Transformations in Transit: Reconstitution of Gender Identity among Moldovan Domestic Workers in Istanbul Households

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ABSTRACT

Rahime Arzu Ünal

Transformations in Transit: Reconstitution of Gender Identity among Moldovan Domestic Workers in Istanbul Households

This thesis aims to analyze the reconstitution of gender identities of Moldovan domestic workers and changing practices of womanhood, as a result of transnational migration. It shows how their ongoing journeys between Moldova and Turkey transform their understandings of their female identities, which they constitute both in relation to their past experiences and to their practices of transmigrancy.

In their experience of migration, women create new networks and reconstitute their identities by differentiating themselves from or aligning themselves with the others whom they come into contact with and engage in mutual conversations. By focusing on the ongoing struggles of Moldovan women over the meanings of ideal motherhood and housekeeping in these conversations, I argue that the migration of Moldovan women brings different ideas of womanhood together. They reconstitute resisting subjectivities through dismantling and redefining meanings of "ideal" womanhood in relation to multiple affiliations and practices in a transnational field. This transnational field within which they operate gives rise to a variety of different understandings of femininity, strategically employed, in contrast to a hegemonic global definition of gendered identity.

KISA ÖZET

Rahime Arzu Ünal

Geçiş Sürecinde Değişimler: İstanbul Evlerinde Çalışan Moldovyalı Bakıcı Kadınların Toplumsal Cinsiyet Kimliklerinin Yeniden İnşası

Bu tez, Moldovyalı ev işçilerinin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerinin yeniden oluşumunu ve ulusaşırı göç bağlamında değişen kadınlık deneyimlerini çözümlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışma, Moldovya ve Türkiye arasında süregelen yolculuklarının, hem geçmiş yaşantıları hem de göç deneyimleri sonucunda inşa ettikleri kadınlık anlayışlarını nasıl değiştirdiğini göstermektedir.

Moldavyalı kadınlar göç deneyimleri sürecinde, yeni ilişki ağları yaratıp kendilerini temas kurdukları ve birebir diyalogda bulundukları ötekilerle bir tutarak ya da onlardan farklılaştırarak kimliklerini yeniden oluştururlar. Bu diyaloglarda Moldovyalı kadınların ideal annelik ve ev idaresi anlamları üzerine yürüttükleri mücadelelere odaklanarak, Moldovyalı kadınların göçünün farklı kadınlık fikirlerini bir araya getirdiğini tartışıyorum. Ulusaşırı alandaki çoklu pratikleri ve aidiyetleri üzerinden "ideal" kadınlığa yüklenen anlamların içini boşaltıp yeniden tanımlayarak direnen öznellikler inşa ederler. Eylemde bulundukları bu ulusaşırı alan, egemen olan küresel toplumsal cinsiyet kimliği tanımının aksine stratejik olarak kulanılan farklı kadınlık anlayışlarının çeşitliliğini arttırır.

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PROLOGUE

My decision to study Moldovan migrant domestics coincided with the workshop called "Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East: Becoming Visible in the Public Sphere?"[1] As an assistant to this workshop, my job was to record and transcribe the workshop's presentations and discussions. In this workshop several papers were presented on migrant domestic workers in the Middle East. One of these was mainly concerned with the market relations of Moldovan migrant workers, and particularly the role of agents (i.e. the police, mediators in employment agencies) and informal market relations within the globalizing economy.[2] Nevertheless, the study was not directly concerned with the subjectivities of these women and their everyday life stories, nor with their intimate relationships with Turkish[3] employers.

Throughout the discussions in the workshop, Gül Özyeğin's comments on the issues inspired me to formulate my own research questions in relation to Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul households. She elaborated the discussion by emphasizing the significance of the micro-politics of the employer-employee relationship from the perspective of boundary making practices, practices of social proximity and distance. Her questions to the

[1] The workshop was organized by Ferhunde Özbay as a member of a colloborative research project. See the first interim report on Migrant Domestic Workers In The Middle East: Becoming Visible In The Public Sphere?, İstanbul, 12/13/03

[2] "Moldovan Illegal Migrant Workers in Istanbul, Turkey: The "Ethnic Division of Labor" within the Informal Economy" by Bayram Ünal.

[3] I use the term Turkish only to denote citizens of Turkey, rather than women of "Turkish" ethnicity.

participants revealed the significance of this issue. This question was important in the context of globalization and transnational migration, because global domestic employment is characterized by the paradoxical articulation of physical intimacies and differences, not only those of class and race, but also in terms of gender and differences of national origins.

My previous readings on domestic work and migrant women with Ferhunde Özbay during my second year of graduate training were very influential to my choice of this subject as well. In the course of my readings and our discussions, I began to understand why domestic work and home have been appealing issues for scholars in examining different dynamics of power and inequalities in the construction of women's identities. The journeys of Moldovan women to overseas private households, for example, produce not only spatial displacement, but also a movement across the boundaries of meanings, thoughts, imaginations and memories which constitute their subjectivities. As "outsiders" in Turkey, they are often trapped between at least two homes, and reconstitute their subjectivities simultaneously through norms and values in the imagination of "proper" womanhood at these different homes.

In February, 2005, as a research assistant, I participated in a video film project on the lives of Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul, produced by Gülsün Karamustafa[4] In "Unawarded Performances" her aim was to represent the

[4] Gülsün Karamustafa was born in 1946; she has been a prominent artist and film director in contemporary Turkey since the 1970s. Her career was directly affected by the political violence of the 1970s and 1980s. She has created a series of works that form a counter discourse to Orientalism and critical works reflecting women's position in Turkey both historically and in contemporary Turkey. She works primarily in video and installation art. Recently, she has addressed issues of transit migration. For

changing lives of Moldovan women who work in Istanbul households, caring for elderly women.[5] Her camera's gaze portrayed a dramatic picture of the longings, fears, despairs and hopes of young Moldovan women in the environment of upper-middle class Istanbul households. Her piece successfully captures the trapped lives of Moldovan care takers who exist between two worlds. Through my encounter with the gaze of her camera, I also began to see that the dynamics and meanings of domestic work and housekeeping were varied, not only based on the different nationalities of the women, but also according to their ages, class differences and particularly their unique life stories and past experiences.

Although it was not about foreign domestic workers, Aksu Bora's study on local domestic workers and employers was published as soon as I finished my field work. It helped to inspire me and to guide me through the different stages of my data analysis. In her book, I found illuminating instances of the role of paid domestic work in the constitution of women's subjectivities Her account of the constitution of women's subjectivities through the relationship between domestic workers and employers helped me to question the similarities and differences of their situation with the case of Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul households. In my own research, I try to illuminate emerging

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instance, in her previous video documentation called "Objetcs of Desire/ A Suitcase Trade (Limit 100 $)", she brilliantly portrayed experiences of shuttle traders in Istanbul. By carrying a suitcase filled with illegal goods that they had recently purchased from the informal markets of Istanbul, they crossed borders to various destinations where they sold the contents of their.

[5] This video film was produced for a project called "Transit Migration" which was a part of "Projekt Migration" sponsored by the German Federal Cultural Foundation in cooperation with DOMİT e.V. (Documentation Centre & Museum on Migration from Turkey and the Kölnischer Kunstverein.)

inequalities and new codes of antagonism that are developed in the specific encounters between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers.

In this thesis, I elucidate the ways in which Moldovan domestic workers attribute different meanings to their femininity by focusing on their journeys and their encounters with Turkish employers in Istanbul households. I view these journeys and encounters as a realm where new inequalities and codes of antagonism emerge in the globalizing world.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the perpetual struggle of Moldovan women over the meanings of ideal motherhood and housekeeping. It shows how their journeys and encounters transform their understandings of their female identities which they reconstitute both in relation to their past experiences and to their employers. A study on Moldovan domestic workers in Turkey inevitably combines three different axes. The first of these axes is the position of undocumented, illegal, periodic movers as sojourners between Moldova and Turkey.[6] The second axis is their employment within private households; as a result of the conditions of employment, the third axis, the encounter with the intimate "other" and the contestation of meanings over proper "womanhood", emerges. These three axes come together as a result of the journey which Moldovan domestic workers must make to Istanbul, in order to cope with economic and political crises in Moldova.

The journey of Moldovan domestic workers involves a process of subject formation and is a potentially self-transformative experience. In this thesis, I use the concept of journey not only as referring to movements of people but also metaphorically as a reconstruction of ideas, meanings and practices. Moldovan women continuously define themselves through the notions of

[6] In the literature of transnational migration, use of the term "soujourner" was often questioned. For instance while Cohen (1997) suggests that transnational migrants are better described as soujourners, some scholars in the field of transnational migration disagreed, because these migrants settle and become embedded in economic and political institutions of the host countries. Moldovan domestic workers are more like soujorners as they are undocumented and illegal, because they are not recognized by these institutions, and because their presence in public spaces is very limited. Although Moldovan domestic workers become embedded in patterns of daily life in Istanbul households, they often stated that they see their positions as domestic workers in Istanbul as temporary and had no intention to stay for a long time.

housekeeping and womanhood. These notions are employed by Moldovan women as a way of distinguishing themselves from "others," particularly the Turkish upper-class women whom they encounter through their employment.

As Sara Ahmed (2000) argues, "encounter" indicates a "sliding across of subjects in their meetings with others", and redefines "identity" by a continuous formation that never completely ends. Therefore, I choose the term "encounter" rather than "identity" in my analysis because it helps me to grasp the dynamics of relationships, newly emerging codes of antagonism between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers. I would like to consider these encounters between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers as framed by broader relationships of power and inequalities in globalizing private households. I think of 'the encounter' as associated with how meanings are signified through the coming together of subjects at a particular time and place. Hence, the stories which women told me about different encounters do not appear free from the existing narrative frames within society as a whole. Both affirmative and negative stories of encounters entail an approach to the "other", and reflect the boundaries between the self and other. They are mediated and partial. What I try to do in the context of encounters between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers is specifically to look at changing meanings of womanhood, and the ways in which they were attached and/or related to women's subjectivities in the processes of encounter.

In the past ten years, irregular migration from ex-Soviet countries to Turkey has increased to such an extent that Turkey has become a migrant receiving

country; whereas until the 1990's it was considered a sending country or a transit country (İçduygu, 2003). Scholars have conceptualized population flows from ex-Soviet countries as "new wave" migration (Wimmer & Glick Shillller, 2002, Vertovec & Cohen, 1999). The increasing proportion of female migrants due to suit-case trading, trafficking and prostitution has attracted the attention of scholars in Turkey. According to Yükseker (2002), illegal female migration abroad was triggered as a result of downsized feminized labor sectors in post-Soviet Russia, such as trade, communication and catering. Turkey had become a recipient of female migrants from the former Soviet countries (Erder& Kaska, 2003) partially because of the strict regulations put forward on immigration to the EU countries. Emphasis on tourism by recent governments in Turkey also led to an increase in irregular migration, as Moldovans enter Turkey with tourist visas.

Informal migration is becoming a serious issue in Turkey. In comparison to the past Turkey is now more flexible in issuing tourist visas (Erder & Kaska 2003). Tourism and suit case trade (and related activities such as sex industry) constitute serious aspects of the Turkish economy (Yükseker, 2002, 2004). The suit-case trade, known as "bavul ticareti", is especially significant among the Russians and members of ex-Soviet countries, including Moldovans.

Among the illegal migrants from ex-Soviet countries; the situation of Moldovans is particularly severe due to painful economic and social transformations in Moldova. The collapse of the Moldovan economy coupled with political chaos forced Moldovan women to seek every opportunity--

including domestic service--abroad. Their desperateness about the future in their home country and their illegality in Turkey makes them vulnerable to all kinds of oppression in the work place, where they are often employed as live-in domestic workers.

Today, care work (Sinke, 2006) spans across political boundaries and enforces intimate encounters of people from different classes, ethnicities and nationalities. Although domestic work is usually stigmatized and seen as the labor of inferiors, there is growing evidence that domestic service still remains a main channel of geographic and social mobility for women.[7] Women migrate to other countries more easily than men by finding jobs as "care takers," and provide a living for their families.

The migration of Moldovans to Turkey is a recent phenomenon, and it has escalated and coincided with the growing demand for migrant live-in domestic workers as a result of the increasing "care crisis" in Turkey (Keough, 2006). The care crisis is mostly triggered as a result of the recent increase in the elderly population of Turkey.[8] Furthermore, the disintegration of traditional family life leaves many elderly people unattended. Among the migrants from

[7] Women from Asia and post-Soviet countries form a larger cheap labor flow to occupy gender-specific jobs of domestic service in Western capitalist societies, in the developing countries of Asia, and in the oil-rich Gulf States of Middle East. In the 1970's women formed about 15 percent of the migrant labor force, in the mid- 1990's almost 60 percentage of the Filipino migrant labor force was female, and women constituted approximately 80 percentage of the Sri Lankan and the Indonesian migrant labor force(Moors, 2003).

[8] In the last two decades, the elderly population of Turkish society has experienced significant growth, which is an important indicator in explaining the increased demand for elderly care. For instance, in 1980 the number of people in the age group 65 and above was only 2,125,908, in 1990 it increased to 2,417,363, and according to national census in 2000, it is 3,858,949. (TSI, 2006).

ex-Soviet countries, Moldovans stand out as being the dominant group in domestic work (Erder & Kaska, 2003), and they are often employed as care-takers for elderly persons.

Although the majority of Moldovan domestic workers are Gagauz Turks and hence speak Gagauz Turkish, they are Christians rather than Muslims. Ottoman authorities as well as early Republican governments did not allow these Christian Turks mix with the Muslim native community in Turkey (Özbay & Yücel, 2001). Their penetration into Turkish territory is often as tourists, and those who overstay for work purposes are considered illegal or informal migrants. Their legal entry as immigrants --with a few exceptions--is almost impossible. Today, Moldovan women constitute one of the two main groups who stay and become employed in Turkey illegally.[9] Moldovan women are an important concern for the Turkish state, as they form a major group of overstays and illegal labor (İçduygu, 2003, p. 29-30). Lately, legal changes allow them to get a working permit for a limited time span. However, this option is usually unavailable in practice, since the bureaucratic procedures are difficult and long lasting.

The situation of Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul represents the changing nature of migration world-wide. Periodic mobilities of Moldovan domestic workers from Moldova to Istanbul challenge our understanding of migration flows as unilinear--an understanding that is based on a dichotomous

[9] The other group is composed of male migrants from Romania and Moldova who are employed as cheap labor in the farms and construction companies of the western regions (İçduygu, 2003).

articulation between poles and centers, and developed and under-developed nations--and our view of culture as a temporally and spatially bounded. The ambiguous and seemingly contradictory ways through which Moldovan domestic workers reconfigure and affirm their positions and constitute their femininities help us broaden our understanding of multiplying inequalities and imbalances and the reconstitution of multiple and non-aligned subjectivities in a globalizing world.

Scholars of transnational migration have claimed that the practices of an increasing number of people can no longer be understood within the localities defined by the national boundaries of states since many groups are now embedded in "multi-layered", "multi-sited", "transnational social fields", encompassing those who move and those who stay behind" (Basch, Glick Shiller, Szanton-Blanc, 1994). Migrant networks play a significant role in this process. These networks, encompassing both "here" and "there", "constitute a single field created by a network of networks" (Levitt & Glick Shilller, 2004, p. 1009). These fields designate a multiplicity of positions that are available for the subjects, who also become wrapped in interconnectivity and interdependencies.

Debates on globalization have revealed that ideas of place or locality have been challenged and devalued; furthermore they have claimed that notions of space and time are reconfigured and redefined in terms of increasing flows of people, ideas, goods and capital (Appadurai, 1996, Harvey, 1996, Massey 1994). As D'Andrea puts it, these flows cause "the interaction between local and

translocal forces and defines the spatiotemporality of a given social formation" (2006, p. 100). Such interactions do not imply "the replication of uniformity but an organization of diversity, an increasing interconnectedness of varied cultures, as well as development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory" (Hannerz, 1996, p. 102 cited in D'Andrea, 2006, p. 100).

In anthropology and sociology, a transnational approach to migration studies is introduced as a part of broader intellectual movement that has criticized "culture" as static, coherent and straight. Kathleen Stewart argues for a new way of studying culture that would concede and embrace previously excluded notions of motion, particularities, arbitrariness and subjectivity. She argues that culture is not "something that can be set 'straight' but that has to be tracked through its movement and versions, its sites of encounter and engagements, its pride and regrets, its permeabilities and vulnerabilities, its nervous shifts from one thing to another, its moments of self-possession and dispersal" (Stewart, 1996, p. 9). From a similar point of view, my study perceives Moldovan women's journeys as ongoing encounters with the self and others in which enduring conversations take place. Sometimes these conversations involve painful memories of a lost past and future, and sometimes a new found hope for a better life. Nevertheless, I show that they are always mediated by gender and class. Yet, these categories take on different meanings in different contexts and are strategically employed as Moldovan women try to negotiate ideals of proper womanhood and their failure to meet that ideal given their every day life. By comparing and contrasting themselves with their employers and/or with their mothers and by creating new networks based on the experience of

migration, they actively reconstitute their femininity and produce new identities. I hope that this thesis will contribute to the dismantling of the "natural" appearance of cultural meanings attributed to "proper" womanhood.

The concept of "transnationalism from below" has been applied to the analysis of complex contexts where migration leads to contestations over meanings and the formation of new meanings and practices. This term is useful to distinguish emerging "scattered", "overlapping" hegemonies from multiple "counter-hegemonic powers" in the daily experience of transmigrants (Guarnizo& Smith, 1998). Mobile subjects tend to form cross-border ties, as they draw on diverse assemblages of meanings and locate themselves in different geographies simultaneously (Rosaldo & Inda, 2002, p. 19). In other words, mobile subjects construct a social field that challenges spatial, temporal and cultural boundaries (Bretell, 2000, Margolis, 1995); hence the migration of Moldovan women bring different ideas of womanhood together, and the transnational space within which they operate give rise to a variety of different understandings of femininity strategically employed rather than producing a hegemonic global definition of gendered identity.

As I indicated above, the daily experiences of Moldovan women are entrenched in a transnational social field where hegemonies--formations of class, gender, nationality--are scattered as well as intersecting, and manifest themselves through new codes of antagonisms and multiplying inequalities. Moldovan domestic workers are non-elites and constitute a group of people who "work to transform 'traditional' power relations, to reconfigure and not

reaffirm them" (Mahler, 1998, p. 91). Everyday practices of contemporary migrants involve the maintaining of simultaneous social interactions that relate the home and the host country. This fact deconstructs the notion of people and their identities as firmly linked to particular places and leads us to rethink the idea that these identities are "fixed". In other words, globalization from below is undermining modes of differences that are constructed based on localities. Yet, all these altering modes of material and cultural practices are neither random, nor necessarily always liberating. Sometimes, they reinforce new codes of antagonism. In the globalized order "class, gender, race and legal status lead to complex hierarchies of privilege", that needs to be studied carefully (Castles, 2002, p. 1159-60).

