



CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY SOFIA

## CAS WORKING PAPER SERIES

**Issue 1**

Sofia 2007

This publication presents part of the research outcome of a project carried out at the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia under the title

## **Sofia Academic NEXUS**

### How to Think about the Balkans: Culture, Region, Identity

*Available in electronic form at  
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**AYSE PARLA**

**LONGING, BELONGING, AND LOCATIONS  
OF HOMELAND AMONG TURKISH IMMIGRANTS FROM  
BULGARIA**

**Introduction: Variable Homelands**

In his oral history *cum* novel, *The Emigrants*, W.G. Sebald quotes a German Jew who fled from his turbulent town to New York in the thirties: “I often come out here, said Uncle Kasimir, it makes me feel that I am a long way away, though I never quite know from where” (Sebald, 146).

The lack of a geographical referent for the residual sense of remoteness expressed by this particular emigrant is akin to what Said has famously called the “generalized condition of homelessness.” It contrasts sharply with the resilient and politicized attachment to a national homeland sustained by many contemporary diasporic groups. In fact, one of the splits in the proliferating literature on the transnational movement of people is precisely around the significance of territorial attachments. One strand emphasizes the waning pull of a national homeland and the virtues of “flexible citizenship,” (Ong 1999), where displacement, even if not initially voluntary, is ultimately appropriated by the migrant as a creative opportunity. The second strand posits instead the significance of continuing political and emotional attachments to a national homeland as giving purpose and meaning to the diasporic existence of the displaced. Both approaches have been influential in undermining the putative isomorphism of culture, place and people (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). But while the emphasis on cosmopolitan (Morley and Robbins 1995), hybrid (Bhabha 1994), or creolized (Gilroy 1993) identities of the first strand challenges the primacy of ethno-national belonging, the second trend argues that displacement and deterritorialization do not necessarily result in more flexible identities, but may result instead in reinforced ethnic attachments and nationalisms (Anderson 1991 [1983], Levy 2000, Werbner 2000).<sup>1</sup>

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1 An important question here, albeit beyond the scope of this paper, concerns the relation between description and prescription. There is often a slippage, among scholars of both trends, between describing the empirical data, and implicitly affirming it. Thus one

“Return” migrations complicate further this rift in the migration and diaspora literature because of the ambiguity that surrounds the “original” location of homeland. The Turks of Bulgaria who fled in 1989 their lived homeland as a result of the repressive measures of the falling communist government in Bulgaria, arrived in what Turkish nationalism designates as their true, ancestral homeland. Yet many had not even visited this symbolic homeland before. Nonetheless, press accounts were replete with the trope of the arriving immigrant kissing the earth, while the return of almost half of the 300,000 migrants back to Bulgaria after the fall of Zhivkov’s regime went virtually unreported. To complicate the pattern of this particular migration wave even further, movement in both directions has continued since the nineties, with seasonal labor migration to Turkey in response to the local demand for domestic work, as well as from Turkey since the prospects of Bulgaria’s EU candidacy. The multiple departures and arrivals in both directions, and the meanings attached to them, render the location of homeland among Bulgarian Turkish immigrants ambiguous at best – take the contrast for example between a 1989 migrant who came and settled, a 1989 migrant who returned to Bulgaria, and a post nineties labor migrant who has to cross the border every three months because of visa regulations.

The framework of transnationalism shifts the focus away from pinning down origin and destination, and towards recognizing the duality (or multiplicity) of locations that figure in the experience and imagination of immigrants. Whether called transnational communities (Kearney 1995), bilocal communities (Clifford 1997), or transnational circuits (Rouse 1991), the framework of transnationalism<sup>2</sup> appears more suited to the experience of Bulgarian Turks than either the classical diaspora paradigm that posits yearning for a single homeland as fundamental, or the cosmopolitan paradigm that altogether dismisses embeddedness in a particular locality. The recognition of attachments that transcend national boundaries should not, however, come at the expense of investigating the abiding grip that the nation-states exert on the dislocation experience. I thus argue that besides recognizing dual or multiple attachments, the framework of transnationalism has to be strongly attuned to the nationalist contexts out of and into which migration occurs. In analyzing the narratives of homeland among Bulgarian Turkish immigrants, then, I demonstrate the tensions between the phenomenological experience of dislocation and the discursive formations of nationalism that shape and limit those experiences.

