratives told everywhere. According to Stokes, the *arabesk* films themselves make it perfectly plain that alcohol consumption (though undoubtedly a 'dense semantic act') is ultimately escapist, and does not enable transcendence. Stokes is dismissive of the official, modernist, secularist discourse that would see the whole anti-culture of *arabesk* as no less futile and escapist, achieving nothing more than 'short-term gratification'; but he does not seriously attempt to *argue* against such an analysis. Clearly *he* has found meaning and significance in the genre himself. He has found transcendence of the Western musical traditions in which he was educated, and which he had long found oppressive. But what kind of transcendence is really attained by local audiences? Personally I still find it easy to sympathize with the rationalist critics, who may experience less of the exquisite emotional release afforded by *arabesk* stars at *muhabbet* gatherings, but whose analysis of the social and political significance of the genre seems close to the mark.

The series in which this fine book appears is entitled 'Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology', which I suppose is in itself a sign of changing times in British anthropology. To my mind Stokes really does achieve an innovative synthesis in this book: cultural meanings are subtly explored against the evidence rather than imposed by the observer, and the author pays careful attention to the full social and political context. At the same time I hope it is still premature to identify the demise of the community-focused enquiry; indeed Stokes himself is clearly superbly equipped to follow up this study with one that would examine music-making more intensively within one urban locality, in which closer attention to such variables as class and region of origin, plus of course gender, would complement the more macro-orientation of the present book. At any rate, there is no doubt that in his first book Martin Stokes admirably realises the stated goal of this new Oxford series, namely to set 'the criteria of excellence in ethnographic description and innovation in analysis'. Moreover, despite my more critical comments on the others, all the books reviewed here together mark a useful advance in anthropological understandings of modern Turkey.

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