Scholars have paid attention to shifting and flexible positions that subjects partake in order to mediate these processes in culturally specific ways. For instance, Aihwa Ong (1999) claims that the question we need to ask is "how are cultural flows and human imagination conditioned and shaped within these new relations of global inequalities?" (p. 11). She is also one of the first scholars to have situated subject analysis in the center of the studies of migration and transnationalism. According to Ong, "people's everyday actions as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts",--where "regulatory effects of particular cultural institutions, projects, regimes and markets" are felt--"shape people's motivations, desires, struggles and make them particular kinds of subjects" (1999, p. 5-6).

The rising mobilities of women are considered to be one of the major characteristics of new border crossing flows in the globalizing world.[10] Groups of women as independent actors have become ever more visible in transnational migrant flows due to global economic restructuring. Market transformations and economic reforms have weakened women's participation in the labor force and affected them negatively and disproportionately in a variety of places. As a result of these trials, and coupled with the growing demand for female labor particularly in the service sector, tourism, entertainment and domestic work, increasingly more women are migrating to cities were their labor is needed (Anthias & Lazaridis 2000, Koffman et al 2000, Phizacklea 1998, Sassen 2000).

Sassen (2000) conceptualizes the growing presence of women in cross-border flows as "counter-geographies of globalization" and the "feminization of survival". She argues that globalization has produced alternative cross-border circuits in which the roles of women, especially those of migrant women, are significant. By the term "feminization of survival," she directs attention to the fact that households, whole communities and governments are increasingly becoming dependent upon the earnings of migrant women for their survival (p. 506). According to Sassen, concomitant with this, we observe that the so-called "serving classes" in globalizing cities all around the world "are composed of largely of immigrant and migrant women" (p. 510).

[10] Women now constitute nearly half of all international migrants world wide- 95 million. (UNPF, 2006).

Recently, the feminization of transnational migration has initiated some limited research on women as independent actors and their ambiguous yet strategic economic, social and familial positionings across the borders. This line of research reveals that women who migrate are independent social actors making decisions, using strategies and tactics, redefining and reconstituting the family, their gender roles and identities as they move across the borders in order to achieve a better life and future in the globalizing world (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 2001, Morokvasic 1993, Parrenas 2000, 2001, Lan 2003, Anderson 2000, Cheng 2003, Constable, 1997, 2002). However, the role of women in shaping transnational social fields is still understudied. Furthermore, the ways in which gendered actors make sense of place, the ways in which their shifting positions shape their subjectivities, and how these subjectivities in turn shape global processes are barely addressed (Resurreccion, 2005).

My study of Moldovan domestic workers attempts to demonstrate that the experience of migration is mediated by the meanings they attach to their journeys and to their encounters with Turkish employers. It aims to show the simultaneous and multiple positions that migrants take in this process. In their experience of migration women create new networks and reconstitute their identities by differentiating or aligning themselves from/with others they come into contact and engage in mutual conversations. In other words, the mobility of Moldovan women as domestic workers is more than spatial displacement; it should be viewed as a strategy of survival as well as a process of constitution of new modes of feminine subjectivities. Throughout their journeys, women have to struggle against legal restrictions on their rights, against an informal

market controlled by various agents and against their alienation, the prejudices they encounter and self-criticism resulting from their ideas about ideal femininity. Yet, they still find ways for themselves to carve a living space in Istanbul and acquire some level of negotiation power. In that sense, their labor as domestic workers in private Istanbul households can be perceived as a counter-geography of globalization. They constitute resisting and hybrid subjectivities through dismantling and redefining meanings of "proper" womanhood in relation to multiple affiliations and practices in different localities.

In the Field

I carried out my fieldwork in Istanbul between September 2004 and September 2005. During this period I made several visits to different households--where Moldovan workers are employed--in various neighborhoods of Istanbul. I also visited some of the places where Moldovan women go on their off days, such as shopping centers in nearby neighborhoods, cafes, shops and a parking-lot in Laleli. I went to these places with the Moldovan women themselves. During the fieldwork, besides conducting participant observation, I conducted 21 in-depth interviews: eleven with Moldovan domestic workers and ten with Turkish employers. Additionally, through textual analyses of news bits and stories in the Turkish media, I explored representations of Moldovan domestic workers.

During my field research, I visited fifteen Istanbul households in different neighborhoods such as Şişli, Beykoz, Kadıköy and Beşiktaş. One of these households was a villa, two of them were duplex flats and the rest of them were

modestly furnished, ordinary middle class flats, with 2 or 3 rooms. While some employers were the owners of their flats, others were only tenants. Although some employers were not able to arrange a separate room for the live-in domestic worker, employing a Moldovan domestic worker was still affordable for them. The locations and arrangements of the households were important in understanding the different forms of encounters between employers and workers. Peripheral districts and newly established suburbs (known as *sites* in Turkish) do not attract the Moldovan women because they usually want to be near the center of the city. The main reasons for this are their wish to remain close to the network of other Moldovan women, and to Laleli. Laleli is important because it is the site from which the women maintain their contacts with family members in Moldova. Laleli is an important location for the cargo companies which the women use to make shipments of money and gifts to Moldova.

My story focuses on the Moldovan domestic workers' lives and their daily encounters with employers in Istanbul households. Although my intention to study these encounters was deliberate from the beginning, I felt great uneasiness about how to handle this issue. First of all, the literature on domestic migrant workers is unbalanced in terms of countries of origin. It is important to see how specific national-ethnic identities interact. Yet, although there was a lot of information and research findings about Filipinos in the context of different host countries, limited research had been conducted on other nationalities. In addition to the wide literature on Filipino domestic migrants, which provides rich ethnographical accounts of their daily lives and

relationships with their employers, I was also able to find a few ethnographic studies on Indonesian and Sri Lankan domestic workers in Singapore and in the Gulf States (Yeoh & Huang 1996, 1998, 2000, Gamburd, 2000, Silvey, 2004), Ukrainian domestic workers in Poland (Escriva, 2005, Kindler, 2005), Peruvian care takers in Spain, and Latina domestic migrants in Israel (Rijman & Schammah-Gesser, 2003).

The case of Moldovan domestic workers differs noticeably from these groups both because they are illegal migrants and because the reasons behind their journeys to Turkey were directly determined by sudden political changes and related economic crises in their lives after the collapse of Soviet Union. There is a very limited literature on Moldovan domestic workers both in Turkey and elsewhere, and this literature is not directly relevant to my research questions. Apart from Bayram Ünal's contribution to the field with his study on the informal market relations of Moldovan domestic workers and employment agencies, there are only a few studies on Moldovan domestic workers in Turkey. Belkıs Kümbetoğlu's study focuses on the transnational solidarity networks that nurture Moldovan domestic employees' informality and illegality, as well as their hidden strategies in dealing with such positions in both countries. Leyla Keough's study reveals Moldovan women's agency in the process of migration and their methods of resistance. It criticizes official discourses on trafficking, where these women are represented either as passive victims or criminals. (Kümbetoğlu, 2005 Keough, 2004, 2006). During my field research, I also met another colleague, Ayşe Akalın, who is conducting

ethnographic research on Moldovan domestic workers and their employers, but her work is still in progress.

My field research was also difficult because finding participants was challenging: There is no way to choose Moldovan domestic workers randomly, partly because of the fact that they are illegal workers but also because they most often remain in the houses where they work. They are simply invisible in the eyes of the public. In general, I used the contacts that I made during early interviews to reach other Moldovan migrant workers and Turkish employers. I did not interview both workers and employers of the same household due to ethical concerns; that is, in order to avoid the potential of workers viewing me as their employers' friend and therefore refusing to trust me. As such, I preferred to avoid the presence of the employers when first contacting Moldovan domestic workers. I also made another methodological decision purposefully: I tried not to finish our interviews at once, as I noticed that in subsequent meetings, the Moldovan women started narrating their stories more openly. At first they would tell me stories of other friends, but as they came to know me better they began to reveal their own encounters with Turkish employers.

Both the fears of Moldovan women as illegal workers and the hesitation of Turkish women as employers of these undocumented migrants created difficulty in having face to face relationships and building confidence. In particular, the Moldovan women were wary and suspicious of whom to trust in Turkey--as one of them said, "This is Turkey, anything can happen (Burası

Türkiye her şey olabilir)"[11] Furthermore, throughout our encounters I was continuously reshaped and redefined as a subject myself by my informants. As a researcher, a school girl or as a stranger, was I someone whom they could trust enough to tell their life stories, despite the fact that they were longing to tell these stories? At other times the interview was structured by the surprise of having somebody willing to listen to their problems. Alternately, would their employers, who hire them illegally and informally, trust me enough to open their doors to let me in to conduct interviews?

I am happy to say that I was lucky throughout the course of my fieldwork. Initially I met Silvia, who eventually became my key informant and helped me to reach other Moldovan domestic workers. I received her telephone number from a friend by a chance, and after asking me several questions during our first phone conversation, Silvia kindly invited me to her employer's home for our first meeting. Our first interview was held in Silvia's tiny and plain room in the house. Silvia did not have much in her room, just a few personal belongings such as family photographs and a radio near her bed, and a few beauty products on the shelves, including her lipstick, some perfume and medicine. She also had an old, small wardrobe for her clothes where she also kept some good home-made Moldovan wine.

Silvia introduced me to many of her Moldovan friends to interview. Some of their employers rejected my suggestion to converse with their employees in the houses. In outside meetings, most Moldovan women preferred not to meet me

[11] Lara (42 years old). Pseudonyms are used through out the text.

alone; they usually were accompanied by another friend. Furthermore, they never wanted to come to my home. It was possible to understand their worries, since they have a constant fear of getting caught by the police and therefore getting deported to Moldova. So, besides my visits to the houses, some of my interviews had to take place outside in cafes, restaurants, parks, and on the university campus (which they considered to be a very safe place); the interviews only began to take place in my house after we got to know each other.

Sometimes, the Moldovan women whom I interviewed perceived me as their only Turkish friend or even as their only ally whom they could trust in Turkey, which created difficulties in my positioning of myself as a researcher. When Silvia first told me that her Turkish boyfriend was going to ask me something, I was not aware of the difficulty of losing my position as a researcher by becoming too much of a friend. I did not know that Silvia had a boyfriend. She had met him only two weeks before this conversation. At first, I was surprised and happy for her, because I knew that she wanted to have such a relationship; she had even asked me if I knew someone good for her. But when she timidly said that he wanted to meet her alone, and that they had no place to go, and therefore, that he was planning to ask me if they could use my place in exchange for the payment of some bills, I was stunned, and did not know what to say--I did my best to avoid answering her question. At the very least, I wanted to have a chance to think about it, but she called me a few days later, and directly asked if I would accept her proposal; my answer was “I am sorry

but I have to say no". At that moment, I questioned and rethought my own encounters with Moldovan women as a researcher.

In some of my interviews with Moldovan migrant domestic workers, the tape recorder was a significant means of defining the definition of "proper" womanhood to be narrated in a recorded interview. As trust was built over the course of our meetings in friendlier contexts and conversations in the absence of the recorder, some informants confessed that they had told me "fake" stories. The same stories told by the same informant in the absence and the presence of the tape recorder were noticeably different. For example, one woman, Tatiana, told me the following story when the tape was running: "I got divorced twice, and when I divorced my first husband, I moved to another house, I left our home to my ex-husband. We were going to kill each other there, so I did not care about the house. (*How long were you married to your second husband?*) Only six months, (*How was it?*) We were in love, it was love, what else could have it been, we didn't have any wealth, so that is how it happened." As we left the place of the interview, Tatiana and her friend asked me to take them to a coiffeur on the campus since the prices were cheaper. At the coiffeur, while Alexi had her hair cut, Tatiana and I sat and continued to chat in a friendlier manner. In this context, I was no longer a researcher with a tape recorder, "officially" recording their stories. Eventually, Tatiana gently touched my knee and said: "I told you a lie before, it was not a love marriage". She never actually moved to another house, or left the home to her ex-husband; they still share their home, her husband is unemployed, and she regularly sends money to him. Furthermore, she married another man so that she could come

back to Turkey. She needed to change her surname to get a new passport and visa, since she was deported before.

Sometimes as a researcher, as a friend whom they could ask for help, as a girl to give advice, sometimes as an ally or a Turkish woman or perhaps as a potential future employer, my own encounters with Moldovan domestic workers also modified the design of the interviews and reshaped the narratives of the "proper" woman according to the shifting conditions of our interactions. Sometimes, they openly expressed their feelings towards their employers and Turkish women in general. At other times, they distanced themselves from me as a Muslim Turkish woman by reminding me not to be offended by the stories they told about Turkish women. The meanings of the "proper" woman were redefined throughout the interviews because there was an ongoing negotiation between my informants and me.

I interviewed eleven Moldovan live-in domestic workers aged between 39 and 55. Only two of them had a junior-high school diploma, six of them were high school graduates and three of them were university graduates. Each of them had long periods of work experience in different sectors before coming to Turkey. Only one of them was a recent migrant; the others' work experience in Turkey as domestic workers ranged from 3 years to 9 years. They had a relatively good command of Turkish, since they had the advantage of speaking the Gagauz Turkish language in Moldova and significant work experience in Turkey, so we had almost no difficulty communicating. I conducted interviews with ten Turkish employers aged between 36 and 66 from different middle-

upper class neighborhoods in Istanbul. Except for one of the employers, who only had a high school diploma, all of them were university graduates. Although some of them were not working at the time of the interviews, all of them at least had some work experience in professional occupations. (For a brief description of the participants in this study see Appendix I and II).

Conducting proper interviews with Moldovan domestic workers in their employers' houses was also difficult, since interviews were often interrupted by the demands of the employers. The presence of employees made interviews with employers also difficult since talking frankly about their domestic workers was difficult to do in their presence. Unlike Moldovan women's longing to tell their stories or share their problems and loneliness, the employers had very busy lives, and it was often difficult to have a second chance to interview them. This fact created an imbalance between the interviews with employees and those with employers. In particular, there was an imbalance in terms of the length of the interviews.

The length of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 3 hours. The length of the interviews with the Moldovan domestic workers was longer than those with the employers. The Moldovan women had a lot to tell but no one to listen to their longing for "golden times", their nostalgic childhood memories, feelings of despair, fears, worries about their up-side-down lives and the future, their stories about leaving home to take a journey, those left behind and their struggles to cope with a new life in Istanbul households. Apart from the Moldovan women's stories about their journeys and homes in Moldova, open-

ended questions in my interviews with both groups concentrated on exploring their everyday lives and encounters, and the meanings they attributed to good housekeeping and womanhood. Willingly or unwillingly, I think my position as a single woman living away from my family brought greater empathy to the encounters with Moldovan women, as we were both able to talk about "home" as a place *somewhere else*. On the other hand, my own position as a single young woman who had no experience hiring a domestic worker shaped my encounters with the employers, and perhaps limited the number of significant questions that I was able to ask the employers in order to provoke them to discuss their everyday lives and encounters with Moldovan domestic workers.

Akin to Sara Ahmed's approach to the term "encounter"[12], I would like to think of "encounters" as a methodological framework of my study. Ahmed (2000) argues that "encounters involve the production of meaning as a form of social reality" (p. 15). Using the encounter as a methodology for the analysis of the constitution of subjectivity enables us to see subjects as formed in an ongoing conversation of shifting positions, never static but always in motion.

Throughout my interviews, I wanted to learn how my informants positioned themselves in their encounters with "others". I pursued the different stories they told me about their encounters in their journeys as well as in their stay. However, the stories of my own encounters with Moldovan domestic workers,

[12] In her book "Strange Encounters", Sara Ahmed makes a brilliant analogy between "encounters" and the relationship of reader and text; "the texts are not simply written and visual documents" because "the reader and the text generate certain possibilities and foreclose others". Reading is the act of 'coming together' at a particular time and place. A reader's encounter with the text is an encounter that presupposes movement and border crossing (p. 14-15).

as well as with their Turkish employers, have become another text to re-read through the different stages of narrative analysis. In other words, my encounters play an important yet implicit role in my discussions.

The first chapter of this thesis tells the story of domestic workers' journeys to Turkey. It begins with Moldovan women's encounter with a sense of loss and their longings for a secure home and future in Moldova. This includes the emergence of a sudden political crisis in Moldovan households with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first responses and reflections of women to these crises which affect their private lives. This part of my thesis covers the stories of my informants concerning the role of friendship and kinship networks in the process of making the decision to move to Turkey, as well as arrangements for the families left behind and for the journey itself. I argue that the journey is the means by which my informants seek a secure home and future for their families in the absence of a "protecting" state. I will claim that their narratives of "golden times" and their longings for the position of a "proper" motherhood and homemaker, which they previously took for granted, play a significant role in the constitution of their subjectivities.

The second chapter is devoted to the interviews that I conducted with domestic workers and Turkish employers and to the everyday encounters between these parties in the context of Istanbul households. In this chapter I concentrate on the shifting conditions of encounters where new codes of antagonism in the employee-employer relationship are produced and negotiated. These negotiations evolve around the ideals about proper femininity and

housekeeping. I also trace the articulation of gender with other dimensions of identity--particularly class and nationality This chapter also includes an analysis of discourses on “foreign” domestic workers and specific and contradictory representations of Moldovan domestic workers depicted in the written and visual media.

In the third chapter, by focusing on the changing meanings of motherhood, I will specifically discuss how Moldovan domestic workers are trapped between and attached to their lives in both Moldova and Turkey simultaneously. I demonstrate how my informants redefine the meanings and practices of motherhood in order to cope with the contradiction between ideal notions of motherhood, which they still hold dear, and their positions as mothers away from home. By representing their feelings of uncertainty to return to Moldova, I try to show how women’s identities and practices are shaped by the transnational dimension of their lives and by living in a world that is increasingly interconnected.

CHAPTER I JOURNEY

I want to begin this chapter with one of my informants' traveling story. Tatiana and I had met several times and became good friends. She did not tell me her story as I present it here. Instead, she usually talked about her feelings, ideas, fears and dreams. From all these emotional conversations I pieced together the following life story which is really a story of her journey. Tatiana's story is illuminating because it embodies some of the central themes that connect all of the stories told by Moldovan domestic workers. She starts her journey to overcome the economic and personal crises in her life which were generated by the collapse of Soviet Russia. As an experienced traveler who has moved a number of times between Turkey and Moldova, she defines herself as a key actor in the networks of Moldovan women in Istanbul; she also describes her traveling story as a successful one, since she is now able to provide for her family and secure the future for her sons.