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wonders, for example, how much of the cosmopolitanism is intrinsic to the migrant community studied, and how much an attribute of the projections of the scholar who has a preference for cosmopolitan identities instead of ethno-nationally defined ones. The same question holds, of course, for the other camp.

2 Other ways of defining the transnational have been to specify its distinction from a related term. Kearney, another major theorist of transnationalism who studies the Mexican-US border, defines transnational in contradistinction to the global (Kearney 1995).

## Previous Migrations Across the Border

The Turks of Bulgaria, after their original settlement in the Balkans as a result of the expansionist strategies of the Ottoman Empire, became a minority with the establishment of the Bulgarian nation-state in 1858. Prior to the massive exodus of 1989, there were five other substantial migration waves. Two of them predate the founding of the Turkish nation-state: migrations occurred during the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877-8 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, as Muslims retreated from the lost territories of the Ottoman Empire. After the establishment of the Turkish nation-state, three big waves occurred: one in 1925, following the agreement signed by Bulgaria and Turkey allowing voluntary resettlement<sup>3</sup>; another in 1950-51, soon after the advent of communism and the collectivization of land in Bulgaria; and a third in 1968, following the treaty to unite separated families.<sup>4</sup> These migrations depended not only on the political regimes in Bulgaria and their different policies towards the Turkish minority, but also on the regimes in Turkey, and the current political and economic climate.

If Bulgarian communism fostered the ideology of ethno-national unity based on proletariat brotherhood, Turkish nationalism portrayed Bulgarian Turks as kindred who retained their distinct ethnic and cultural essence at all costs. The actual degree of the Turkish minority's interaction and mixing with the larger Bulgarian society seems to have greatly varied by generation and geographical location. In particular, communist party initiatives during the 1950s aimed at spreading education, ensuring healthcare, and encouraging cultural activities and publications in Turkish; these were successful to varying degrees in integrating the Turkish minority and installing a socialist consciousness that sought to override ethnic isolationism. These initiatives, however, were eventually replaced by more aggressive assimilation policies, which included the closing of Turkish schools and the elimination of Turkish newspapers and journals.<sup>5</sup>

The drive for homogeneity reached its apex with the assimilation campaign, infamously labeled the "rebirth campaign," that began in 1984. The Bulgarian government under the leadership of Todor Zhivkov launched a systematic effort to forcibly change Turkish names to Bulgarian ones, ban the speaking of the Turkish language in public spaces, and ultimately deny the existence of Turks in Bulgaria (see the report by Amnesty International, 1986). In 1989,

3 For more details on the treaties, see the two essays by Kirisci and Tarhanli in a compilation by BMMYK (2000) of court decisions in Turkey concerning issues of asylum, refugees and immigration.

4 It is extremely hard to give precise numbers for these migration waves because both the Bulgarian and Turkish primary sources are biased, each reducing or amplifying the figures as would befit their ideological purposes. For reasonable estimates, see Kirisci (1995), Poulton (1989) and Vasileva (1992).

5 For a more detailed account of the repressive policies directed at the Turkish minority, see Eminov (1997).

partly in response to international outcry, and partly because it was expedient publicity, Özal announced that Turkey would open its borders to Turks who were officially designated as “ethnic kin.” When the number of immigrants surpassed 300,000, however, the Turkish government abruptly closed the border. In less than a year, almost half of the immigrants went back to Bulgaria, disillusioned with their alleged homeland (Vasileva 1997, Zhelyazkova 1998). Perhaps the most recurrent sentiment expressed during the course of my fieldwork among Bulgarian Turkish immigrants was that after having been persecuted by the government in Bulgaria because they were “Turkish,” they were marginalized in Turkey by the local population because they were “Bulgarian.”

