revisionists the positivist historical perspective that attempts to uncover a final historical 'Truth'. Ueno, on the contrary, claims that there is no objective, single, historical 'Truth' but only different 'realities' for different people. For Ueno, testimonies are important not because they are useful in discovering a single authentic history, but because these various narratives of history themselves are the very process of constructing the past in the present.

Ueno's work has always been polemical and *Nationalism and Gender* is no exception. However, she has successfully raised crucial issues around 'Military Comfort Women' which many writers on this issue have failed to examine. And Ueno's analysis has a sharp critical edge. Nevertheless, she does not offer any alternative approach to history. If there exist multiple realities, as she claims, can we claim any realities as history? Where does judgement lie? Similarly, if feminism needs to transcend the state, how could this be achieved? It seems that she has left these questions for the reader to grapple with further.

Maki Kimura

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Rethinking Islam and liberal democracy: Islamist women in Turkish politics

Yeşim Arat; State University of New York Press, Albany, 2005, 150p,
ISBN 0-7914-6466-0 £12.00 (Pbk); ISBN 0-7914-6465-2 £34.50 (Hbk)

The book by Yeşim Arat sheds light in a very innovative way, on the much talked about uniqueness of the Turkish experience regarding female's emancipation and status. This is done by thoroughly detailing the mobilization and modes of participation of women in the *Refah* Party. The book clearly illustrates that when analysing women's participation in seemingly illiberal movements, to advocate their false consciousness is both an easy and simplistic way of looking into their participation. Instead, the research highlights a group of women who were apparently caught up in the webs of the private realm, but who were ready and willing to be politicized in the pursuit of their self-interests and in achieving self-realization. One of the most interesting findings in Arat's research, is the way *Refah* women built up their constituency. Of particular interest is the author's emphasis on the significance of kinship and community ties in reaching over to other women and in politicizing them. Hence, the concept of 'apolitical politicization' can be a valuable theoretical tool in investigating women's political mobilization and passage from the private into the public sphere. Reading the book, the reviewer cannot help but think about the ongoing debate on the application of the concept of civil society to Middle Eastern societies which has been pervaded by arguments on whether such a concept, which implies

the grouping together of (supposedly unrelated) individuals to defend common interests, is relevant in a setting where the family occupies such a preponderant position.

Clearly, in this particular case, these ties have played a very important role in drawing women together in the pursuit of common interests. The rallying around issues such as prostitution in the Black Sea region, clearly demonstrates that Islamist women, united by a common religious ideology can and do get together in order to defend what they perceive to be their common interests. This reality, in turn, may shed light on the debate regarding the compatibility of Islam with democracy as well as on more elaborate ways of defining the concept of civil society in communal societies.

The research by Arat is also a critical evaluation of the achievements and failures of the Turkish Republic in the secularization of society. It depicts a large group of people who feel alienated by the pervasive secularization and its concomitant rejection of religious values in the public sphere. It seems that women's disillusionment with the practices of the Republic and the subsequent rejection of women who chose to express their religiosity through their attire has completely drawn them into the *Refah* Party. Of particular importance is the assertion that although the *Refah* Party was not exactly feminist in its functioning and did not give women a say in its internal structure, that is something the country's secular parties also did not do. The glass ceiling is a very common feature in all societies, even the more liberal ones, a fact that is often overlooked when discussing the illiberal practices of Islamist parties.

The experiences depicted in this book (which, as the author asserts, are not representative due to the small sample of interviewees), are specific to the Turkish experience. These women, although adhering to a religious view of the world and advocating an Islamic ethos in public life, are not prepared to relinquish the gains obtained through secularization. Hence, their view of Islam is profoundly embedded in liberal principles of autonomy, individualism and self-realization. Throughout the book, Arat herself points out that, in this case, women can afford to be idealistic and advocate a certain vision of Islam because their acquired rights are not at stake.

Finally, the book illustrates to what extent a certain vision of Islam is compatible with liberalism and democracy and the potentials for cross-fertilization. Political Islam can be part of 'normalized' politics, as the ascent to power of the Justice and Development Party so rightly illustrates. On a more negative note, however, the reviewer feels that the discussion on liberalism and political Islam is somewhat cursory and should have been given more room than it has in the book, particularly considering the centrality of this dichotomy to the argument. But overall, this book is an important contribution to the debate on women in politics, particularly in what might be considered 'fundamentalist' movements.

As discussed, the wealth of information Arat provides also resonates with other broader issues, namely the adaptability of political Islam to 'sanctioned' politics, the compatibility of Islam with liberal democracy, and finally the issue of female agency in fundamentalist movements. In conclusion, this is a very interesting book that is exceedingly useful in understanding women's participation in illiberal movements, and for exploring the issue of the compatibility of Islam with liberal democracy.

Vânia Carvalho Pinto

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Liberating economics: feminist perspectives on families, work and globalization

Drucilla K. Barker and Susan F. Feinstein; University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2004, 208p, ISBN 0-472-06843-1, £17.50 (Pbk); ISBN 0-472-09843-8 £41.50 (Hbk)

Sandra Harding's endorsement states that this book 'is a must-read for every future economist, undergraduate and graduate, and for every women's studies student. It should be required reading for every policy-maker at the WB, IMF and WTO'. So is this view justified and if so what is it about the book that supports this claim?

The book opens with the paradox of the increasing prominence given to gender equality (now considered central to economic growth) in international policy and the continuing hardships and injustices experienced by women, despite their increasingly visible contributions to the market economy. The authors argue that feminist economics would allow some progress to be made towards understanding, if not resolving, this contradiction by bringing the crucial and currently hidden contribution of the domestic or reproductive sphere into the analysis. In so doing, it would 'liberate economics' from its current pre-occupations with scarcity, competitiveness and market efficiency.

The authors show how feminist economics understands economics as the study of *provisioning* rather than simply of markets. It has a different understanding of the human subject and operates with a different set of boundaries than orthodox economics. More specifically 'rational economic man', the cornerstone of neoclassical economics, who makes choices on the basis of atomized preferences in order to maximize their individual (or in some cases household) utility, is replaced by a socially situated individual whose decisions or agency is shaped by the constraints of their social context. The orthodox approach regards individuals