Tatiana is a 45 year old Gagauz Turk from Moldova. After she graduated from high school she began to work in a state farm as an assistant director. She is married and has two sons. Her husband used to work as an unskilled worker in another state firm. She described his job as "aygazcı" (tube gas salesman). According to Tatiana, they were a happy family before 1990, during the Soviet regime. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, first Tatiana and then her husband lost their jobs. For a while, she attempted to do suit-case trading between Moldova and Ukraine. This period was full of sad stories for her. She was not successful in bringing enough money to the family and her unemployed husband became an alcoholic. The domestic violence that she was exposed to was an important reason for her decision to come to Istanbul.

In 1995, when she first came to Istanbul with her friends, they had only tourist visas, but they had hopes to work and live in this city. Four friends found a room in one of the Laleli Hotels where they cleaned the whole building together during the weekends to keep the room free of charge. During the week days they also worked together in a restaurant, for about eight months. One day she met Luba, an old friend, in Laleli. Luba was working as a domestic worker and earning relatively more money than her. Tatiana found her first job as a domestic worker with the help of Luba. She was soon arrested by the

police as an illegal migrant and deported to Moldova. After one year of living in Moldova, she divorced her husband and remarried another Moldovan man in order to get a new surname and a passport. She was back to Istanbul again as a tourist in 1998.

Since then, she has continued to shuttle back and forth between Moldova and Turkey. She has become one of the key actors in migrant networks and worked as an informal agent for her relatives and friends. She spends most of her earnings on her family in Moldova. She is very proud that she was able to arrange good weddings for her sons and bought a small bar in her village where her sons work as managers. Moreover, she redecorated her home in the village and regularly sent money to her sick father as well as her still unemployed ex-husband. The family in Moldova still needs her remittances.

The Journey as a Life Style

(T)raveling as a practice of bold mission and minute depiction allows one to (become) shamelessly hybridize(d) as one shuttles back and forth between critical blindness and critical insight.

T. Minh-ha, "Other Than Myself/ My Other Self" (1994: 24)

The voyages of Moldovan women from their villages to Istanbul are only one journey among the several journeys in their lives, but nonetheless an important one. While they physically cross borders, they pass by and across the boundaries of different meanings, thoughts, imaginations and memories. What makes Moldovan women's experience of migration a special one is the fact that most Moldovan women do not see their stay in Turkey as the beginning of a new life but as a means to improve their lives back in their hometowns.

The Moldovan women I interviewed emphasize the fact that they only temporarily migrate to Istanbul in order to be employed as a domestic worker for a year or less. As soon as they save enough money to secure their livelihoods in Moldova for the next few years, in addition to the money they have to pay the Turkish state for their overstay, they go back home. Once at

home they hope they won't have to return to Istanbul again. But in the long run, this journey proves itself to be more than temporary, and homecoming seems impossible. They shuttle back and forth for a long period of time as the political and economic conditions of Moldova do not really improve for them.

Moldovan domestic workers are like "frequent travelers" or "periodic movers" across borders. They combine "simultaneous ways of being and belonging", both in Moldova and Turkey, through their networks. In this sense, my informants are not migrants in a classical sense, but transmigrants, since they maintain various forms of attachment to their home country, although they also establish ties and networks in Turkey. In the literature on transnational migration, the concept of "transmigrant" is used to denote subjects who perform being "there" and "here" simultaneously (Basch, Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1995). Transnational subjects combine different ways of being and belonging in order to claim recognition in both places.

From the very beginning of their journeys, Moldovan domestic workers establish their own networks. In different stages of these journeys, my informants' involvement with these networks and the ways in which they use them change. They partake in these networks in order to cope with feelings of fear, despair, insecurity, mistrust and illegality in Turkey. Furthermore, they simultaneously rework their ties with friends and relatives in Moldova to compensate for their absence at home.

Recent literature on transnational migration flows has conceptualized the roles of social networks simultaneously as constraining and enabling the actions of individuals. It has been argued that the mobilization of social ties is practiced within contexts of social and cultural norms and values; therefore these ties are often "ambiguous or even contentious" (Smart & Smart, 1998). Migrant networks are multiple and situational depending on the various positions that individuals take. Parrenas (2001) claims that social networks of migrant domestic workers promote interdependency and solidarity; these networks become main sources of migrants' interactions both in home and host countries. However, as another study of networks among Mexican domestic workers illustrates, such interdependency might be constraining for the newcomers, who are sometimes exploited by their more experienced counter-parts while beginning the process of accessing the market of domestic service (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Guarnizo and Smith's discussion of trans-local migrant networks and working arrangements as "social spaces" reveals that they affect the formation of identity and the actions of subjects. They argue that "identity can be seen as fluctuating and contingent as the contexts through which people move in time-space change and are appropriated and/or resisted by acting subjects" (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998, p. 21). In my analysis of Moldovan women's networks, I pay attention to the particular actions of my informants in these networks, which both serve and restrict them in the course of their travels. I argue that the simultaneity of complex relations and multiple-layered positions

that they engage in these networks--both at points of arrival and departure--play a significant role in the constitution of my informants' subjectivities.

In the accounts of their journeys, women also constantly referred to the "Russian times": They expressed their longing for old ways of life as well as their previous positions and roles as workers, mothers, daughters, wives and protected citizens of the Soviet Union. They spoke as though they were constantly at a "threshold", standing between the revived memoirs of the past and sweet dreams about the future in their home.

In their narratives of the "good old times", my informants portrayed their longings and the loss of home life as a result of several economic and political crises, all due to the collapse of Soviet Russia. Home is no longer a place where women feel secure and confident in the future of their families. Due to the economic and political crises, women not only lost their jobs, and the welfare services provided by the Soviet Regime; furthermore, these political and economic transformations have also affected their notions of home life, because Soviet women's femininity was primarily constituted through their status as working mothers.

The meanings attached to femininity have begun to transform as a consequence of this loss, since the notion of a working mother and the idea of nuclear family is no longer secured and promoted as it was in the "good old days". I approach their journey as a compensation for their loss, through which women reconstitute their subjectivities along with their networks. I argue that the

journey itself, as a practice, becomes a site where women continuously seek ways to provide a new, secure life and "home" for their families.

I devote this chapter to their travel stories. As Moldovan women shuttle back and forth, the meanings they attribute to these journeys undergo alteration as they accumulate different experiences, and as they create their own agencies and strategic coping mechanisms in order to deal with challenging circumstances of these journeys. As I examine their memories of the past, I will first portray women's sense of loss and their desire for belonging to a home as a secure place, in which they could perform their gendered duties prescribed by previous socialist ideals of womanhood. Then, I will sketch out the over-all circumstances which they presented as the reason for such a loss and subsequently led them to move to Turkey. I will discuss individual decision making processes, preparations for the journeys, and work arrangements in Istanbul households along with the roles that women's networks play in these processes. This is also my travelogue of women's journeys to Turkey. My journey into their lives inevitably mingles with the different facades of their travel practices, which in the end becomes a self-transformative journey for both parties.

“Good Old Days”: Longing for the “Russian Times”

Nostalgia (nostos and algia) is a longing for home. (Boym, 1994, p. 284). It is a place called home which no longer exists or perhaps never existed. According to Boym, the nostalgic individual “reinvents his or her own imaginary affective geography that does not coincide with any scientific map” and “nostalgia makes us acutely aware of the irreversibility of time; but if one can not travel back in time, one can travel in space to the place that feels like home” (p. 285).

Remembering the “good old days” and retelling the stories of golden Russian times figures significantly in the travel narratives of Moldovan domestic workers. As they narrated what I consider the “threshold” moments of their journeys involving difficulties, fears, despairs and embarrassing encounters, women often paused and said “we were good once, not like now”[13] and their narrations shifted from present to the past in order to remember and retell their comfortable and enjoyable lives in Soviet Union.

I argue that retelling stories of the golden Russian times are employed to distance themselves from present conditions in both Moldova and Turkey, both of which they view as stigmatizing and humiliating. Even if they are at home, they never feel fully at home. They remember “home” through their youth and childhood stories of “Russian times”. They described home to me as a place where everything used to be “fine” and “good”.

[13] “İyiyidik bir zamanlar, böyle değildik.”

Sara Ahmed, a scholar who is interested in the dynamics of remembrance in contexts of displacement, argues that migration is not only about a spatial dislocation but also a temporal one. Journeys involve complex acts of narrating through which actors imagine a "mythic past" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 91). She maintains that "the past" is reconstructed in relation to a home which one no longer inhabits in the present. Similarly, Anne-Marie Fortier (2000) claims that memory becomes "a primary ground of identity formation in the context of migration, where 'territory' is decentered and exploded into multiple settings" (p. 157). Like Ahmed and Fortier, I also consider the migrants' longing for old days within the context of temporal discontinuity between the past and the present as a consequence of their physical displacement.

For my respondents, the place called home is no longer where they feel secure or able to provide s basic subsistence for their families. Even if they are at home, because of extreme poverty they suffer, they cannot perform their roles and duties as "proper" mothers: they cannot send their children to school or even find enough food to feed their children and buy clothing. In the stories of Moldovan domestic workers, continuity with the past is broken by their separation from home.

I also argue that emphasizing the "Russian times", an era when women enjoyed respect and privilege both in family life and social life, could be seen as a strategy to deal with the stigmas and exclusions of being away from their families. The stigma of being away from home, which women confront through their journeys, was internalized by women. In our discussions, they

often described the pain they felt for not being "proper" mothers or homemakers. In addition to being stigmatized for leaving their homes, being employed as live-in domestic workers in Istanbul households was also perceived as stigmatizing by my informants. Therefore, I argue that by retelling their old ways of life and doing things, they also try to distance themselves from the negative connotations of their current positions as domestic workers in Istanbul.

In the accounts of my informants, compelling conditions in Moldova that caused them to take these journeys were represented as stigmatizing, too. With the collapse of Soviet Russia, they became displaced in the country of origin, as the newly independent state of Moldova is neither able to perform the traditional roles of Soviet Union, nor provide welfare service for them; furthermore it has excluded and stigmatized them as an ethnic minority, i.e. Gagauz Turks. In other words, Moldovan domestic workers were displaced in their own country by becoming an ethnic minority. Therefore, in the narratives of "good old days," their longing emphasizes Soviet Russia, which kept families and different communities together with strong ties, and which provided them with work and social services. In these narratives, they described their journeys as a way of dealing with being abandoned and not protected by the state.

There are two main plots through which the retelling the past is organized in their stories of journey. Although these two plots referred to two different realms--one is family life and the other is the social life--they are each directly

related to the collapse of Soviet Russia. One reveals their longing for previous positions and the status as employed women in their communities, and the other expresses a longing for a stable family life, happily living and working together. The qualitative study conducted by the World Bank in Moldova has also pointed out that in Moldova, people tend to define poverty in relation to the past times when the majority of people had secure employment and were able to get by on with their salaries (Gomart, Marc, Dudwick & Kuehnast, 2003). Here, a comfortable home was identified by having different kinds of food in adequate quantities, adequate clothing, and availability of employment opportunities:

> In old times, when we were a part of Russia, our refrigerators were full of food; sausages, salami…My parents used to get on well with each other. My mother was working in a restaurant, and she was the chef. My father was a trader. We lived decently in Russian times. Our childhood was very beautiful. We wore nice clothes, and our stomachs were full. We were very happy about our lives.[14]

My informants often told stories about broken families in their villages as a consequence of the collapse and women's leaving home to work abroad. In this account, Tatiana remembers her childhood, and retells the past, when her mother and father were both employed and shared an honorable life in which they got along with each other. The narrator relates the employment of her parents as a significant condition for the happiness of the family at that time; they were able to enjoy life together as a family without difficulties. Their

[14] From an interview with Tatiana, May 2005. "Eski zaman Rusya'ya bağlıydık ya bizim buzdolaplarımız dolu doluydu, salam, sucuk her şey…Annem babam çok iyi geçinirlerdi, annem çalışıyordu restoranda, aşçı başı, babamda ticaret yapardı, Rus zamanı çok güzel yaşardık, çocukluğumuz çok güzel geçti, giyindikte, toktuk, çok memnunduk hayatımızdan."

longing for strong ties of family and community was implied in these narratives.

My informants often compared their childhood under the rule of the Soviet regime with what has been promised to the future generation by the new state. Their disappointments and concerns were most observable when they pondered the future of their children in Moldova. The new state promises no opportunity to receive free education and employment for their children. The Russian times were often juxtaposed with their description of an insecure and ambiguous future for the next generations in their narratives:

> We lived nicely in our youth. We were a big family…We had good days. My mother was working. My father was working. We did not wear fashionable clothes, but we dressed cleanly. Everything was decent. But today's children…There aren't any jobs, where can they work? In old times, everyone was educated, and everyone was working. But now, educated people cannot find a job.[15]

The future of the younger generations was the one of the most important concerns of the Moldovan mothers performing domestic work in Istanbul households. They grew up in a place and time in which no one had to confront unemployment, and everyone had access to free education, health services and other services provided by the state. Alexi remembers that during her school years she could get free education, and she is worried over how her grandchild will go to school and complete his education for a better future. She regularly sends money to Moldova for the education of her grandchild:

[15] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Yaşadık gençliğimizde, büyük aileydik…Güzel geçti günlerimiz, anne çalışıyor, baba çalışıyor. Modelli giyinmezdik ama temiz giyinirdik. Düzgündü. Ama çocuklar şimdi, bu gençler yok yer nerede çalışırlar. Biz gördük, herkes okumuş çalışıyor, hani okusun çocuğu şimdi ama nerede çalışacak."

> In our times, it was better. Everything was free of charge. The schools were free. My daughter was educated freely. My grandchild is going to school now, but it is not free of charge, and very difficult.[16]

Sara Ahmed (1999) claims that the feeling of displacement--in other words, a sense of alienation from home--leads to a constitution of a new community which provides a sense of fixity. According to her, migratory subjects claim "a space in their refusal of it" (p. 336). Ahmed treats narratives of inheriting a collective past, which signify that subjects share the lack of home rather than a home itself, as a claim of the sense of fixity in the formation of migrants' subjectivities.

Indeed, my informants often refused to describe themselves either as domestic workers in Istanbul or as unemployed women in Moldova. In contrast, they defined themselves in relation to a collective past where in which they could enjoy life and felt respected and privileged:

> We used to live a very good life…I was working. I was working as a vice-manager at a farm. There were very beautiful grapes, and I was selling them. I had built my house there, and I had saved money. I had a very beautiful life.[17]

Caroline Humphrey's work, "The Unmaking of Soviet Life" (2002), illustrates people's feelings and experiences of invisibility by referring to their vulnerable conditions and the loss of power and recognition right after the collapse of Soviet Russia. Here, she employs the term "(dis)possessed" to examine

[16] From an interview with Alexi September 2005. "Bizim zamanımızda daha iyiydi, o zaman bedavaydı her şey, okula giderken her şey bedavaydı. Kızımda okudu böyle, şimdi torunum okuyor bedava değil, zor."

[17] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Çok güzel bir hayat yaşardık…Ben çalışıyordum. Nasıl müdür yardımcısı olarak çalışıyordum, çiftlik gibi var, üzümleri çok güzel, mal satardım, çok güzel evimi yapmıştım, para biriktirmiştim. Çok güzel bir hayatım vardı."

people's collective feeling of loss resulting from the fact that "they are no longer inside the quasi-federal corporations, the collective 'domains' which confer social status on their members" (Humphery, 2002, p. 21). People become dispossessed because they are deprived of property, work and entitlements.

Similar feelings were expressed by my informants. Almost overnight, these women became dispossessed, and somewhat later they became abandoned by the state and its institutions. Silvia, for example, remembers the era of the collective farms as good times:

> There used to be collective farms. They had joint farms in Soviet times. All the farms belonged to the Soviet Union. The people used to go to the farms to work as groups, and they got the money when the time came.[18]

But now they no longer belong to these collective "domains", which grant them social status, recognition and economic well-being. Most of my informants themselves or their parents used to work for these collective domains such as collective farms called "*Kolkhozy*", or some other foundations, collective shops and factories. These collective domains fully pervaded the daily practices of people, and besides conferring them recognition and status, constituted their ways of doing and belonging. Staying outside of these domains was almost impossible, as this could be interpreted as a rejection of primary units of society. Therefore, when they became unemployed, they were also eliminated from these basic units of their communities.

[18] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "O zamanlar vardı kolektif, Sovyetler zamanında tarlaları birleştirdiler. Oldu bir Sovyetlerin, şimdi insanlar oraya çalışmaya giderdi, gurup gurup, ayın geldi paranı verirlerdi."

Larisa worked in a textile factory for twelve years in Soviet Moldova. She remembers that in those days she could provide a high standard of living for her family with her husband, and she expresses her longing for those days, when opportunities for employment were available and everyone worked:

> In old times, our state used to provide us jobs. For example, when I was jobless, they would stop me in the middle of the road and ask why I was wandering around. They would give me 24 days to find a job for myself. And you used to find one. There were many possibilities. There were factories, and everything. We used to work even for a little money. Everyone used to work. Now everyone is on the streets. There is no one who would stop them…Now there aren't any possibilities like that. Everywhere was closed down, everything collapsed. They sold everything.[19]

These nostalgic remembrances of "our times" and "our state" reveal Moldovan women's longing for belonging, and their journeys reflect their search for a secure home. Anne-Marie Fortier (2000) refers to belonging as both "possession" and "inclusion"; she emphasizes that "practices of group identity are about manufacturing cultural and historical belongings that mark out terrains of commonality, through which the social dynamics and politics of 'fitting in' are delineated" (p. 2).[20] Moldovan migrant domestic workers continue to face different forms of oppression and exclusion as a result of their dislocation. They feel dislocated from their ordinary habits and practices in

[19] From an interview with Larisa, April 2005. "Eskiden bizim devlet iş veriyordu, mesela ben işsizsem beni yolda durduruyorlardı, neden sen yolda geziyorsun, 24 gün bana ara veriyorlardı, 24 gün içinde sen iş bulacaksın kendine, ve buluyordun iş, iş imkanları vardı. Fabrikalar vardı, her şey vardı, az da paraya olsa çalışıyorduk. Herkes çalışıyordu şimdi herkes sokaklarda durduran yok, dur diyen yok, herkes sokaklarda…Şu an yok bu imkanlar yok, her şey kapandı her şey dağıldı, her şeyi dağıttılar, sattılar…"

[20] Akin to Sara Ahmed' use of the term encounter, Fortier employs the concept of "belonging" to evoke the desire of the migrant for some kind of attachment. She indicates that "identity" is never a fixed concept but is always in transition and involves "momentary positionalities" (Fortier, 2000, p. 2).

their home towns not only as a consequence of their physical separation from home, but also due to the sudden economic and political crisis in Moldova after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Throughout the journey, their marginalized status both as a member of the Gagauz ethnic minority and as illegal migrants and domestic workers in Istanbul engender their "otherness" and shape their politics of inclusion.