### Finding the Appropriate Category

As Turkish nationalist historiography would have it, “That Bulgarian Turks are inseparable and indivisible from Turkish Turks is not a mere theory. Whatever might be said, Bulgarian Turks are a part of their blood brothers in Turkey. The apple cannot fall far from the tree” (Şimşir, 1986: 284).<sup>6</sup>

The above statement is emblematic of the nationalist creed that ethnic affiliation, primordially defined, irrevocably ties a specific group of people to a specific space that is designated as the place of origin. This relation between the place of origin and people is seen as an organic relationship, as in the metaphor of the apple and the tree deployed by the author. Furthermore, this view assumes that place of origin has priority over the lived homeland, and that there is an essential, indivisible link based on shared blood between those who have left and their “blood kindred” who have remained in the original homeland.

According to the terms set by this history, then, the population flow of 300,000 Turks in 1989 from Bulgaria to Turkey should be classified as a “return migration.” Indeed the 1989 exodus was popularly hailed as the great homecoming. A 1980 review article in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, however, defines return migration as the “movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle” (Gmelsch 1980:23). The word “resettle” carries the assumption of residence prior to emigration, rendering the notion of return to a place never before visited an oxymoron. Within a decade after this article, a radical recasting of definitions in the field ensued, which makes the notion of a return to homeland never visited not only possible, but also the very *raison d’etre* of diaspora. In the founding issue of the journal *Diaspora*, certain features were given by Safran (1991) for a minority to qualify for the diaspora model. These

6 “Bulgaristan Türklerinin Türkiye Türkleriyle ayrılmazlığı ve bölünmezliği, bir teori değildir. Kim ne derse desin, Bulgaristan Türkleri, Türkiye’deki kan kardeşlerinden bir parçadır. Elma dalından uzağa düşemez.”

included a collective vision or myth about, and political and economic commitment to, the original homeland as well as the expectation of an eventual return, along with a certain alienation from the host country.

Some of these features were relevant to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The status of Turkey was a matter of contestation throughout the history of the two nation-states; propaganda by Turkish nationalists asserted the uniqueness of the Turkish motherland and its superiority to the communist Bulgaria, and counter-propaganda by communists emphasized the depravity and corruption of capitalist Turkey, and the allegiance of the Turkish minority to the Bulgarian state. Either way, Turkey figured prominently in both the public discourses of the party-subsidized press and the more covert conversations among the Turkish minority (cf. Simsir 1986, 1990.) My own conversations with Turks in Bulgaria who did not leave for Turkey in 1989 suggest that even some of the most integrated among the Turkish minority felt a strong sense of alienation in the eighties, when the regime forced the Turkish minority to change their names and declared that there were, in fact, “no Turks in Bulgaria” in the first place.

If the elements mentioned above constitute a diasporic consciousness among the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, then the migration of more than 300,000 people in 1989 do classify as a return. But besides ignoring significant variation among immigrants with respect to motives for and actual experiences of migration, as the narratives below will reveal, where does one then situate nearly half of these immigrants who decided to go back to Bulgaria within a year of their so-called homecoming? Shall we call that a double return, or a re-return? And where would that put the current location of diaspora?

The earlier, classic migration paradigm took for granted the world order of nation-states and its territorial definition, while the diaspora paradigm, in its early incarnations, though shifting the perspective to those of the displaced, ultimately enacted the naturalizing fallacy by privileging the viewpoint of nationalist diaspora consciousness. Analytically more rigorous definitions of homeland and return have to take into account more carefully the tensions between, on the one hand, a political geography dictated by national borders, and on the other hand, individual experiences of dislocation that often result in split attachments. Furthermore, the location of homeland shifts not only within individual itineraries, but also across migrants who belong to the same migration wave and thus often are mistakenly viewed as a monolithic entity. In the next section I trace the border crossings of three immigrants whose different trajectories point to the need to move beyond both the nationalist discourse of homecoming and dichotomous conceptualizations of homeland and return: 1) Deniz Bey settled permanently in Istanbul after 1989; 2) Hamdi Dayı went back to Bulgaria within a year of his arrival in Turkey; 3) Kerime Teyze, after spending ten years in Turkey, returned to Bulgaria following her

husband's retirement. Though unique, each individual's trajectory is at the same time representative of larger trends of migration, settlement and relocation among the 1989 immigrants.

### **A Permanent Homecoming**

Deniz Bey, aged 48, was employed full-time as a health worker at a clinic in Istanbul. He earned an M.D. degree in Bulgaria but it is not recognized in Turkey. Already as a child he had his heart set on becoming a doctor, his resolve clenched by his family's circumstances – a father who earned a living as a shepherd and a mother with heart rheumatism. He had to jump many hurdles to realize his dream profession. His third grade teacher was very fond of him, but would often say with regret, "Such a smart boy, such a pretty boy, but alas, he is Turkish." This was a formative memory for Deniz Bey; he said those words made him aware very early on that the Bulgarian regime did not regard his "ethnic kin" favorably. He realized that the Bulgarian secret police monitored Turkish families, surveillance being more lenient if the family was tolerant to the communist regime but strict if loyal to Turkish customs and mores. Deniz Bey himself came from a family, he underscored, which has steadfastly preserved Turkish traditions, and which put him at odds with the regime from the start.

In high school, he was approached by a party member who made him an offer: In return for reporting any suspicious activities by fellow ethnic kin to the authorities, he would be guaranteed an army service free of any hardship, and immediately following his discharge, would be able to study at the Department of Oriental Studies at Sofia University. This meant, he said, outstanding prospects for a job at the Foreign Ministry. He rejected them "because they would be at odds with my upbringing, my family mores." He believes that his refusal resulted being tabbed by the regime before he had even finished high school. Although he won admission to medical school, his acceptance was delayed because he was discharged from the military ten days after the formal registration deadline. He eventually obtained his diploma, but close surveillance of his activities continued after graduation. He would regularly be called up and questioned on his professional practices. When the forcible name-changing reached Deniz Bey's village, he refused to change his name, and he was released from his duties. He devoted his time to resistance activities against the regime. While nationalists in Bulgaria were advancing the thesis that the Turkish minority actually consisted of Bulgarians who had forcibly been converted to Islam by the Ottomans, Deniz Bey and his peers were putting forth their own research, backed up by ethnographic studies in what Deniz Bey called the "pure" Bulgarian villages: that all Bulgarians were in fact of Turkish origin.

After being jobless for several months, Deniz Bey, to his surprise, was awarded an honorary trip to Kostence. There he contacted a Turkish diplomat, and handed over a list of people whose names had thus far been changed. Shortly after, he attended a meeting at the house of a dissident Bulgarian intellectual, and was almost caught. He remained with the resistance, and was eventually seized by the police, questioned and tortured.

In a published testimony, Deniz Bey gives the following written account of his departure for Turkey:

On May 17, 1989, the Bulgarian police came and asked two people in our village, one being me, to apply to get our passports to exit the country within 24 hours. How happy I was I cannot even begin to say. But I insisted I would not leave if they would not let go of my sister and her family as well. The mayor took pity on me, and sorted out our papers. But at the time, protests were being held, so I did not want to leave right away. In order to meet the Turkish delegate that was rumored to arrive and to tell them the situation in Bulgaria in all its clarity, I delayed my departure. They took me again on the 24th of March. They held me in prison and after severe beatings, they let me go because they could not find any concrete evidence against me. I had to lie inside of a sheep's skin (for two days) for the bruises on my body to heal. The Turkish delegate we were waiting for did not come. Finally, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, I was expelled with my family and four suitcases. Although our ticket was to Vienna, the train they put us on arrived in Kapikule. So we were directly reunited with the Motherland. Now we are very happy (quoted in Togrol 1991, translation mine).

I quote this published account for two reasons. One, the ultimate chord of closure attained through reunion with the motherland is representative of what became a standard trope in media accounts of the 1989 immigrants. But while the above segment marks the end of the Deniz Bey's narrative in the book, the oral version delivered to me continues with discordant notes that jar the harmony promised by the "reunion with the motherland."

Deniz Bey confessed to many disappointments during his residence in Turkey. The most profound is that his M.D. degree is not recognized in Turkey. He also expressed disappointment with the attitudes and character traits of people he got to know in Turkey. "Perhaps it is natural for me to feel this way, coming from a village of 4000 where I knew everyone from the about-to-die to the about-to-be born. Here, when I see the behavior of those I thought I knew well, I ask myself why people are so double-faced."