In what follows, I will offer an overview of the political and economic circumstances which have particularly affected my informants as members of Gagauz ethnic minority in Moldova, and have led them to head on their journeys to Turkey as domestic workers.

Moldova: Living at the Margin

Avtar Brah (1996) claims that the question we need to ask about migration is not simply "*who travels* but *when, how, and under what circumstances*?" We have to acknowledge the significance of "relational positioning for it enables us to reconstruct regimes of power which operate to differentiate one group from another…or to include or exclude from constructions of 'nation' and body politics…" (p. 182-183, emphasis original). In the accounts of my informants, their particular economic and political situations were related to their ethnic Gagauz identity. Unlike the Romanian-speaking Moldovan majority, my informants told me that they eventually chose to move Turkey for domestic employment because here they have the advantage of speaking

Gagauz Turkish.[21] Yet, ironically, in Turkey they are represented and excluded as "Moldovans".

In December 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed, leaving all sorts of problems to be solved by the new Moldovan nation-state. A painful "transition" period started and no one was able to predict how many years this burdensome period would last. Moldova has always been a poor country. It was located on the periphery of the Soviet Union and served as an agricultural market. Its economy is solely dependent on the production of tobacco, wine, vegetables and fruits. While Moldovans perceived themselves as a national majority in Moldova, they were a minority in the Russian-dominated Soviet Union. Under the Soviet regime, ethnic Moldovans and other minorities, such as Gagauz Turks, shared their exclusion. They all experienced disproportional representation in important political and economic positions in the country (Roper, 2002, p. 103). They hardly achieved positions in desirable jobs; they dominated the inferior agricultural sector (Kaufman, 1996, p. 120).

The multiethnic structure of Moldova was always on the political agenda of the Soviet Union, yet it was often a target for elimination through the annexation and Russification policies of the state. Before independence, Moldova relied on the Soviet Union's political model, in which citizens granted their loyalty to the state in return for the satisfaction of their basic needs.

[21] According to the 1989 census, the population is ethnically diverse in Moldova: 64.5 percent ethnic Romanian-speaking, 13.8 percent Ukrainian, 13 percent Russian, 3.5 percent Gagauz, 1.5 percent Bulgarian, and 2 percent Jewish and others. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1997, p. 670).

A politics of language was also an important means of the Russification policies of Soviet Russia in Moldova. Even before the official declaration of the collapse, during the period of perestroika, primary political demands (such as the use of mother tongue as an official language) were openly voiced. Romanian-speaking "Moldovans" form the largest community in Moldova. In 1988-1989, the Popular Front Party in Moldova demanded that Russian be eliminated as the state's official language and that the Moldovan language should be recognized instead. Although the "Romanian" and "Moldovan" languages are identical, Romanian speakers in Moldova have long been referred as "Moldovans". Stalin declared that the Romanian-speaking peasants in Soviet Moldova were "Moldovans", linguistically and historically different from the Romanian peasants on the other side of the Prut River.[22] Moldovan (or more correctly Romanian) is written in the Latin alphabet. Moldovan nationalists see the Cyrillic alphabet as a remnant of the imposed Russian rule and cultural Russification (Kaufman, 1996, p. 121).

A small minority of Gagauz Turks (3.5 percent) learned Russian and the Cyrillic alphabet in schools, but they did not necessarily know Moldovan and the Latin alphabet during the Soviet regime.[23] Currently, they have to learn a third language and a new script: Moldovan and the Latin alphabet. The issues of national identity and citizenship have become a chief political agenda for the newly independent Moldovan Republic. These new policies concerning regulations of national identity and citizenship, which were introduced by the

[22] For further discussion see Kaufman, S. (1996).

[23] They are located in the south of Moldova. Within Moldova Republic, their share of territory is 5.5 percent and their share of agricultural holdings is 6.6 percent. (UNDP, 2001).

Moldovan Republic, often confronted the claims of autonomy made by ethnic minorities. New policies designed to "nationalize" Moldova excluded ethnic minority groups in the south and eastern regions of the country. Minority groups perceived these as attempts to "Romanianize" Moldova, whereas Moldovans viewed the claims of the minorities as an attempt to "Russify" Moldova (Cash, 2004, p. 5). During the years 1991-1992, the endeavor to unite Moldova with Romania triggered an ethnic civil war between Moldovan nationalists and Russian-speaking secessionists in the Dniester region in the east of Moldova (Kaufman, 1996).

After independence in 1991, the Moldovan economy quickly lost ground as a result of the power struggle among political elites over statehood (Roper, 2001). The whole population of Moldova suffered, because after the independence they lost their vital market to sell agricultural products, and as a result of market transition many people became unemployed. Eventually, the national production of Moldova decreased. These processes coincided with a shocking inflation. As an agricultural country, hunger had never been a problem in Moldova. Yet, after the collapse, Moldova was also deprived of access to natural resources, like water, coal, natural gas and petroleum, which had direct impacts on the daily needs of people. As Moldova became more dependent on its own resources, it became difficult for ethnic minorities to have access to services and resources.

The Gagauz territory was pushed to the margins of Moldova by the nationalizing policies of the Moldovan Republic; they were severely affected

by hardship and deprivation. In 1994, the Gagauz Region (Yeri) in the south of Moldova was constitutionally established as a semi-autonomous region, without a violent conflict, unlike Dniester. They adopted national symbols and organized a local defense force. However, they continue to be dependent on Moldova, as regional governance in Gagauzia is not developed, in contrast to Transnistria. The Gagauz people are very dependent on Chisinau (the capital of Moldova) for their economic viability and foreign economic policy (Roper, 2001, p. 117).

In addition to the problems that all ex-Soviet states have confronted following the collapse of the union, in Moldova economic crises manifested themselves in many unique areas. For example, the crises resulted in a down-sizing of female labor, increased the poverty level of the population at large, led to unemployment and malnutrition, caused the lack of basic necessities, and initiated a decline in education, public health, and social security, all of which are seen as the reasons for widespread depression, and separation of families. A World Bank study conducted in 1996 in Moldova illustrates the various dimensions of poverty. It claims that the degree of poverty is so deep that people feel defenseless and hopeless for the future (De Soto & Dudwick, 2003, p. 336-338). During this dramatic transformation, people with strong personal networks were better equipped to deal with the economic crisis and its manifestations in their private lives, whereas others, especially those living in rural regions, were totally deprived of all economic activity and eventually had difficulties in their private lives. Many of these were the members of Gagauz community.

During the transition period in Moldova, policies concerning restrictions on welfare services, and the reappropriation of properties and land, have come to signify injustice for Moldova's minorities. Most of my informants complained that poor and honest people became poorer because they lacked the ability to cultivate, manipulate and bribe influential people. These inequalities separated the worlds of poor and rich people. They also signified the dissolution of community networks. One of my informants feels offended and complains about how the manager of her old work place became a property owner and a rich person while she became unemployed:

> After the collapse of the Soviets, the clever ones became rich. We became poor. For example, someone who was a manager once pilfered something for himself became rich. I was working at a restaurant then, the man who was the manager of the restaurant bought the restaurant. He bought the restaurant very cheap and he hired two people for a very cheap salary. He is becoming richer and richer. He will also hire me if I want, but I do not go there because of my pride, and I say "do it yourself." I do not work there because of my pride. Now rich people are like these. They have cars, houses…Their children are like, how to say it in Russian; Nuva Ruski (new Russians). They have become rich suddenly. We became poor over night, and they became rich over night. That's it.[24]

Most of the population has suffered from these traumatic changes; however women and children have had to bear the burden of this situation more than

[24] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005." Şimdi Sovyetlerde dağıldılar, kim ne kapabildi kendisine, onlar oldular zengin, bizde kaldık böyle. Mesela kim müdürdü zamanında, bir şeycikler kaptı adam kendisine, böyle zengin oldu…Ben çalışıyordum restoranda, mesela oranın müdürü kim, aldı kendisine, restoran mesela bir kafe, aldı. İki kişiyi aldı çalıştırıyor orada, ucuza aldı. O orada zengin oluyor. Hani şimdi beni alır oraya, bende gururumdan gitmiyorum, diyorum yap kendin. Sen aldın al da yap, yap kendin. Ben mesela gururdan çalışmam orada…Şimdi bu zenginler böyle oldular. Arabaları var, evleri var, çocukları nasıl derler Rusça, Nuva Ruski, yeni Ruslar gibi. Bunlar birden zengin oldular. Biz millet hani bir gecede fakir olduk onlar bir millet bir gecede zengin oldu böyle oldu."

others (Humphrey 2002). While socialist policies provided work for women, privatized and self-financing enterprises have not been willing to employ women with small children or to grant them a shorter working day and longer holidays (White, 1990, p. 70). As scholars have pointed out, in many post-socialist states, policies of privatization have created an environment where women can hardly find jobs. In many households where men are also not working, the unemployment of woman simply caused starvation.

Migration has become a crucial option for seeking employment opportunities for both Moldovan men and women in order to deal both with the sudden economic crisis and the long term stagnation period of the country. Having the advantage of knowing or being familiar with the language of host countries has shaped the journeys of Moldovans. For instance, both the Moldovan majority and ethnic minorities first preferred to migrate to countries that did not require a visa or where they knew the language, such as Russia, Ukraine and Romania. While Moldovans often migrated to Italy due to the Romanian connection, the Gagauz community often continued on their journeys to Turkey, because they are able speak Gagauz Turkish (Martin, 2005).

The remarks of my following informant presents a good example of how women feel a longing for recognition and try to find a place for themselves in Moldova. She claims that her Christian identity was the only means by which she could relate to the Moldovan majority[25]:

[25] The participants in my study haven't emphasized their Gagauz ethnic identity in order to make connections with Turkish identity, because they have also been excluded and stigmatized as "Moldovans" in Turkey. Due to this exclusion in both countries, they have been placed at the margin, somewhere between Moldova and

> Russians are Christian and so are the Moldovans. We are Christians. If we were Muslims things would be worse. When I went to church and a Moldovan or a Russian would be near me. Each of us lights a candle and prays to the same God. Religion is the same among us, thank God![26]

The account below illustrates how members of the Gagauz ethnic minority were compelled to learn a new language or leave their territory. One of my informants explains this exclusionist policy in following manner:

> They do not like Gagauz Turks in Moldova. They wanted to annex Moldova to Romania. It is written in the newspapers that until such and such time, women at such ages ought to learn the Romanian language and ought to learn how to write with the Latin alphabet. If they do not, they should go somewhere else.[27]

Another one complained that they were excluded from their own land, and that their Gagauz identity became stigmatized and a reason to be excluded:

> They call us "dirty Turks"! Go to Turkey! Get out of here![28]

According to my informants, poverty is not only defined in terms of being unemployed or lacking money to buy daily food, but also by restrictions on natural resources. Their diminished access to natural resources, such as water,

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Turkey. In Moldova, the Romanian- speaking "Moldovan" majority considers them to be Turks rather than "proper Moldovans". They are called "Moldovan" domestic workers rather than Gagauz Turks in Turkey. I suppose non-Muslims cannot be conceptualized as "Turks" in Turkey, given that Turkish national identity was defined in terms of Muslim identity as much as territorial boundaries.

[26] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Moldovan'da Hıristiyan Rus'ta Hıristiyan, bizde Hıristiyanız, ama olsaydı bir Müslümanlık bizde çok kötü olacaktı. Ama şu anda bizde bir din, şimdi ben gidiyorum kiliseye yanımda Moldovan, Rus'ya hepimiz birer mum yakıyoruz, aynı Allah'a dua ediyoruz. Din aynı bizde iyi ki."

[27] From an interview with Svetlana, May 2005. "Gagavuzları sevmiyorlar. Romanya ile birleştirmek istediler bizi, onlar gazete de yazdılar; şu vakitte kadar bu yaştan bu yaşa kadınlar, Romen dili öğrenecekler, Latin dili yazmasını öğrenecekler, kim bilmeyecekse bunları, nasıl gitsin başka yerde yaşasın."

[28] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Hep kovalarlar bizi Türkiye'ye git, Türkiye'ye git. Pis Türkler bize böyle derler!"

severely affected Gagauz rural households, whose subsistence was based on farming. The Gagauz region has always been dependent on these resources for its agricultural production and basic subsistence. The quote below draws an illustrative picture of what it meant to be a Gagauz, in terms of being deprived of access to natural resources, like water and electricity, in Moldova:

> The Russian side does not listen (regard) to the Moldovans, Gagauz people listen to them, because everything is there. There is electricity on the Russian side, there is an electrical center, they can produce their own electricity. But we Gagauz people have nothing. We just have grapes and peaches, but they can't be irrigated since they blocked the water, we have nothing now…We are in the middle, they cut the electricity, they blocked the water, they cut the food, the bread.[29]

As the quote above illustrates, when my informants talked about poverty and exclusion, their remarks were not simply about worsening living standards, the declining economy, the effects of inflation or their discrimination in public offices. Ethnicity and poverty together put them in a situation where they were all--but--literally starving. In the following section I will try to illustrate how poverty manifested itself in the lives of my informants and how ethnic conflicts and economic circumstances in Moldova shaped their conditions during the state of transition.

[29] From an interview with Larisa, April 2005. "Rus tarafı Moldavalıları dinlemiyor, Gagavuzlar dinliyorlar çünkü her şey orada, Rus tarafında elektrik var, kendi elektrikleri var,orada elektrik santrali var, kendi kendilerine yetebiliyorlar, ama bizim Gagavuzlar, yani hiçbir şeyimiz yok, bir tek üzümler, şeftaliler onlarda susuz, bitiyorlar suyu kapattılar ya, bir şeyimiz kalmadı…Biz ortada kaldık, bizden elektiriği kestiler, bizden suyu kestiler, yemeği ekmeyi kestiler."

Living on the Edge of Poverty

The first part of all women's travel narratives was constituted by how and why they were compelled to leave their homes. According to Moldovan domestic workers these travels were forced upon them as much as made out of choice, since political and economic circumstances left Gagauz women living in the rural areas of Moldova, victimized, vulnerable and desperate. When I heard Tatiana's answer to my question of why she came here: "*If your women would have been in our situation, they would have come to Turkey by foot,*" I realized that the question of why connotes the judgments and stigmas that they often have to confront both in here and there.[30] Perhaps it sounded like a policeman's question, stopping them on the streets, at a border crossing, to examine why they are here. Or maybe it reminded them how they were interrogated on why they left their home-towns by Moldovans. For them, coming to Turkey was not a voluntary decision, it was the only way to survive.

Poverty was not a new phenomenon for my informants; I could trace it in their childhood memories. For instance, Larisa sadly remembers her school years, when she could have only grapes and few slices of bread as meal when she came back home from school. Later, she was put in an orphanage because her family could not take care of her. Although poverty was often part of their

[30] Therefore, I eventually eliminated the direct question of why they are here, as it had negative connotations for my informants. I also think that the question of how they traveled here is more revealing in terms of capturing the undesirable conditions that forced women to move, and does not directly evoke the stigmas that they experience as mother or wives away from home and as excluded "Turks" in Moldova and "Moldovans" in Turkey.

experiences, they still believe that what they are going through now is completely different than before. Even if they were poor before, at least the basic needs and future of their families were guaranteed by the state under Soviet rule.

They described poverty as lack of enough food to survive, which was also a significant determinant of how and why they had to move to Istanbul for domestic employment.

> Of course I resent this…people struggle too much for bread. We earn 50 leys, 5 dollars a day. Few people can get this money. 30-40 dollars a month. A kilo of meat is 5 dollars, and some oil has to be bought with the meat. These women come here because of hunger. When I go there, the money I earn here seems like a lot, but when I get home it flows like water, everything is very expensive… They say there is little money in Turkey, but if I work for this little money I can save my family, but I cannot in my own country.[31]

Even though they knew that the economic and social impoverishments in Moldova were the outcome of a long period of stagnation in Soviet Russia, the effects of poverty in daily lives of Moldovan women were described as a recent and very sudden phenomenon. Many of them repeated: "When we woke up things were changed, we had nothing". They felt defenseless, confused and lost hope for the future. Political turmoil in the country and the wholesale transformation of their lives made them subjectively experience their poverty differently than hardship which they associated with their childhood.

[31] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Tabi çok güceniyorum buna…İnsanlar çok mücadele veriyor, ekmek, biz para alıyoruz 50 ley, 5 dolar günde alıyoruz, onuda çok az insan alıyor, 30-40 dolar ayda, bir kilo et 5 dolar, etin yanında yağ da lazım, bu kadınlar açlıktan geliyor buraya. Şimdi ben gidiyorum, burada kazanılan para çok gibi görünüyor ama eve gidince o su gibi gidiyor, çok pahalı…Türkiye'de az para varmış ama ben bu az parada çalışsam ben ailemi kurtarabilirim ama bizim memlekette kurtaramazsın."

Many of them were severely affected by the problem of inflation in the beginning of the 1990's. I asked about the effects of inflation on their lives to examine what they meant by "sudden change and loss". The falling value of Natalia's mother's life-time savings in the bank is an illuminating instance of the size of loss:

> For instance, my mother had 16 thousand in the bank, she could buy a house with that money, but now it is only worth of 5 loafs of bread.[32]

All of my informants had work experience in Moldova, yet each of them became unemployed due to the privatization of the market. For instance, Anna had worked in kindergartens for more than ten years; kindergartens were important state institutions because most of the mothers were also employees. But like other state institutions in the transition to a market economy, kindergartens were closed one by one when the subsidy they were receiving evaporated as a result of the declining economy:

> I was working in a kindergarten, we looked after the kids then, but our kindergarten was closed down. Why did they close our school? We did not have food to serve the kids. They closed down the kindergarten, then we became unemployed…We are working for you now, you give us our money, we are glad, there is money, we can look after our children, we can feed them. We are very happy. If there was not Turkey, I do not know what else we would do.[33]

Even if they could find jobs in the newly established privatized market, the money that they could earn would not be enough for providing basic

[32] From an interview with Natalia, March 2005. "Nasıl bankada 16 bin varsa, mesela benim annemin vardı, ev parasıydı, 16 bini, şimdi kaldı 5 ekmek parası."

[33] From an interview with Anna, March 2005. "Yuva da çalışıyordum, çocuk bakardık, ondan sonra kapandı yuvamız, kapattılar neden? yemek çocuklara yoktu ne verelim. Yuvayı kapattılar, bizde işsiz kaldık…Burada size çalışıyoruz, siz bizim paramızı veriyorsunuz, memnunuz, para var, çocuklarımıza bakıyoruz, yemek yediyoruz, çok memnunuz bundan, Türkiye olmayaydı, bilmiyorum biz ne yapacaktık."

subsistence for their families. Furthermore, women's access to the privatized market was limited because of their skills, level of education and ages. For these women, leaving home to perform domestic work in Istanbul households became the ultimate strategy for survival.