But most devastating for him, he said, was the persecution he felt at the workplace, when he was subjected to a random search one day upon allegations of theft of clinic property.

I was so hurt that I called the boss at eleven (at night), and said, “Sir, when in foreign land/giaourland (gavuristan), they searched not only my house but the very holes of the gas stove, I knew it was because they were accusing me of espionage. Pray, for what reason have I deserved this search here?” He dismissed me with the reply, “it was a routine procedure.”

Despite all his disappointments, however, Deniz Bey does not consider going back to Bulgaria. He even refused an offer for a seat in the parliament made to him by his friends from the resistance movement who later became involved with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, the party that by and large represents the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. “Now I will tell you exactly the answer I gave to this offer,” Deniz Bey continued, “so that you will better understand my character. I said, ‘I would be Turkey’s street sweeper, but I will not be an MP in Bulgaria.’”

His decision to never go back was thus firmly made and dramatically expressed, but Deniz Bey admitted that it was no easy feat to have crossed the border once and for all.

But I will tell you truthfully, my world darkened when I crossed that border. Everyone’s world darkened. My first memories are there. My parents’ graves, my grandparents’ graves. But I can’t go and visit anymore, because I understand that language, those insults, because inside the Bulgarians, there is that malice, that hatred. I, too, don’t have any trust left.

### **A Permanent Return**

On the day that I met the 78 year-old Hamdi Dayı in his native village in Bulgaria, he was celebrating because it was the anniversary of his return to Bulgaria. He announced playfully, “like the Bulgarians who celebrate their freedom from Ottoman yoke, I celebrate every year on this day my freedom from Turkish yoke.”

Like Deniz Bey, Hamdi Dayı was approached by a party member when he was an adolescent. Unlike Deniz Bey, he agreed to join the party, and was given the chance to make up for his lack of education by attending night school. He soon became an exemplary party member, was among the first to join in the collectivization of the land, and he worked to persuade others among the Turkish minority resistant to collectivization. He went on to become the tourism representative and co-founder of the *Pionerski Lager* in his village.

Imagine his utter bewilderment then, when he was summoned one day in 1989 to the party office, and was told he had only three days to pack up and leave. He explains the seeming illogic of the party in banishing a dutiful member as both a tactic of intimidation and a precaution to eliminate those in prestigious positions who might pose opposition. “But anyway, we did

not oppose them, when it is the decision of our party, we would not have opposed them,” he said. Despite the circumstances of his departure, Hamdi Dayı expressed no sense of betrayal. To the contrary, when retelling what to me sounded like a harsh confrontation with the official who told him to leave, he constantly emphasized the remedying aspects:

He asked (the party official), have you prepared for Turkey already? No, I said, nothing of the sort crossed my mind. I said, I know about Turkey, we cannot live there. My birthplace is here, in Bulgaria, my motherland is here, comrade, I have no intention to go. The system there is different, we are used to the system here. Don’t talk so much, he said, I give you three days permission, and you are leaving Bulgaria. However much baggage you want to take, you can take, he said. That is, he let me take baggage. That is, he was saying something good, I understood later. I said, but I can’t be ready in three days. All right, he said, one extra day from me. Four days. When I took my leave, I said to him, farewell. Let me repeat, he said, however fast you get out of Bulgaria, it is for your own good. Consider these words now. I thought about them a lot.

At the Turkish border, Hamdi Dayı was instructed by officials to continue on to Ankara, but some distant relatives persuaded him to stay in Istanbul. He and his extended family found a cheap place at the outskirts of Istanbul. Hamdi Dayı’s yearning for his village back in Bulgaria was so intense, he could not bear to look outside the only window in his room. Even his ten-year old grandson understood his devastation, Hamdi Dayı said, for the little boy presented him one day with a picture from home, which he hung not on the wall, but on the window. Once, when he got drunk with the guard of a rich neighbor, Hamdi Dayı fired a shot with the guard’s gun, sang a folksong, and after stripping off his clothes, he jumped in the lake. “The guard was calling after me,” Hamdi Dayı said, “shouting ‘Granddad, did you go mad? Where do you think you are going? You can’t go from here.’ ‘Yes, I can go, I told him, Bulgaria is this way.’ ‘But this is not the sea, the guard said, you can’t pass across.’ ‘If I have to pass from under the earth,’ I said, ‘I will.’” Cajoled by his mother’s screams, Hamdi Dayı swam back eventually, but when he got out, his feet were bleeding because of all the glass on the bottom. “If only it had been the Black Sea,” Hamdi Dayı insisted still, this time to me, “I would have gone, even if I made it only half of the way, I would have still gone.”