However, moving to Istanbul as domestic workers was not the first strategy that these women employed to deal with the sudden economic crisis in their lives. Before coming to Istanbul, most of the participants in my study said that they tried some other ways to earn money. Some of them engaged in informal trade activities like suitcase trading. For instance, they used to bring goods from the port of Odessa in Ukraine to sell in the market places. Some of them tried to sell their own crops in the bazaars of the villages. Some women traveled to other ex-Soviet countries to seek employment. For instance two of my informants traveled to Moscow and Siberia, where they had the advantage of speaking Russian. However, they soon became unemployed in these regions, and had to return to their villages, because ongoing political and economic transformation negatively affected these regions as well.

Women started to leave their villages when they eventually failed in these activities. Marina emphasized that neither trading nor being employed in Moldova helps them to provide for the basic needs of their families. Who would do the shopping if everyone has became a seller in the small bazaar of the villages? Marina, who is a widow with three daughters, told me that the state would pay only 20 dollars as allowance for her children, and even if she

were employed in Moldova, she could make at most 50 dollars per month, which is not enough to provide a living for her daughters:

> Too much unemployment. Even if you have work to do, the wages are very low, 30 dollars, 50 dollars (a month). Even if there is a job, people do not want to work for this money, because they cannot look after their children with this much money…Most of them are working at the bazaars, but if everyone works at the bazaar, who does the shopping. I thought of that too, but it is useless.[34]

Poverty was often described as difficulty in finding food for survival, adequate clothing and having access to social services. Lack of social services meant lack of health care and schooling. Moldovan domestic workers often needed money to hospitalize their elder parents and they were worried that their children were no longer receiving a good education compared to what was provided in the Soviet system. Liza told me that she was compelled to come to Turkey, because if she did not come here, her family would be starving and her son would not receive a university education:

> We do not have money, we do not have jobs, and we have not seen money in our hands for three, four years. Once a year you go to the farms to gather corn, and sunflower, which are even not enough for your own needs. And I have a child. He is going to finish school in May. Then he will enter university to learn more. I have to do this. I have to come here, I have to earn money…Is this life? It is also very difficult to come here. Very difficult. What can I do? We have no money, that is why we come here, for money. Whether you are healthy or not, you have to work. You have left the children at home…[35]

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[34] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Çok işsizlik var, işin olsa bile parası çok az, otuz dolar, elli dolar (aylık)…İş olsa bile, insanlar bu paraya çalışmak istemiyorlar, bakamazsın o parayla çocuklarına…Çoğu pazarlarda çalışıyor, hepsi pazarda çalışırsa kim alış veriş yapacak, bunu da düşündüm çok ama olmuyor."

[35] From an interview with Liza, April 2005. "Paramız yok, iş yok, parayı üç, dört senedir görmüyoruz avucumuzda, senede bir defa gidiyorsun topluyorsun mısır, ayçiçeği, yetmiyor senin kendi ihtiyacına…Birde çocuğum var mayısta bitiriyor okulu. Sonra üniversiteye gidecek öğrenmeye. Mecburum. Buraya gelmeye, para

Another informant desperately needed a job in order to take her sick and old father to the hospital:

> My father was sick. I needed a job to take him to the hospital. Then I hospitalized him. (What is wrong with him?) Prostate disease, stomach disease, heart problems and everthing. Now he is very old. They were waiting for me to take him to the hospital. I needed to find a job, I needed money.[36]

My informants often stated that they take these journeys to Istanbul in order to limit the effects of poverty on their lives. These narratives of travel illustrate that poverty creates feelings of insecurity. Poverty and increased inequality were depicted as humiliating and they were explained on the basis of ethnicized socio-economic disparity by the women I talked to. While women desperately tried to find ways to cope with this stigmatizing poverty, leaving families for informal employment in Turkey was also difficult, and involved stressful as well as stigmatizing processes of decision making.

Decisions and Leaving Home

The journey to Turkey for domestic employment was seen as the last resort when the women I spoke to failed in other economic activities in their countries. These journeys are difficult and involve pain of separation, feelings of fear, despair and mistrust. They are also stigmatized as women who left their home, even if the journey is taken for the well being of those who stayed behind.

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kazanmaya, buna derler yaşamak mı? Bizim gelişimiz zor. Çok zor…Ne yapalım yok, buraya geliyoruz işte, para için. Sağlığın var yok çalışıyorsun. Çoluğu çocuğu bırakmışın evde…"

[36] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Babam hastaydı, onu hastaneye götürmek için, o orada yatılı kaldı, bende götürdüm, (nesi var) prostat, mide kalp her şey var, artık yaşlı, beni beklediler iş bulmak lazımdı, yani para lazımdı."

Many risks, dangers and worries await those who take the journey to Istanbul. Therefore taking the journey is never an easy decision to make. How could one be brave enough to take these risks? How might one convince one's family, when there are so many dreadful stories about what has happened to women who left home for Turkey? Or, how would they convince their husbands, when women leaving home for Turkey are seen as "prostitutes" by the communities in their villages? It was by making networks with women who actually have been to Turkey that my informants managed to deal with their fears, despairs and worries. I argue that in the formation of Moldovan domestic worker's subjectivities, the centrality of women's multiple networks gains significant importance in several interrelated domains. My informants actively partake in these networks in order to struggle against stigmatization at home, for the provision of care for those who stayed behind and for survival and work arrangements in Istanbul.

Moldovan women often start their journeys without knowing where they are going, who they will work for, where and with whom they will live. Before women make their decisions and inquire themselves about Istanbul, they frequently hear stories of kidnapping, rape, and murder. They often told me about the missing women in Turkey, who left home and never returned. For those who were planning to move to Istanbul, it was very difficult to confront the stories in which women were represented as "victims" or "prostitutes. In my interviews, women cited these stories as the primary reason for postponing the trip to Turkey:

> I was very afraid to come here, because a lot of women who came to Turkey before spoke very badly about here. There was some kind of fear of Turkey. They wrote about it in the papers in my country. They said our women went there to work… Well you know, I do not want to say it…(prostitution?) Yes …I had got my passport valid for two years, but I did not use it. I could not come here.[37]

The way in which Moldovan domestic workers deal with the difficult process of decision making can be defined as what Ong (1992) has called "strategies of accumulation". By asking the advice of other women, they both formulate their own opinions and start partaking in a network of transmigrants. They regularly visit places such as the village church and the bazaars, where they can hear stories of other women working in Istanbul, and meet somebody who has been in Turkey recently. In this sense, women's networks are crucial from the very beginning in forming the subjectivities of my informants. Lara, for example, told me how her interactions with other women prepared her for the journey and made her change her mind several times. It took her two years to finalize her decision to come to Istanbul.

> When the women returned from Turkey I would go to the bazaar. When we met them there they would say they had just come from Turkey. Then, I would say, oh, I want to go to Turkey, too, but how? How can I find a job? Will they accept me? What if they do not accept me? What kind of jobs are there? Some people say the situation is very bad in Turkey. They say they make you divert to the wrong ways. They say, do not go there, it is very difficult, very bad…But a woman called Lara said, do not wait a minute, go there, it is very nice. Some other person says, do not go. So I was in between. I could not decide whether to go or not. When I went back home I talked to my son. I asked him how I could get there. Because I was scared! And he told me

[37] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Ben çok korktum buraya gelmeye, duydum bizim bayanlar, çok başladılar gelmeye ama çok kötü şeyler söylüyorlardı, Türkiye için bir korku vardı. Bir de bizim oralarda hep yazdılar (gazetelerde), bizim bayanlar oraya gidiyorlar *çalışmaya*, yani, anlıyorsunuz, söylemek istemiyorum (fahişelik mi?) evet….İki sene yaptırdım, pasaport duruyordu. Gelemiyordum."

> to go and decide whether it is good or not for myself…[38]

Natalia also told me that she regularly visited the church in the village and talked with the priests, and tried to learn about the stories of other women working in Turkey. She was curious to know what kinds of families or employers she would encounter. In general, the priests only had negative things to say about Istanbul:

> The priests in the church told me not to go there because there was disaster. They told me to work here. (What kind of a disaster?) They kidnap the women. There are villainous employers. For example, one day an employer pushed the woman when she was cleaning the windows…She was a very young women. Another employer took the woman from Laleli, she squeezed her hands, bruised them. And after that, she said, "Have some Turkish dollars, ha!" For what a cost…[39]

She was confused about what she had heard, and hesitated to take such a journey. However, one day, one of the priests in the church said: "go my daughter…I will pray for you that things will be fine." Only then did she decide to depart on her journey.

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[38] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Bayanlar geldi mi (Türkiye'den) pazara gidiyordum, karşılaşıyoruz bayanlarla diyor "Türkiye'den geldim", aayy diyorum, bende istiyorum Türkiye'ye gitmek, ama nasıl gideyim? nasıl iş bulacağım? alacaklar mı beni? almazlar mı? nasıl işler var? Biri diyor ayy çok kötü, bu çok kötü yerlere düşüyorlar, diyorlar ayy dur burada gitme bir yere çok zor çok kötü…Bir bayan diyor Lara durma git, çok iyi. Başkasıyla görüşüyorum ayy çok kötü gitme, işte ben böyle git, gitme, geliyorum eve oğlumla böyle konuşuyorum, oğlum ben nasıl gideyim korkuyorum, o da dedi, git gör ondan sonra sen söyle kötü mü iyi mi…"

[39] From an interview with Natalia, March 2005. "Kilisedeki papazlar dediler gitme orası çok felaket gitme burada çalış. (nasıl felaket) felaket kadınları kaçırıyorlar, mesela patronda var çok felaket, böyle patron pencereden itmiş cam silerken kadını. Gencecik kadın patron….Laleli'den kadını almış getirmiş, onu sıkmış çok mor etmiş ellerini, demiş al sana Türk doları gör, çok felaket var. Sonra işte, hani bu kadınların yeni insanlar nasıl ben bilmezdim, biz sizi yerleştireceğiz, getiriyorlar bir eve, çalıştırıyorlar kadınları sonra ellerine veriyorlar dolarları sonra git buradan öldüreceğiz…"

Making a decision to go to Turkey was, in the narratives of my informants, not only difficult because of the risks involved, but also because it conflicted with the gender roles assigned to them at home. Even though women depicted themselves as the equals of their husbands when referring to their previous roles and positions in the family, they nevertheless had difficult encounters with their husbands before leaving their villages.

First of all, women who traveled to Turkey for domestic employment often earned more money than their husbands in Moldova. Most of them have become the only breadwinners in their households. In other words, women's employment meant a threat to men's identity in the family. Second, husbands are suspicious about women who go to Turkey, because there are some women who have never returned home, abandoned their families, got married in Turkey, and started a new life. However, the fact that most of the husbands of my informants were unemployed led them eventually to accept their wives' journeys. Some of them even accompanied their wives. However, it is not as easy for Moldovan men to find jobs as it is for women, even in service sectors, and only a few lucky couples could manage to work in villas in Istanbul together.

Most of the women I interviewed told me that before coming to Turkey they had to convince their husbands and families that they would not get involved in prostitution. They promised that they would not abandon their families and that they would return to Moldova as honorable wives and mothers. Some of my informants spent months arguing with their husbands. Larisa's dialogue with

her husband reveals a significant stage in her decision-making process. It is a conversation in which her body and sexuality becomes a site of negotiation. She struggles against her husband's claim over her body by bringing her concerns about the coming winter to the forefront:

> In our home people do not think good things about Turkey, especially the men. They think women go to Turkey to sell their bodies in order to earn money. They think like that. They also think Turkish men are bad. That is why they tell us not to go and try to live on in our present situation. How can we live on in our present situation? The winter is coming, and we have nothing. We have to buy 200-300 kilos of potatoes in order to eat in winter. Jars have to be filled by winter. You have to do this so you will not be hungry. But if you do not have money, how can you do that? You cannot.[40]

Again, women depend on the experiences of friends and use the stories of other women to negotiate the stigmas of leaving home. Some of my informants took their friends, who used to work in Istanbul to their homes, and asked them to talk to their husbands and tell them what they did in Turkey. This is one how one of my informants explains how she convinced her husband to let her go:

> Before my first journey to Turkey my husband said I could not go there under any circumstance. One of my friends was going to leave for Turkey the next day. I said, "Please, come to my house and convince my husband. Tell him that I will come with you." She came to our house and said to my husband, "She is coming with me. There is nothing to worry about. I already found a job for her. She is going to start her job first thing tomorrow." Then, he was convinced.[41]

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[40] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Yani bizim orada Türkiye için iyi düşünmüyorlar nasıl…Özellikle erkekler Türkiye için iyi düşünmüyorlar kadınlar Türkiye'ye gidiyor, kendilerini satıyorlar böyle para kazanıyorlar, böyle bir şey düşünüyorlar, Türk erkekleri de kötü görüyorlar, onun için gitmeyeceksin böyle geçinicez, nasıl böyle geçinicez…Baksana yani kışa gireceğiz, hiçbir şeyimiz yok, kışa girmek için 200-300 kilo patates almamız lazım…Kavanozlar hepsi kapalı (dolu) olması lazım kışa girmek için, yani aç kalmayasın diye bunları yapacaksın ama para olmadıktan sonra nasıl yapacaksın bunları, yapamazsı."

[41] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Ilk gelişimde (kocam) katiyen gitmeyeceksin dedi, bir arkadaşım ertesi günü gidecek, dedim ki gel lütfen gel, bizim

Even after they leave their home by convincing their families, Moldovan women continue to be the subject of inquiries and criticism throughout their journeys. According to the women I have talked to, the possibility of them getting involved in prostitution or having affairs with Turkish men was a constant theme in their telephone conversations with their husbands. Also, I have heard from employers that some of the Moldovan domestic workers sent photographs or video records of their work place and the families that they work for in order to deal with accusations about prostitution. During one of my visits to Silvia's work place I saw that she was very sad, and asked what was bothering her. She told me that she got a phone call from her husband, saying that he would kill her when she returns. He claimed that she does not care for her family, that she does not send enough money and so on. She believed that she had become a "prostitute" in his eyes.

The travel stories I listened to were often interrupted by sighs or emotional pauses because stories of displacement were reminding women of their roles and duties at home and therefore causing them distress. To start a journey, the women must arrange for the household, and make sure that the needs of their children will be satisfied during their absence. During the absence of some of my informants, their husbands took on their roles and duties; they performed cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. However, even in these cases my informants also asked for the help of women relatives and friends.

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eve ve onu ikna et, söyleyeceksin bak seninle gidiyorum. Kadın geldi, eve kadar dedi ki yani benimle geliyor merak etme, ben ona işte buldum. Yani direk işe gidecek dedi…O zaman ikna oldu."

In the previous section, I discussed how my informants related the conditions that necessitated their journeys to the disappearance of a "protecting" state. Hence, I argue that reinventing kin and friendship relations for survival and care work in the absence of the state ensured social reproduction. Women's networks become an important site by means of which my informants reallocate their roles and duties as mothers and homemakers to other women relatives, as well as to their friends. Their journeys heighten the meanings of kinship and family, which have been taken for granted before their departure. This process also transforms the meaning of womanhood for Moldovan women and makes care networks central to their identity.

There were other cases in which women could not find support from their relatives, or, because they were widows, did not have a husband to leave their children with. In these cases, children were left with neighbors, friends or acquaintances, and women regularly sent money for their children to be cared for by these women.

Establishing care networks among women in the villages played an important role in allowing Moldovan mothers to perform their journeys. Nonetheless, the needs of the children are still a constant concern of my informants all of the time, in addition to the emotional pain of separation. As I will explain in the third chapter, the worries of mothers with small children over whether their children are well cared for or not and their constant feelings of guilt force them to negotiate the definition of "proper" motherhood throughout the journey.

Istanbul: Coming is Difficult, So is Leaving

Although all journeys of arrival and return were narrated by emphasizing the difficulties on the way, each story was particular and revealed different phases of the journey. There are particular institutional actors that Moldovan domestic workers must interact with during their transit from Moldova to Istanbul households, including police, people in employment agencies, and employers. Any of these interactions might affect their faith in the journey. Sometimes, they are stopped at the borders and sent back by the police; sometimes they successfully meet with their Moldovan friends in Istanbul and reach a place of employment, and at other times they have to stay at work agencies, hotels or stand on the streets of the neighborhood of Laleli in Istanbul, until they find a place to work.

I believe that it is important to say a few words about the women who could not manage to travel to Turkey for domestic employment, because this reveals some of the other circumstances that affect women's mobility from their villages to Istanbul. When I asked my interviewees about the poor people in contemporary Moldova, their responses distinctively portrayed the people who had to stay behind, and who as a result still experience great hardship and struggle to survive. Elderly and disabled women, who are no longer able to work, and who could not find money to get a passport, visa and travel tickets belong to this group.

When women are struggling to meet the basic needs of their families, acquiring money to come to Turkey is very difficult for them. Some women could not

find a way to cover the costs of travel; some of them borrow money from friends or relatives in order to travel to Turkey. Being healthy enough to work and finding enough money to travel are necessary conditions for the journey. Yet, by themselves these do not guarantee successful arrivals. Therefore, even when money is found, the journey is still perceived to be risky:

> No money! Travel money has to be paid to come to Turkey. 150 dollars is a lot of money for us. They cannot get it and they cannot come. Most of them have the same problem. They do not have enough money. They have to have money to get a passport. A visa is 10 dollars. Anyway, can you pass the line? They send most of them back.[42]

Moments of arrival and border-crossings were often described as "threshold" moments, full of uncertain, ambiguous, disquieting encounters and subsequently causing feelings of despair, fear and insecurity. In some travel stories, reaching and passing the border was represented as the most restless, terrifying time for the informants, especially if one could not cover the cost of a more comfortable journey by plane or ship. Traveling by coach involves a further number of encounters and the travel is differently shaped by several conditions, as Anna's travel story illustrates:

> We were nine people in Moldova in a minibus, 2 male drivers, the rest of us were women. We set out on the 4th of February. We were on the roads for a week and it was very hard. We came face-to-face with very difficult situations. There was snow, and it was very cold. When we arrived in Romania, there was snow up to our knees. We were stuck at the countryside, slept in the bus Aahh… We were out of food, out of water. We got out of the bus. There was no one. We went to the village. A policeman was there, but I could not speak Romanian. I approached him and tried to tell him something, but he could not understand me. I pointed to

[42] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Yok yol parası lazım Türkiye'ye gelmek için 150 dolar o bize büyük para yok bulamıyorlar gelemiyorlar, çoğunda bu problem. Para yok, pasaport yapman lazım o da para gelemiyorlar. Vize de 10 dolar, hem geçebilecek misin çoğunu geri çeviriyorlar, özellikle gençleri çeviriyorlar geri."

> the bus and gestured that we were stuck in the snow…Then a tractor pulled us out to the road…The police said the roads were cleared out, so we could go on our way. Then we arrived in Bulgaria, but the roads were closed in Bulgaria. Where could we stay? We went to the hotels, but they wanted too much money. We did not have that much money. They wanted us to pay 25 dollars. We did not have that money. Then we talked with one another. Where could we stay? Where could we sleep? Then we decided to stay on the bus. We closed the doors and slept. The next day, we found a hotel. At last they accepted us there, and they gave us clean beds. After that, the men went to buy something to eat. We ate some and rested there for few days.[43]

If one successfully passes the border and arrives in Istanbul, the next difficulty is finding a safe Istanbul household to work in. According to Sara Ahmed (1999), travel narratives are "the spatial reconfigurations of an embodied self: a transformation in the very skin through which the body is embodied" (p. 342). The experience of moving to another place is often felt through sensations.

The account of a recent migrant exemplifies the feelings of fear and estrangement; finding herself in an uncanny passage without a reassuring base, where she is no longer understood or can understand the language well. Istanbul is a city very different from her village, with its crowds, sounds,

[43] From an interview with Anna, March 2005. "Biz 9 kişiydik Moldovya'da minibüste, 2 erkek şoför, kalanı kadınlardık. Şubatın 4 ünde çıktık, yolda bir hafta biz süründük, çok zordu. Kötü duruma düştük. Kardı soğuktu. Romanya ya yetiştik, Romanya'da kar bu kadar dizlerimizde, kırda kaldık, minibuste uyuduk, offf…Yemeğimiz bitti, suyumuz bitti…indik minibüsten çıktık, köye, orada hiç kimse yok, çıktık köye gittik, yürüyüş yaptık, orada bir bakıyorum bir polis duruyor, yaklaştım ona, Romanca konuşmak hiç bilmiyorum, yaklaştım, ona anlatıyorum bir şeyler, o anlamıyor, ben ona gösteriyorum, burada, minibüs gösteriyorum orada kaldık…Bir traktör aldı bizi, çekti çıkardı yola bizi…Polis dedi, devam edin yollar açık, paklandı yollar…Yetiştik Bulgarya'ya (Bulgaristan), kapalı yollar, ne yanda kalalım, yok, gittik otellere, oteller çok pahalı istiyorlar, para bizden paramız yok. O kadar para bizde yok otele paramız. 25 dolar diyor ödeyeceksiniz. Yok bizde o para. Ondan sonra, konuştuk orada aramızda kızlarla ne yapacağız ne yanda kalacağız. Dedik yine kalacağız minibüste. Şoför kapattı kapıları, yattık uyuduk sabah oldu. Bir otel bulduk sonunda bizi kabul ettiler oraya, verdiler bize yatak temiz, ondan sonra çocuklar gitti yemek bir şeyler aldı. Yedik oturduk, ondan sonra orada 2 gün kaldık."

smells, buildings and traffic. The networks of Moldovan friends and Turkish employers, as well as work agencies, play significant role at this stage of journey. It is quite important for a recent migrant to have acquaintances in Istanbul. Although Maria had difficult times in the Karaköy Harbor, she had the advantage of knowing Tatiana, who managed to arrange a place for her to stay and helped her to find work on her first arrival:

> I arrived in Karaköy by ship. I had come here for the first time then. I cannot speak the language; I have no money in my pocket. I gave my last money to the ship. My friend Tatiana should have met me. But she was working in Maltepe. We have no traffic jams at home. I waited for one hour, but she did not come. What could I do? I had no money. I asked for help, but nobody could understand my language…I waited for one and a half hours, and then I saw her at a distance, and started to cry. She asked me why I was crying. "I thought you would not come", I said. 'Why wouldn't I come', she said. There was a traffic jam, and I changed vehicles twice. She changed vehicles two or three times before arriving. We came home, and phoned the woman (employer) immediately. The woman said they gave up the idea of hiring an employee. I was very desperate, because there was no job. My friend's employer had a restaurant, and she was a very nice woman. She let me stay there until I could find a job. Then we found a job; there was a 14 year-old sick girl. I did not want to wait jobless. I did not want to spend even one day jobless.[44]

Some of them are not lucky enough to enter into the existing networks of Moldovan domestic workers easily, so they stay in hotels on their first arrival,

[44] From an interview with Maria, September 2005. "Karaköy'e gemi ile geldim. İlk defa geldim, yabancı her yer, dil bilmiyorum, geldim ve bir kuruş yok cebimde. Son yol parası bindim gemiye, beni de arkadaşım Lara lazım karşılayacak. O da çalışıyordu Maltepe de burada. Trafik falan bizde yok hiç, 1 saat bekledim yok, ne yapayım, paramda yok, soruyorum da benim dilimi de anlamıyorlar…Bir saat, bir buçuk saat bekledim, hani uzaktan onu gördüm, başladım ağlamaya, neden ağlıyorsun dedi, dedim zannettim sen gelemeyeceksin. Neden gelmemeyim dedi, trafik var 2 araba değiştirdim, 2-3 araba değiştirmiş,gelene kadar, geldik eve hemen telefon ettik o kadına (employer), o kadında biz dedi vazgeçtik, ne yapayım iş yok, o arkadaşımın çalıştığı evin sahibinin, lokantası var, o da çok iyi kadın, dedi yer var burada iş buluncaya kadar kalsın. Sonra bulduk bir iş, hasta bir kız 14 yaşında, boş durmayım, para kazanmak lazım.Bir gün geçmesin böyle boşa."

but that also costs lot of money. If they lack their own networks, the employment agencies become an important medium for finding a place of employment:

> There was no job. I stayed at the hotel. I looked for a job, and then I went to the agency. I passed two days there. That landlady hired me. She came there, and saw me, and she liked me.[45]

Women carry out these journeys with very small amounts of money; therefore one must be lucky enough to find a job promptly after the arrival. For them, each unemployed day after their arrival costs money, and delays their return home. Simultaneously, staying unemployed means having no shelter, and is even more dangerous for those with expired visas. Recent migrants with weaker networks in Istanbul prefer to apply to work agencies, because at least they provide food and place to stay during the time of unemployment, as Liza describes:

> We throw ourselves to the agencies. There are agencies here, and they find jobs for us. We heard about them, and found their telephone numbers. We call them…We call them from the public phone box. And they tell us to wait at the telephone box and they come to meet us. Then we go to the agency together. They always find a job.[46]

Moldovan domestic workers with lengthy work experience maintain their own networks in Istanbul. They prefer to use their own connections with the employers and find jobs for the new comers in Istanbul households. Like any

[45] From an interview with Anna, March 2005. "İş yoktu. Otelde durdum. İş aradım ondan sonra şirkete gittim, orada 2 gün durdum, o ev sahibi aldı beni çalışmaya, geldi oraya gördü, beğendi beni, aldı beni."

[46] From an interview with Liza, April 2005. "Atıyoruz şirketlere kendimizi. Şirketler var burada danışmanlık, işte bundan şundan duyuyorsun, alıyorsun telefonunu. Telefonlaşıyorsun, soruyorsun…Sonra gel telefon klubesinden aç telefon, ben sana (yoluna) çıkıcam, karşılayacağım derler…İşte gidiyorsun şirkette, sana yüzde yüz iş buluyorlar."

encounter, Moldovan domestic workers' relationship with agencies are transformed as they shuttle back and forth for long periods of time. On the basis of the experiences of previous journeys and having heard friends' stories, women reshape their travels and encounters with other actors, including work agencies, the police and employers.

It is often the case that their dependency on these agencies diminishes in time as they manage to have their own connections and networks in Istanbul. They complain that the agencies do not care about their working conditions; sometimes they even benefit from bad working conditions, since every contract means more money for them. For example, Tatiana prefers her own connections, rather than agencies, because she mistrusts them.

> I do not trust the agencies very much. They deceive people. They send you there (wicked houses). They change your place after a month and they get money from you one more time…They earn money this way. They take money from both the employer and you. They cannot get on well with the employer, and the employers treat them badly, the woman cannot stay there any more. So the agency finds you another house, and they take money one more time.[47]

In the accounts of my informants, there was another reason why they tried to avoid the encounter with these agencies, which I believe reveals a more dramatic side of estrangement experienced by domestic workers. Moldovan women see these settings as a display window where they are presented to the employers. Women noted that not only their labor but also their bodies were subjected to the exchange occurring between Turkish employers and work

[47] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Ben şirkete çok güvenmiyorum. Şirket çok kazıklıyor insanları, hem de bile bile seni iter oraya (kötü evlere), bir aydan sonra değiştirir (yerini), yine para alır…Bundan kazanıyor. O kadından da (para) alıyor, senden de alıyor. Geçinemiyorlar, kötü davranıyorlar, kadın duramıyor, seni tekrar yerleştiriyor bir yere yine para alıyor."

agencies. In our conversations, while Lara joked about the agencies and employers as though they were the judges for a beauty contest, Alexi told me that the way that employers treated them during the job interviews is humiliating. She feels embarrassed that she was displayed like a "thing" to the employer:

> I did not like the agency at all…The people are sleeping on the floors. They come to hire you, they look at your teeth, and they look at you from head to toe. Well, in old times, they used to sell people. It is just like that.[48]

Svetlana complained about the work agencies because they forced some of her friends into prostitution under the name of domestic employment, and revealed another reason for preferring one's own connections. Personal connections are simply easier to trust:

> I want to go to someone I know. For example Sister Nermin (her employer) tells me to find someone I know. Well, for the work, she has to be familiar. We have to find someone we know. We are afraid of the outside people. How can we find a nice person? What might they do to you? We are foreigners, you know.[49]

By using informal networks, Moldovan domestic workers try to negotiate feelings of estrangement, insecurity, fear, and mistrust:

> It is very nice to work for someone you know. So, when I find a job for one of my friends in the house of someone I know, I am sure that they will get on well with each other. But if the agency sends her somewhere, who knows what they will do? I do not have a guarantee. For example when you go to the house, she (employer) does not give you food, leaves you hungry. In a five-storey house, normally two to

[48] From an interview with Maria, September 2005. "Şirketi de hiç beğenmedim orada herkes yerde yatıyor, işe almaya geliyorlar seni, dişlerine bakıyorlar, bakıyorlar sana ayaktan başa, hani satılık, hani eskiden vardı ya insanları satarlardı ya işte öyle."

[49] From an interview with Svetlana, May 2005. "Tanıdık kişiye gitmek istiyorum. Mesela sevinç abla (iş vereni) diyor bana bul bir insan hani tanıdığın senin olsun. Mesela iş için hani, öyle bulmak lazım öyle, dışarıdan korkuyorsun, ne yandan nasıl insan bulacaksın. Ne yapacaklar sana, biz yabancıyız yani."

> three people work. But she hires only one woman, she wakes you up in the middle of the night to work.[50]

As they establish their own networks and have acquaintances in Istanbul, some Moldovan domestic workers use these networks as another source of income. When they arrange safer places of employment for their friends, they are paid for these arrangements. For instance, one day Silvia told me that her friend, Sasha is coming from Moldova, so she needs to welcome her at Karaköy harbor to take her to a work place, the house of her employer's friend. I know that for couple of months Silvia assisted her, because she does not speak proper Turkish and therefore cannot communicate well with her employer. Moreover, she did not know anything about Turkish cuisine. Silvia taught her basic sentences that she might need to communicate with her employer, to understand basic service commands and how to cook "proper" Turkish food.

One day, Silvia and Sasha visited my house for a coffee. Silvia told me that Sasha does not want to work in the same household anymore, and that they might need to find another place for her if her employer continued to treat her badly. Sasha also complained that her employer calls her "stupid" because she cannot easily understand what needs to be done due to her inadequate Turkish. One day, Sasha's employer wanted her to cook spinach, but because she did not know how to separate the roots and leaves of the spinach, her employer beat her hands. When Silvia heard about this, knowing their respective employers are good friends, she asked her employer to tell her friend's

[50] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Ama bu tanıdık tanıdığa gidince, çok güzel. Ama benim bir arkadaşım var ben ona iş arıyorum o çok dürüst, ben kefil oluyorum, o giderse oraya ben biliyorum çok güzel geçinecekler. Ama danışmanlık yerden giderse, ne yapıyorlar orada, ama tabi onun hiçbir güvencesi hiçbir şeyi yok, sende şimdi gidiyorsun yeni eve, yemek vermez, aç bırakır, beş katlı bir ev iki, üç kişi çalışacak normalde, bu yalnız bir kadın çalıştırır, gece kaldırır seni bu işi yap."

employer to treat Sasha better. Otherwise Silvia would find another place for her. In return, Sasha gave Silvia fifty dollars, as agreed upon, and thanked her for caring so much. As this case illustrates, unlike employment agencies whose involvement ends after arranging the place of employment, these women's networks were used to adjust bad work conditions and protect the rights of domestic workers for a longer period of time.

All of my informants have pointed out that their entrance to Turkey has been firmly restricted in recent times. They said that crossing the Turkish border is more difficult and risky in these days for Moldovan women. How they situate themselves through the encounter with the police at the borders has apparently also changed, as they are seen as potential "illegal" migrants and "criminals" by the police. Luba thinks that the Turkish police no longer believe the lie that they are tourists. With the increase in surveillance technologies, the police easily keep records and recognize who was deported, or left Turkey without paying the penalties for previous illegal stays. Because the police no longer believe they are tourists, on her last arrival, Luba made up a new story to convince the police to let her pass the border. She said that her mother is married to a Turkish man, and that she will study in Turkey.[51]

These fake stories are not only performed to convince the police at the borders, but also on the streets of Istanbul. Moldovan women are subject to police monitoring on the streets, even when their visas have not yet expired:

[51] At the very beginning of my field study, I had a chance to meet with Luba at a friend's house. She was the youngest Moldovan women I met during field research but unfortunately when I tried to reach her for a formal interview, she was in Moldova.

> The police stopped me to ask for my ID. OK, I said, I have a visa. I have been here for 15 days, there are 15 days more. I showed him my passport. He took it. He said, "Your visa has expired". I said, "No! Look carefully". He glanced at it and gave it to someone else. One says, it has expired, one says, no it hasn't. One policeman said, "You haven't come here as a tourist, you have come here for work." I explained that I came here as a visitor. That my sister is married here. That I did not come here for work. That I have only 15 days more, and I will stay here for one more week and then go back home. Only then did they give my passport back. They questioned me that much.[52]

Sometimes women even used false marriage as a strategy for being able to work in Turkey. Most of my informants saw marrying a Turkish man as the only way to overcome their "illegal" and "criminalized" positions.

A park in the Istanbul' neighborhood of Laleli is another important setting for Moldovan domestic workers' journey. This particular setting is well known by other actors as well--Turkish employers, work agencies as well as the police. As such, it is a place where encounters unfold and become negotiated. One of the well known journals in Turkey described this park as the "Moldovan women market", (Moldovyalı kadın pazarı) or "human market" (insan pazarı).[53] Around the park Moldovan domestic workers sit on the pavement and wait to be hired as care-takers or domestic workers in Istanbul households. This is also a place where they might possibly get caught by the police, meet

[52] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Durdu polis, bayan kimlik? tamam dedim, işte ben vize var, 15 gündür buradayım daha 15 gün var, çıkardım pasaportu buyurun dedim. İşte aldı. Sizin vizeniz geçti, aa hayır dedim…İyi bakın dedim. İyi bakınız, bir baktı öyle, bir başkasına verdi. İkisi baktılar, biri diyor aa daha var bunun, bu da diyor "Eee sen buraya turist gibi gelmedin sen çalışmaya geldin"…Dedim "siz biliyor musunuz beyefendi, ben geldim buraya turist gibi, benim kızım burada evli, ben misafir geldim buraya, ben çalışmaya gelmedim, bir de benim 15 günüm var, zaten ben şimdi bir hafta daha duracağım, gideceğim memlekete dedim" O kadar dedim, baktılar bana böyle işte, verdiler. O kadar mecbur bıraktılar."

[53] Milliyet Gazetesi, 02, November 2002.

with their friends, or send their remittances, presents and other things home to Moldova. In other words, the park embodies the experiences of Moldovan women, shaped by risks and opportunities, fear and hope, and loss and longing simultaneously.

These women are not only new-comers or women with weaker networks in Istanbul. Among them there are domestic workers who became unemployed unexpectedly. This was indeed an important concern for many women, because they have heard the stories of friends who were sacked by their employers. Since Moldovan women perform live-in domestic work, becoming unemployed in Istanbul also immediately means losing their shelter and home. To put it differently, they have to go back to the work agencies, the streets or hostels in Laleli. Most of the women had no place to stay in Istanbul in these unanticipated and difficult situations; therefore agencies were seen as safer places to hide from the police until they found a new work place.

The trauma, fear and pain of not being fully at home is a constant theme in the narratives I collected, yet these are experienced much more dramatically during the first arrival. On their first arrivals, Moldovan women confront communication difficulties because of their inadequate knowledge of the Turkish language, as well as the absence of familiar connections and surroundings. One of the narrators recalls the state of uneasiness and dread of her first journey to Istanbul. In her description it was as if they were "taken away from home and left alone on an island":

> I do not know anyone. I do not speak the language at all. I can speak a little but I cannot understand

> everything… Well, at that time, I felt that someone took me away from my home and left me on some kind of a lone island. There are too many people, too many cars. They threw me into a very big place. I looked around myself, it was very strange. The place I live is a city, but it is a village when it is compared to the cities here. There aren't that many big buildings there…Ah, (fear) Where am I? Where did they take me? What am I doing? Are they going to kill me? What will they do? I thought of these kinds of things then.[54]

As one can observe in this account, feelings of distrust, fear and estrangement are intermingled in the experience of Moldovan women. It is only by getting to know people and surroundings, establishing their own connections and gaining a better knowledge of the Turkish language that women can re-establish their sense of security.