Immediately following the communist party leader Todor Zhivkov’s resignation in October 1989, the ruling post-Zhivkov communist government, with the open support of the opposition party, the Union of Democratic Forces, granted back the rights of the Turkish minority. Hamdi Dayı was among the first to join the convoy of immigrants returning to Bulgaria.

When we reached the border, I sent the rest ahead with a taxi (he had some money to collect) and I went to a hotel for the night. The boss welcomed me,

and said, in Bulgarian, what would you like? He said, you are an immigrant from Turkey, no? I know what you will want. You will want rakiya and you will want köfte. Give me two köfte, I said. And rakiya. He brought them. He brought four köfte instead of two. I said, I can't eat this all. He said, I know, you won't be full until you eat enough köfte. Eat as much as you like, this is Bulgarian köfte. After I went to my room. There is a nice bath. So I did not want to smell in the midst of the children, and I hadn't taken a bath. Anyway, water was so expensive in Istanbul, we were taking it from the lake. I went in the tub, and stayed so long I almost fell asleep. I passed over to the bed. And what a sleep I had, when I had crossed onto Bulgarian soil, no dreams, no nothing. Thank God. I made a prayer, and said, God I lived long enough, but please grant me two more days so I can also sleep once in my village, too. Of course, when I arrived in the village, I said, thank you God, but please grant me a few more years, please, so I can enjoy living here in Bulgaria some more....

### **“Home to One Man, Exile to Another”: National Territory and Belonging**

The idea of the nation-state is based on the premise of autonomous and spatially distinct units. In a world order where nations appropriate, and derive their legitimacy from, such discrete, territorialized spaces, a major identity marker becomes belonging to a particular national territory. Belonging, Liisa Malkki suggests, taking her cue from Deleuze and Guattari, is often expressed in nationalist thought through arborescent metaphors (Malkki 1995: 436). Images of roots and trees abound in nationalist depictions of the relation between people and the soil to which they belong, as in the metaphor of the tree and the apple we saw earlier to describe the relation of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey.<sup>7</sup>

Although Deniz Bey did not set foot outside Bulgaria until adulthood, it figures in his imaginary as “foreign land” (*gavuristan*). In line with the conflation of ethnicity and place as posited by nationalist thought, Deniz Bey's marginal status as a member of a minority group leads him to pledge absolute allegiance to a homeland he has never seen. He thus does not view his expulsion as a state of exile; but rather, he embraces it as a homecoming, a reunion with the “true” homeland. That very same homeland carries none of the symbolic force for Hamdi Dayı, although he, too, has shared the same minority status as Deniz Bey. But for Hamdi Dayı, commitment to the communist party overrides ethnic affiliation. When he is expelled, therefore, there is no solace in going to Turkey. He returns to Bulgaria as soon as conditions

7 Thus the very notion of homeland “suggests that each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it.” (Malkki, 438).

make it possible, and the act of border crossing is narrated together with the act of bathing, as if his body were being really cleansed for the first time in months. Not only do köfte and rakiya taste different and better on the other side of the border, he claims that the very soil induces the first peaceful sleep he has had in months.

With their exclusive and essentialized notions of homeland, the narratives of Deniz Bey and Hamdi Dayı appear to conform to the logic of nationalism. Read against each other, however, the two narratives challenge the same logic they seem to affirm when taken separately. T. S. Eliot's lines, "Every country is home to one man/and exile to another," are meaningful here with a peculiar twist: Bulgaria was home to Hamdi Dayı and exile to Deniz Bey, and Turkey vice versa, despite their initially shared citizenship (Bulgarian) and ethnic identification (Turkish).