Throughout the interviews, Moldovan domestic workers consistently said that they never wished to return to Turkey, at least never as a domestic worker, again. However, although they never intended to return to Istanbul households, they know that their savings would not last long in Moldova. On their departures, they know that sooner or later, once the money runs out, they will have to come back and perform domestic work again. Therefore they are always concerned about the next arrival before they leave. Although they complete their travel in six months or a year, the journey is far from reaching an end. In the case of Moldovan domestic workers, homecoming remains an impossibility. The act of traveling between fixed points of arrival and departure

[54] From an interview with Larisa, April 2005. "Kimseyi bilmiyorum dili de yani az da olsa böyle sanki biliyorum ama çoğu şeyi anlamıyorum da…O zaman sanki benim evimden aldılar da beni böyle bir ıssız adaya attılar, ama insan çok, araba çok, yani, çok büyük bir şey içine attılar, sanki böyle, her tarafımda bakıyorum, ne biliyim acayip bir şeydi, küçük bir köy, şehir sayılıyor bizim (yer), bu kadar büyük binalar bu kadar büyük şeyler yok bizde…Oooh (korku) neredeyim ben? Nereye götürdüler? Ne yapıyorum ben öldürecekler mi beni? Ne yapacaklar böyle bir şeye kapıldım ben."

for a certain period of time can possibly be completed, but women continue dwelling between Turkey and Moldova as a result of the ongoing economic crisis and unemployment.[55]

Moldovan women can never be sure if they will be allowed to enter Turkey again. Previous overstays with expired visas, and penalties for illegal stays or official changes in surnames on the passports--all of which can become reasons for deportation--haunt their next arrival. To secure a better chance of return, these women should leave Turkey with a clean official record, which means one should not have an incidence of deportation and should have paid the penalty for her illegal overstays.

Some of my informants postpone their returns and stay for a longer period of time in Istanbul, because they have to pay a huge penalty to clean their records from illegality. They are caught in a vicious circle: One must work to pay the penalty, yet each day of illegality increases the amount of money that must be paid. For one year illegal stay the penalty is approximately 700 YTL, which is equal to the salary one would make for two months domestic work in an Istanbul household.[56]

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[55] Chambers distinguishes between travel and migrancy based on the (im)possibility of homecoming. She argues that travel implies "movement between fixed positions, a site of departure, a point of arrival, knowledge of itinerary" in which homecoming is potentially possible, whereas in "migrancy neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming- completing the story, domestication of detour- becomes impossibility" Ilcan, 2002 and Ahmed, 2000 is quoted from Chambers, 1994, p. 5).

[56] For example, let's say a Moldovan domestic worker arrived to Turkey with a tourist visa on March 2005. If she leaves on February 2006, she has to pay approximately 700 YTL for a legal exit, and if she attempts to leave on May 2006, it is about 900 YTL.

At different stages of the journey, women experience and narrate different forms of fear. In the first arrival stories, "trust/security" and "fear" are explained by the unfamiliar surrounding, or simply by being a "stranger" (yabancı) in Istanbul. On their returns, they do not see themselves as strangers anymore since they soon overcome linguistic difficulties and become part of women's networks. Instead, the object of their fear becomes the state, as they relate themselves to the position of "illegal" migrant or, as they would say, to the position of being "smuggled" in Istanbul.

Women who cannot find a secure place of employment have to cope with their "yabancı" appearance and sounds which identify their illegal positions as they walk on the streets of Istanbul. After six years of experience of a continuous journey, Lara asks for legal recognition in Turkey. She has friends to meet and she wants to spend time outside with them, yet she is afraid:

> I just want to have an ID. I want to walk around freely. I do not want to be afraid of the police. I just want that. We always run away from the police… now we can speak Turkish but they understand our accent. And we mostly speak Russian. When they hear us they stop us. I do not know, maybe they are plainclothes policeman. That's why we do not walk around too much. I am ashamed of this… When something goes wrong, God knows to whom you can tell about it… And I am afraid that they will take my passport. Then what will I do? (Who takes the passports?) When the police controlled my passport and saw that my visa had expired, he wanted to take my passport. He told me to give him some money. He said that only then he would give my passport back. Well, I said, what about your laws? He said, money talks here, not the laws. So, what could I do?[57]

(For further information see Istanbul Police Department's web page on http.//www.iem.gov.tr/iem/uploads/yabancilar/turkce/16_tr.htm)

[57] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Sadece bunu istiyorum, kimlik olsun ben rahat gezeyim, polislerden korkmayayım işte bunu istiyorum çok…Hep koşuyoruz,

In the field, I met women who tried to collect information about the changing regulations of the Turkish State on their legal status. However, direct access to such information was very limited, and the only way to be informed about legal changes was to collect stories of friends who have passed through these processes recently. The news about the number of deportations in Laleli, or about the number of women sent back from the airport during the week, quickly spread through the networks of women. As I have witnessed several times, my informants got phone calls from their friends about this type of information.

Furthermore, I even became a part of this network during field research; I was asked to call the police to learn about the reasons why women were not allowed to pass the border, even if they had paid the penalty. Why were some women allowed and some not? It was not possible to get a precise answer for their situation either on the phone or by face to face talks with the police. For instance, when I visited the police station as a researcher, I expected to hear more about the procedures and regulations on the deportations or border-crossings of Moldovan women, but I was only shown a passport of a deported woman with a red deportation seal on it, and a form which women must fill out to pay the penalty for an over-stay. In return, I was asked questions about how

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kaçıyoruz bu polislerden…Artık biz konuşuyoruz Türkçe, ama yinede bizim Türkçe'den anlıyorlar, bir de daha fazla Rusça konuşuyoruz. Duydukları zaman, belki sivil polis, bilmiyorum bazen böyle de oluyor, durduruyorlar. O yüzden çok dışarıda gezmiyoruz…Ben utanıyorum bundan…Kime söyleyeceksin başına bir şey gelse, bir Allah bilir…Bir de korkuyorum alacaklar pasaportumu, sonra nasıl olacak, korkuyorum, (kim alıyor pasaportu) polis pasaporta bakacak hani vize yok, vize benim geçti ben kaçağım, pasaportu alabilir, nasıl daha fazla para verirsin, diyecek pasaportunu vermeyeceğim bu kadar para getir bana sondan sonra vereceğim…Ee ne dedim, sizin kanunlarınız çalışmıyor mu dedim, burada para geçiyor, kanunlar değil…Eeee ne yapacağım ben sonra."

I found my informants and, especially, in which neighborhoods of Istanbul they work and reside.

Some return journeys, on the other hand, were described as a celebration or a release. This occurs only when one has saved enough money by finding good employment and dealt successfully with her illegal position. Once one has passed the border, the return journey no longer an uncanny passage. Tatiana described that she feels like a "woman" on the way back home:

> I used to go back home by bus, now I go back by ship. The ship is very nice. It takes two days and I rest during the voyage. (Is it comfortable?) Very good. (Could you compare them?) I like the ship. I feel like a real woman there. When I am going back home, it is very good, but coming here is bad. There is no money and everything. But when you are going home, you have the money, you go to the pub. There are women I know when we travel. When we are going back home we are always five or six women. All familiar faces. We dance for two nights. Very beautiful. We dance and drink. When we get back home, we rest for two days. Our feet are aching because of too much dancing. We are so happy when going home…We worked, we saved money, and we are going home…[58]

As Tatiana's travel story illustrates, for some women it is possible to complete the journey. Their fears and anxieties disappear on the way back home. Furthermore, they perceive the way back home as an award for themselves. Instead of taking coach or plane, women organize the return journey with friends, to celebrate the success of return. Even if they know they will return to

[58] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Eskiden otobüsle gidiyordum, şimdi gemiyle gidiyorum, gemi çok güzel, gemi o gün iki gün ben dinleniyorum, (Rahat oluyor mu?) çok güzel, (Karşılaştırsana?) ben gemiyi seviyorum, orada aynı kendimi kadın gibi hissediyorum, şimdi giderken eve, güzel, ama buraya gelmek çok kötü, paran yok bir şeyin yok, ama oraya giderken, paran var, gidiyorsun bara, oturuyorsun, kadınlar var bizden, biz eve giderken hep oluyoruz beş-altı kadın, hani tanıdık oluyor, öyle bütün iki gece gemide dans ediyoruz, güzel güzel, dans ediyoruz içki içiyoruz. Eve gidince kaldırıyorsun 2 gün ayaklarını yukarı çok dans etmekten. Ama güzel bir şey. biz o kadar seviniyoruz ki, çalıştık, para biriktirdik, eve gidiyoruz…"

Turkey again as a consequence of constantly deteriorating circumstances in Moldova, one journey is successfully completed nevertheless.

Journeys, at the end of which Tatiana feels like a "real woman", are traditionally constructed to be masculine. As Enloe (1989) puts it, historically "being feminine has been defined as sticking close to home, masculinity, by contrast, has been the passport for travel" (p. 21). "Travel" and "journey" are culturally constructed as both "gendered" and "gendering" practices. Yet, in the case of my informants, the practice of travel played a significant role in the constitution of their female subjectivities. Throughout their journeys, they constantly redefine and negotiate their gender roles and identities as mothers and wives. Here, I would like to call to mind the opening quote of this chapter, Min-ha's metaphoric use of "T-raveling" *as a practice of bold mission and minute depiction*; I construe Moldovan domestic workers' journeys as altering the meanings that they attribute to themselves as women, as a consequence of boldly shuttling back and forth between meanings, thoughts, imaginations and memories.

CHAPTER II ENCOUNTERS

Encounters in Istanbul Households

Transnational flows of migrants that take up domestic jobs in the countries where they arrive have recently caused private households to become a realm of different social relations. Scholars have examined how interactions between migrant domestic workers and employers often enhance the boundaries that divide them (Lan, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, Cheng, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, Anderson, 2002, Constable, 1997a, 1997b, Parrenas, 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001). They have elucidated this interpersonal encounter, in which parties take different positions that become constitutive of their gendered identities.

Moldovan women's entry into the private households of Turkish families has introduced a new axis of differentiation among women, inviting us to pose new questions and develop novel conceptual frameworks in order to understand the intimate encounters between women of different national and religious identities within the context of transnationalism. In this chapter, I try to analyze these sites of encounter, Istanbul households, in order to elucidate the ways in which differences are marked and enforced in the formation of women's subjectivities.

In the context of domestic service in Turkey, class differences and positions are often constructed through the dichotomies of either "modern"-"traditional" or "rural"-"urban". Studies on domestic workers in Turkey have revealed how these dichotomies are employed as class differences. Özbay's study (1999) illustrates how uneducated, young, rural girls were brought to middle class

houses in the cities to perform domestic work and expected to learn house management skills in the early Republican period. They were inculcated with modern values and were called *evlatlık* (adopted child), yet they were also taught not to transgress boundaries that divided them from their employers strategically (p. 22-23). Özyeğin (2001) claims that in interactions of parties in domestic service, middle class employers act like "positive modernizing agents" for domestic workers, whereas domestic workers both "emulate the styles and tastes of middle class women" in daily practices of womanhood but also "define their identities against urban middle-class femininity, to reaffirm the value of traditional femininity and their own moral superiority as women and mothers" (p. 149).

In the case of local domestics, the codes of antagonism between the employer and the domestic workers are codified, because the subject positions of the actors, such as "rural", "lower class", "domestic worker" and "urban", "middle class", "employer", are well defined. On the other hand, class differences are not always apparent in the encounters of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers. The contradictory representations of Moldovan domestic workers indicate their ambiguous positions in Istanbul households. In this section, I will elaborate the ways in which women negotiate this ambiguous relationship by employing different discourses and strategies in order to try to accumulate respective power.

It is important to note that the downward class mobility of Moldovan women that I discussed in the previous chapter initiates new challenges to the existing

antagonisms between workers and employers in Istanbul households. Their previous experiences as skilled workers with relatively high social statuses complicate the struggle over the meanings of housekeeping and womanhood. In these contexts, domestic workers do not passively accept the subordinate or inferior positions associated with their performances in domestic service. Rather, they employ their own symbolic capital and strategies, through which they contest enforced and disempowering identifications. This allows us to distinguish the emergence of new codes of struggle that are different and more ambiguous than in the cases of local domestic workers and employers.

Gül Özyeğin (2001) has argued that "identities should not be seen as automatically emerging from unequal structural positions of the actors within domestic sectors"; she suggests that "they can be better conceptualized as contextually constructed and relationally defined" (p. 129). Furthermore, she argues that the "existence of certain alternative definitions of identity for the domestic worker makes it difficult to attribute inferiority as a trait that characterizes her very inner being (or her self-worth)" (ibid.). Therefore, we need to look at the shifting conditions of encounters as contexts in which meanings are contested, negotiated and attributed to the self. Furthermore, these meanings also depict particular forms of resistance embedded in the meetings between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers.

Aksu Bora, another social scientist who has worked on domestic work in Turkey, claims that the relational positions of employers and employees in the constitution of women's subjectivities become effective in the constructive

formation of collective identities. In the analysis of class differences among groups and individuals, it is important to note how female subjects position themselves relationally towards others and narrate themselves in relation to women of other classes. Bora argues that class differences among women must be analyzed not only in terms of economic conditions of the class but also on the basis of women's apprehensions of these circumstances, their mobility in these conditions, and their use of strategic means and sources (Bora, 2005, p. 124).

Bora reminds us that Bourdieu's discussions of class and gender must be treated together, because "sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 107 cited in Bora, 2005, p. 140). In the encounters between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers, the meanings that women attribute to femininity vary according to the class dispositions of the parties. These encounters allow women to redefine their femininity in ways that differ from the existing codes.

In my field study, neither Moldovan domestic workers nor Turkish employers directly positioned themselves on the basis of class differences. Yet, by employing different discursive strategies over the meanings of "proper" housekeeping and womanhood, these women indirectly display class differences in their encounters. Moreover, I argue that the qualities of good housekeeping and womanhood changed in contradictory ways through the

shifting conditions of their encounters. In this complex play of positions, each subject modified meanings of good housekeeping and womanhood in relation to differing circumstances of their encounters. This chapter discusses these changing meanings of being "proper" housekeepers and women through an examination of the interactions of Moldovan domestic workers with their others. By analyzing and comparing the narratives of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers, my aim is to examine the question of how both parties strategically redefine themselves as "women" through competing meanings of femininity.

Representations of Moldovan Domestic Workers: Intimate "Strangers" in Istanbul Households

In general, foreign domestic workers are not well represented in the Turkish media. News about them is rare, and there are a limited number of literary works that refer to them. However, some scholars have illustrated how the irregular female migration from ex-Soviet countries to Turkey--including that of Moldovan domestic workers--has received wide attention in the media, especially due to concerns over prostitution and trafficking activities (Erder & Kaska 2003, Demirdirek & Whitehead, 2004). As Gülçür and İlkkaracan (2002) point out, for most people in Turkish society, women from post- Soviet States have become equated with the term "prostitute" regardless of whether they are sex workers or not (p. 414).

Available representations of Moldovan domestic workers in the media change over time. Moldovans began to work in Istanbul at the end of the 1990's. During the early years, rare but positive representations were seen; such

representations may have been intentionally put forward by the work agencies. The media affirmatively represented migrant Moldovan women as "good" housekeepers and care takers, since they are "professional", "educated", "European" and "clean". They are not "illiterate", "uncivilized" and "ignorant", the ways in which local domestic workers with rural backgrounds tend to be represented. In an interview with Turkish employers on Moldovan domestic workers in the Milliyet Newspaper, published in 2004, an employer described them in the following way: "I prefer Moldovans because their lifestyles and world views are European, they are more like us. Besides, they are very clean. Our native domestics are not so clean. The least educated Moldovan is a high school graduate. If you give her a task, she tries to do ten more tasks. They do not hesitate to overwork."[59]

Moldovan women were introduced as "educated" cheap labor willing to perform live-in domestic work. On the other hand, Moldovan women were preferred over other educated foreign domestic workers such as Taiwanese, Filipinos and Malaysians, because Moldovans work for less money and have the advantage of speaking Gagauz Turkish.[60] It certainly was a new phenomenon for Turkish families. Such a situation could only be compared to that of the late Ottoman period. During that time skilled domestic workers (tutors, nannies) in Istanbul were all from the West and North (Petzen, 2002, Özbay, 1999, 2001). European nannies, white Russian tutors or well-trained

[59] Milliyet Gazetesi, 31 March 2004.

[60] Hürriyet Gazetesi, 26 April 2000.

slave girls, who were mostly Circassians or Georgians, were used in domestic work and for elderly and child care.

Globalization and Europeanization have been introduced in a continuum with modernization and development in Turkey; Moldovans have contributed to the modernization of middle class families in Istanbul. Although current influxes of migrant domestic workers throughout the world are often from Far East Asia, Turkish employers have a tendency to choose those from Eastern Europe and especially from ex-Soviet countries, instead of Asians.

Among the female migrants from ex-Soviet countries, Moldovans are particularly preferred because, as I mentioned before they often are able to speak Gagauz Turkish. It is common to hear statements like "did you find a good Moldovan?", "we have got a Moldovan" or "our Moldovan left" among the conversations of upper-class women. The word "Moldovan" is often employed in exchange with "domestic worker". The employment of Moldovan live-in domestic workers is seen to be a sign of Westernization; they are often displayed as symbols of social status among middle class families in Istanbul. Specifically, the newly rich Turkish middle class employers validate their middle-classhood by the consumption of "European", "educated"; "Moldovan" labor service.

Recently, negative representations of Moldovan domestic workers have started to appear more often in the media. These representations not only reinforce the boundaries that separate Moldovan women from their employers in the same

household, they also underpin the image of Moldovan women as "outsiders", or, to put it differently as "strangers". Parallel to the media representations of female migrants from ex-Soviet countries as Natashas--the word connotes their involvement in prostitution--the femininity of Moldovan women is now often referred to as a "threat," bringing disorder to Turkish families.[61]

By drawing upon medical and scientific discourses, experts highlight the cultural and national differences of Moldovan women. They warn employers not to hire foreign women just because they are cheaper than local domestic workers, because these women could have unwanted cultural influences over children.[62] Furthermore, due to advances in technology, employers now have their own forum pages on the web, where they discuss and warn each other about the problems of employing Moldovan domestic workers.[63]

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[61] A news piece titled "Sosyete'de Hizmetçi Paniği" (Maid Panic in High Society)" was presented on television: "When rich men who fall in love with their Russian, Bulgarian, Moldovan and Ukrainian maids start to leave their wives, chaos broke out. Foreign maids are being dismissed", "...The women who came to our country from Russia, Ukraine, and especially from Moldova attract the men in the households. But they say they come here for only saving money." (28. September 2006 TGRT prime time evening news.)

[62] A physiotherapist argues that "when the nanny prays according to her own religion the child may take it as a model. If the nanny has some inappropriate behaviors, these may have some effect on the child. A child cannot interpret things as right or wrong. He picks from the behavior of the loved ones. Foreign people have some language or accent problems. It is very disadvantageous in many ways." An account of a psychologist warns parents against employing foreign women as care takers for children, as follows: "The children can only be entrusted to the nannies who can teach them the society's culture, values, beliefs, customs and traditions. The ones who come from abroad reflect a different culture, beliefs and value judgments. Therefore, this practice is very wrong." (Zaman Gazetesi, 3 September 2006)

[63] On a forum page called "We are mothers," a Moldovan care taker was described to warn potential employers, in the following way: "Hello mothers, Name: N.C. Date of birth: 14th February 1977 Place of birth: Moldova Passport No:A12345219 They have two little children, one boy, one girl. This girl came to work for us with a reference from another woman who worked for us for a while. She is a relative of her. This is her first visit to Turkey, she entered the country on the 29th April 2006. She is a nursery teacher in her country. She is presentable, short, and she has a thin voice. She

In addition to all of this, local administrations have implemented new policies against the increasing number of "educated" and cheap Moldovan domestic workers. For instance, on the basis of demands of Turkish employers who would prefer not to employ foreign domestic workers, Istanbul Municipality has organized courses to train local women as good housekeepers and care takers in some poor districts of Istanbul.[64]

Similar affirmative and negative media representations of Moldovan domestic workers were also cited by Turkish employers in my study; in particular, they compared Moldovan domestic workers with local domestic workers. In such comparisons, employers immediately identified "professionalism", "a capacity for hard-work" and "education" as the desirable qualities of Moldovan women.