Considerations of the life cycle, social and economic capital, and political affiliation, not to mention calculations of risk and benefit, help dispel some of the mystique around identification with a particular homeland that nationalist ideologies posit as a natural force. The passage into adulthood for both men was marked with an encounter with the party. But whereas Deniz Bey took pride in his refusal of the party offer that would have secured him a prestigious position, Hamdi Dayı took pride in his initiation into the party. Their respective rejection and endorsement of the party marked a definitive turning point in their lives, with Deniz Bey joining the resistance soon afterwards, and Hamdi Dayı thriving as a hard-working, successful and respected party member in his village. The resentment Deniz Bey felt as early as third grade when his teacher lamented his being a Turk eventually coagulated into resistance against the discriminatory policies of the regime, and heightened his sense of not being quite an insider. By contrast, Hamdi Dayı's identification with the regime was absolute as a successful party member who first had the opportunity to complete an education he otherwise would not have, and later played a major role in convincing his skeptical co-villagers to agree to the collectivization of land during the sixties. While Deniz Bey upheld the ideal of Turkey as the homeland he truly belong to, Hamdi Dayı saw no disjuncture between his lived and symbolic homeland. His response to the officer's allegations that he was secretly planning to depart for Turkey is poignantly telling; "Bulgaria is our motherland, we are used to the system here."

These two oral histories are representative of a defiant adherence to an ideal of a single homeland, despite the experience of migration that makes such idealization contradictory at best. After years of dedicated service, Hamdi Dayı was expelled by a fellow party member – and a younger one at that, who provided no reason for the party's decision. But when remembering the harsh encounter, Hamdi Dayı still insists on the accommodating attitude of the officer hidden beneath his veneer of harshness. Even his eviction did not

weaken his loyalty. His refusal to accommodate to exile was so absolute that literally he blocked the view of Istanbul from the only window of his room with a picture from Bulgaria.

The betrayal experienced by Deniz Bey by is of a different sort. The first blow in his idealized homeland was his diploma not being recognized by the state. This was followed by interrogations at the job which cast doubt on his integrity and honesty, and which drove him to despair. The incident was emblematic for Deniz Bey of the fallibility of the people around him in general. Yet he perseveres in his devotion by defiantly proclaiming that he would rather be a street sweeper for Turkey than an MP for Bulgaria.

With their insistence on allegiance to a single homeland, these two migration histories stand in contrast to other border-crossings that are marked with uncertainty and ambiguity.

### **A Half-hearted Departure and Return**

When she took me on a tour of the house and ruefully remembered all the furniture that was missing when they returned to Bulgaria after twelve years in Turkey, she repeated several times, “This migrant life, it is painful business, it ravaged us....I could have imagined death but not leaving for Turkey,” “Were you not excited to go to Turkey at all,” I asked. “I was sour,” she replied, “how could I not be, when my mind stayed with all the things, everything, we left back home?”

Unlike Deniz Bey and Hamdi Dayı, Kerime Teyze and her husband Mehmet Amca were not expelled by the regime. They belong to the majority among the 1989 immigrants who left Bulgaria out of the general climate of uncertainty and fear that began in 1984 with the repression and violence directed against the Turkish minority.

After their arrival in Istanbul with their two children, they stayed several months with ten people to a room. When her daughter, husband, son and daughter-in-law were placed as state employees, they moved to the residence units. When their term there was up, they moved to the immigrant settlement in Kağıthane, where they lived until their departure for Bulgaria after her husband’s retirement. Now, when she visits her neighbors in the settlement, they tell her, “you deserted us.” “If I could continue to have them as neighbors, I should have preferred to stay in Istanbul,” she said, not sharing her husband’s sentiments, who, like many in his generation, after retirement, immediately decided to go back to Bulgaria, to his land, his animals, and his friends in the village. At any event, Kerime Teyze does not harbor much hope of return, and said in a resigned tone, “Better to die here anyway, burial is so expensive over there.”

But despite the knowledge that she and her husband have resettled in Bulgaria for good, the possibility of another compulsory exodus persists in Kerime Teyze's orientation to the future. "If it gets spoilt again between Turkey and Bulgaria, and we have to go again, what will we do with all the furniture? Better not to buy too much stuff."

When she immigrated, Kerime Teyze's "mind stayed with all the things, everything we left back home." And after thirteen years, she followed her husband back to Bulgaria, who, after his retirement, did not know what to do with the idle time on his hands and missed his garden and animals. Now her mind stays with her two children who have settled in Turkey. She also misses the friends and neighbors she left behind. There is the fear as well of the possibility of having to leave again. The rupture of homeland is thus not confined to Kerime Teyze's past as a migrant, but has extended to the present as yearning for her children and to the future as apprehension of another migration. Although back at home, and no longer a migrant in the physical sense of the term, Kerime Teyze will never be as sedentary as she was before her departure in 1989, like Simmel's stranger who is "the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going" (Simmel 1971: 145).<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

Immigrants have traditionally been viewed as only temporarily uprooted people, who after leaving their homeland behind, are subsequently assimilated into their place of arrival. This perspective on immigrants does not pose a challenge to static notions of cultures, nations, and borders. Acknowledged is a temporary upheaval of the established order during the migratory movement, but once the move has been completed, immigrants are seen as being swiftly re-incorporated into the new culture/homeland/nation-state, and the existing boundaries are thus restored.

The framework of transnationalism attempts to capture the daily interactions across international borders and accommodate the immigrants' embeddedness in more than one society and one nation-state. Whether called the "transmigrant" (Glick-Schiller et al 1995) or the "bifocal subject" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), the "circulating migrant" (Rouse), the "remigrant" (Park 1999), or the "nomadic citizen" (Joseph 1999), all these proliferating alterna-

8 And what happens when the place in relation to which one is a stranger is the "homeland," when coming home entails becoming the stranger? "The homcomer," writes Schutz, picking up as it were where Simmel left off, "expects to return to an environment of which he always had and – so he thinks – still has an intimate knowledge and which he just has to take for granted in order to find his bearings within." (Schutz, 294-5). When Kerime Teyze returned to Bulgaria, things were no longer as she left them; "the unaccustomed face" of the home bitterly manifested in her stolen possessions by the very people who were her neighbors.

tive terms urge for the recognition that migration cannot simply be viewed as the unidirectional uprooting and re-rooting of identity in a new, national, territory. Together, they challenge what Malkki has called the “sedentarist analytic bias” of research on migration, that is, the assumption that one’s identity and experiences are only whole when rooted in a territorial homeland.

The framework of transnationalism should not imply that the nation-state is no longer a relevant category of analysis. Investigating the overriding grip that nation-states and nationalist ideologies exert on the dislocation experience is of crucial importance in attributing meaning to the very experience of displacement. Indeed, the sedentarist bias of the early scholarship continues to resonate uncannily well with nationalist ideologies that posit an absolute correspondence between homeland and ethnicity in general. It resonates particularly with Turkish nationalism and its strong ethnic emphasis, especially when the migrant population in question is seen as returning “home.” Officially designated as “soydaş,” or ethnic kin, the Bulgarian Turks are expected to fit neatly into the Turkish homeland. There is a disjuncture for this group of migrants, therefore, between the experience of migration and the discursive structures that frame the meaning of that experience. The requirement to have allegiance to a particular nation-state is belied either by diametrically opposed locations of homeland, as in the cases of Hamdi Dayı and Deniz Bey, or the multiple geographical and mental border-crossings as in the case of Kerime Teyze. While such paradoxes are true to some extent for all migrants across national borders, they seem to be particularly prominent in those contexts of strongly ethnic nationalism, where hyphenated identities are always suspect. This seems to hold true even when the migrants in question are designated as “ethnic kin” (soydaş). The consequence, it seems, is either denying one side of the land as well as the hyphen, or, as another 1989 immigrant put it, “harboring irreconcilables within your very being.”

Even for those who insist on an absolute break with Bulgaria, like Emine’s grandfather who dreams of the goats he left behind, border-crossings occur if only through dreams. Or through scents. Just before my departure for another trip to Bulgaria, Deniz Bey’s wife, who, following her husband refused the option of double citizenship granted the 1989 immigrants, loaded me with presents to be taken to her village and said, “Let me hug you twice and very tight so that you can take my smell to my sister.”

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