However, in daily encounters, these representations were consistently challenged and dismantled by Turkish employers. In these encounters, the uncertain and ambiguous positions of Moldovan domestic workers stemming

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came to our house to baby-sit and do the light housework. But she has never been successful at anything. She can neither manage to hold a baby, nor a napkin. In spite of this she is extremely wiseacre. Her mind is totally somewhere else. She bought a bikini for herself, and she never stopped asking me when we will go swimming. When I wasn't at home she badgered my mother all the time. She is totally insane. When I was abroad she fainted a few times after some phone calls. When my mother told me this, we dismissed her the next day. She can neither do the housework, nor baby-sit. She has some kind of anxieties at home. She can never stay alone in a room. She will be looking for a new job. If you happen to meet her, please be careful!!!" Retrieved July, 2006 from http.//www.anneyiz.biz/haber/haberdtl.php?hid=3477. This is only one example of many other complaints and warnings which could be found on such forum pages on the web.

[64] "İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, çocuklarını yabancı dadılara emanet etmek istemeyen annelerin talebi üzerine dört ilçede eğitici annelik kursu açtı. Zeytinburnu, Eyüp, Ümraniye ve Üsküdar'daki kurslara kayıtlı öğrenci sayısı 150'ye ulaştı." (Hürriyet Gazetesi, 1 May 2004).

from their being "temporal", "illegal" and "undocumented" migrants were described undesirable qualities. All of these paradoxical representations show the changing nature of employee-employer relations as well as the emergence of new codes of struggle in domestic work. Furthermore, I argue that the contextual discursive employment of such qualities must be seen as means of practicing power as well as ways of resisting by both parties.

In the accounts of Turkish employers, Moldovan women were preferred as domestic workers because they know how to keep social distance with their employers, and do not personalize their relationships with their employers in the manner that local domestic workers do. An employer compares local and Moldovan domestic workers in terms of maintaining social distance in the following way:

> Well, they know their limits. For example, when a group of visitors comes to the house they never come near the visitors. Turks can do that. Anyway, you are talking Turkish to them. They understand you. But these women never come and face the visitors. They don't come even if you call for them. Turks are very comfortable about that. They come and sit down with us even if I do not invite them to.[65]

Some of the employers I interviewed considered the "foreignness" of Moldovan domestic workers as an advantage to preserve social distance. This distance was partly a result of cultural differences and communication problems. Employers said they sometimes had difficulty in understanding Moldovans' "broken" Turkish. Although middle class employers sometimes

[65] From an interview with Aliye, June 2005. "Şey hadlerini bilme gibi yaklaşımları var, mesela eve kalabalık bir misafir gurubun geldiği zaman, misafirin yaLara çıkmıyorlar, yani Türkler çıkabiliyor orada, hani sonuçta, hem onlarla Türkçe konuşuyorsun, çok rahat anlıyorsun senin milletinden insanlar, ama onlar kesinlikle çıkmıyor, çağırsan bile gelmiyorlar…Türkler o konuda çok rahatlar, ben davet etmeden gelip oturuyor."

had difficulties in communicating with local workers with a rural background, they only tended to see the barrier of language as a cultural and national difference when it concerned Moldovan women and themselves.

More importantly, Moldovan women were regarded as temporary workers by their employers. They know that these women overstay their visas in Istanbul illegally, and hence sooner or later have to leave their jobs and return to their homes in Moldova. Moldovans also saw their jobs in Istanbul houses as temporary, not as life-long careers, primarily because they take these journeys in order to adjust to economic crises at home. Their ultimate aim is to earn enough money in the shortest period of time, and then to return to Moldova. On the other hand, Kalaycıoğlu and Rittersberger-Tılıç's study (2001) reveals that a significant percentage of local domestic workers desire to work as long as they are in good health (p. 134).

Figen is a 36 year old employer and mother of one child. Although she is not currently working, she used to work as an executive manager in a private company. She employed a Moldovan domestic worker for child care and domestic help, so that she could attend some hobby courses. She complained about the disloyalty of Moldovans:

> Money is very important for them. I have heard so from everybody. You shouldn't expect a heartfelt commitment from them. The agency also says this. Well, they can leave you in the lurch easily. For 10 dollars extra money. Even if you describe your private life to her, or she tells about her private life to you…No matter, even if you think that you two are very close, one day, when she finds another job where she can work with her fiancé, she leaves you. There are differences…They do not share the same feelings with

> Turks, like unity, brotherhood, and commitment. They do not feel gratitude![66]

In the narratives of Turkish employers, the notions of "professionalism" and "work discipline" often contradict with "faithfulness" and "gratefulness". These notions in fact reveal the strategies and tactics that both parties utilize throughout their encounters, according to their own conflict of interests. In the accounts of Turkish employers, Moldovan domestics are simultaneously portrayed as possessing desirable and undesirable qualities of housekeeping.

I noticed that employers often underlined that money is the most important thing for Moldovan domestic workers; they will happily leave their place of employment for better payment in any other place. Some employers connected this type of attitude to a lack of commitment and faithfulness. From the employer's point of view, the "cunning" thievery of Moldovan workers is also related to unfaithfulness. This image of Moldovan women was also based on the fact that are temporary and illegal:

> She can leave everything, grab her bag and go suddenly. She doesn't think about what will happen if she goes. She doesn't think about whether she has to work a little bit more or not. To be left is in the end your destiny. No matter how much you pay her, and think you do much more than your maid deserves, it is not important. If she is a thief there is no way to stop it. Once I left some money for some workers, the workers called me to say that some of the money, 20YTL or 40YTL missing. I did not think the woman in the house, Natali, was taking it. My make-up supplies were taken, and my umbrella was taken from its cover and

[66] From an interview with Figen, May 2005. "Para onlar için hassas bir konu, bunu herkesten de duydum, ee onlardan bir gönül bağlılığı bekleme, yani bunu ajanstakiler de söylüyor, yani seni hakikaten çok kolay satabilir. 10 dolar fazla için, sen istediğin kadar otur ona özel hayatını anlat, o sana özel hayatını anlatsın, aa aslında biz çok yakınız algısına sahip ol, emin ol, nişanlısıyla birlikte çalışmak istediği bir iş bulduğunda, aynı paraya, aynı gün çeker gider. Farklı şeyler var, hani insana gönül bağlılığı o Türklerdeki birlik kardeşlik duygusu yok onlarda. O minnet duygusu yok."

> the cover was turned upside down. There are very sly acts of thievery. You do not even know it. They are taking slowly, one by one. Now I am checking their rooms. I did not used to do it. But when I went and checked it for the first time I saw everything. She hid the things that she stole from me in my house, in her bedroom. They do it so impudently and fearlessly, you cannot believe. They aren't afraid of anything. Why? When I called my lawyer, he told me that I couldn't complain. If you inform it to the police, you will be in trouble. They know it, and they use it. We cannot complain...[67]

At times, the position of Moldovan domestic workers as illegal and undocumented migrants was also seen as a disadvantage for practicing control and surveillance, and therefore preventing the possibility of establishing trust and commitment between the worker and employer. The illegal and informal nature of employing undocumented migrant workers makes it impossible to employ legal sanctions when they commit a crime. Zeynep claimed that the profiles of the newcomers are getting worse; it is more difficult to establish a trustworthy employer-employee relationship:

> The profile of the women arriving here has gotten worse recently. The greatest disadvantage is theft. It is a big problem. We were talking about this with my friends last weekend. There are a lot of instances. They find a Turkish boyfriend; they come to the house by car, and wait somewhere. If she doesn't baby-sit and comes for housework only, she is alone in the house. Employers are usually working women. If the employer

[67] From an interview with Yasemin, September 2005. "Bir anda her şeyi bırakıp bir anda çantasını alıp gidebiliyor, ben gidersem geride ne oluyor, acaba biraz daha mı çalışmam gerekli böyle bir düşünceleri yok her zaman terk edilmeye mahkumsunuz, maddi olarak da ne kadar ne yaparsanız yapın, ben çalışan kadınıma fazlasını da yaptım deseniz, eğer ki hırsızsa buna engel olmanın hiçbir çaresi yok, evde ustalarda yaptığım işten dolayı içine para ayırırdım, usta beni arardı buradan 40 milyon eksik 20 milyon eksik, benim hiç aklıma gelmezdi ki evdeki kadının aldığı…Natali, makyaj malzemeleri, şemsiyenin kılıfından şemsiye alınmış, ters çevrilip bırakılmış, çok kurnazca yapılan bir hırsızlıkları var, hiç farkında değilisiniz, yavaş yavaş götürüyorlar…Odalarını evde olmadıkları zaman o görmeden kontrol ediyorum ben bunu hiç yapmıyordum, bir gün kendiliğimden odasına gidip kontrol ettiğim zaman zaten her şeyi gördüm, o kadar öyle enteresan ki benden çaldıklarını benim evimde kendi odasına saklamış."

> is a housewife, she waits for the right time. When the employer is outside of the house she puts the things she likes into bags, and runs to the boyfriend's car. It is impossible to find a trace. I think this is the greatest disadvantage. It is impossible to control everything at all times. You are living in the same house with them, but you can't find a trace. Turks are preferable because you know where they live; you can guess where her family is living.[68]

From the employer's point of view, Moldovan domestic workers were seen as temporary, undocumented, and sometimes even potentially "criminal outsiders". The two quotes above illustrate that the potential criminality of Moldovan domestic workers was articulated through notions of uncertainty and unpredictability. They were seen as uncontrollable, and, furthermore, threatening.

The fact is that the presence of other domestic helpers in the same house mostly reinforces the image of Moldovan women as "temporary outsiders". Therefore, Moldovan domestic workers also view the presence of local domestic workers as a threat to the visibility and value of their labor. They often complained that in the absence of local domestic workers, they continue to do others' tasks and duties, yet the employers ignore this extra work. Even though Moldovan domestic workers offer to replace the work of these "old"

[68] From an interview with Zeynep, September 2005. "Gelenlerin profili son zamanlarda daha da kötüledi gelenlerin profili son zamanlarda, en büyük dezavantaj hırsızlık ciddi bir sorun, daha bu hafta sonu sitede arkadaşlarımla bunu konuşuyorduk, çok olay yaşanıyor, bu konuyla ilgili, baya valizler dolusu şey yapıp, bir Türk sevgili ayarlıyorlar, arabayla geliniyor bir yerde duruluyor, eve yakın bir yerde kadın zaten işte çoğunlukla çalışan kadınlar, hani evde çocuk bakmıyorsa, sadece ev işi için gelmişse evde yalnız kalıyor, ev kadını da olsa kadının dışarıda olduğu bir zamanı şey yapıp bekleyip, valizlere beğendiği şeyleri doldurup adamın arabasına binip gidiyor, izini bulmanız mümkün değil, bence en büyük dezavantaj bu…Her dakika her şeyinizi kontrol etmeniz mümkün değil, aynı evin içinde yaşıyorsunuz, ve izleri yok, Türk tercih edilmesindeki sebep yeri belli bir şekilde bir izi var biliyorsunuz nerede oturuyor, bir şekilde ailesi nerede falan tahmin edebiliyorsunuz."

and "faithful" domestic helpers, they were often rejected by their employers. It was implied that "old and faithful" (*emektar*) local domestic workers were "insiders" to a greater degree than they could ever be.

One of my Moldovan informants explained that although she complained about another domestic helper to her employer, she was told that she was the one who was supposed to be leaving the house:

> There was a Turkish woman with whom I worked. She was coming at half past ten in the morning and leaving at seven in the evening. She was only cooking. I was staying at night; I was accompanying the lady and I was cleaning in the daytime. At some point, we started to have problems. I don't know why, she started to treat me badly. She was saying bad things. She said, "I hope your children will die". Then, she was searching my bags, I think because of jealousy. I complained about her to my lady, and she said: "Whether you go or not, she is staying. She has been working here for 15 years."…She always supported her.[69]

Narratives about the actual moments of encounter illustrate that the representations of Moldovan women as "professional" and "educated" domestic workers in Istanbul households are challenged and questioned through daily interactions. A variety of meanings is strategically attached to good housekeeping by Turkish employers in order to maintain social distance and highlight differences as a source of control and power. For instance, employers argued that even though Moldovan women care more about their personal hygiene than local domestic workers, they do not know how to

[69] From an interview with Elena, March 2005. "Bir Türk kadını vardı, beraber çalıştık. O sabah on buçukta geliyordu akşam yedi de gidiyordu. O sadece bir yemek yapıyordu o kadar. Ben gece kalıyordum, arkadaşlık ediyordum hanıma, gündüzleri de temizlik yapıyordum. Zaman ilerledikçe aramız bozuldu, bilmem neden bana çok kötü davranmaya başladı. Kötü sözler söylüyordu bana, derdi ki senin çocukların ölsün, sonra çantalarımı karıştırırdı hep, bilmiyorum her halde kıskançlıktan, bende hanıma söyledim, o dedi ki sen ister git ister gitme ama 15 sene oldu o burada çalışıyor…Hep ona arka çıktı."

perform domestic tasks according to rules of hygiene and cleanliness in Istanbul households.

As Sara Ahmed (2000) asserts, "recognizability of strangers involves not only techniques of differentiating strange from familiar (ways of seeing), but also ways of living." According to her, face to face encounters "involve these modes of recognition that produce the stranger as a figure" (p. 22-24). For instance, in the narratives they told about their encounters, employers highlighted the previous lives and habits of the workers in order to mark undesirable differences as a means of maintaining control and discipline:

> Turkish workers know where to take the water--from the bathroom. Turkish workers do not fill the water bucket from the kitchen sink. They (Moldovans) do not have water lines in their houses. They take water from outside and bring it home. They take water from the same place every time. When I ask her, this is her answer…We use a separate cleaning cloth for each place; the toilet brush is different, the wash-basin cloth is different. They learn these things here.[70]

In this context, the employers' abstractions of hygiene and contamination paradoxically changed, and most of the employers articulated these undesirable traits of Moldovan domestic workers through the notion of essentialized cultural and national characteristics. As Douglas (1966) explains, "dirt is the by- product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering in rejecting inappropriate elements…this idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism" (p. 35). As many scholars have argued, the

[70] From an interview with Nergis, September 2005. "Bizimkiler suyun banyodan alındığını bilirler…Bizdeki Türk kova ile mutfaktan su almaz, onların (Moldovyalı) yaşantısında evlerinde su da olmuyor, gidiyorlar dışarı su taşıyorlar eve getiriyorlar, tek bir yerden su alma alışkanlıkları, yani sorduğum zaman bana söylediği şey bu…Bizde yer şeyin bezi ayrı, tuvaletin fırçası ayrı, lavabonun bilmem nesi ayrı diye burada öğreniliyor onlar."

meanings of hygiene and purity are dramatically altered through the daily interactions of domestic workers and employers (Özyeğin, 2001, Kalaycıoğlu & Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2001, Bora, 2005). These meanings are often employed to underline class inequalities between the parties of domestic service.

Some employers also expressed doubts about the level of education of Moldovan workers, since they often had difficulties in adapting to the daily routines of Istanbul households in terms of "good" housekeeping. Young and middle class employers, in particular, complained that Moldovans are still "peasants" in spite of their education, because they do not know how to use machines, or do not recognize the vegetables necessary for cooking certain dishes. Zeynep, who employed a Moldovan woman as a care taker for her daughters, asked the domestic worker to bring her diploma from home, because she could not believe that this Moldovan lady was "educated":

> Yes, they are all educated; in fact I requested Larissa's diploma from her country…They have a specific education, but it is never enough to erase their "peasant" side. They have a diploma, they have a university degree, or a college degree, but I think that is not like here in Turkey. Most of them learn most things in Turkey. Because there aren't any kind of electronic tools like dishwashers, washing machines in their country. The ones who live for a long time in Turkey learn them here. Some of them do not even recognize certain vegetables and fruit. They see them in Turkey, because they haven't got them in their country. So, their education doesn't work here, and it doesn't make daily life easier.[71]

[71] From an interview with Zeynep, September 2005. "Evet hepsi eğitimli, bakıyorsunuz, ben hatta Larissa'nın diplomasını istedim memleketinden…Belli bir eğitim var ama onların köylü taraflarını asla ortadan kaldırmaya yeterli bir şey değil, baktığınızda bir diploması, bir üniversite eğitimi yada liseden sonra iki yıl bir meslek okulu gibi bir şey okumuşlukları var ama, bizdeki gibi değil ben öyle düşünüyorum pek çoğu, pek çok şeyi Türkiye'de öğreniyor, yok çünkü görmemiş, bulaşık makinesi, çamaşır makinesini, elektronik aletleri, Türkiye'de uzun süre yaşamış kişiler bunları Türkiye'de öğrenmişler, bazıları çeşitli meyve ve sebzeleri tanımıyor bile, Türkiye'de

Aksu Bora's study illustrates that similar understandings are deployed to justify employer's practices of control over local domestic workers and their job performances. She conceptualizes these as strategies of household management, which involve an expression of self-superiority over the worker by evoking her undesirable qualities.[72] However, in the accounts of employers I collected, differences in the performance of housekeeping were not only attributed to class distinctions, but were also used to delineate the national character of Moldovan women as "outsiders" and "foreign" women--"as a collective figure of the stranger."

Sites of Encounter: Istanbul Households as Places of Employment

Istanbul households are important sites for the journey of Moldovan domestic workers. As a place of employment, live-in Moldovan domestic workers spend most of their time in these houses. Their employment in Istanbul households makes a variety of daily interactions possible for Moldovan women. These interactions include those with employers, and employers' family and friends as well as, other local domestic helpers and doorkeepers.

This section briefly presents the physical conditions of employment in Istanbul households. The number of households that my interviewees were employed in throughout their presence in Istanbul differed; in general, the number ranged from two to ten. Sometimes they changed their work place because of poor working conditions; sometimes they substituted their job positions with

görüyor böyle bir şeyi yok yani kendi ülkelerinde o zaman o eğitimin çokta bir şeyi kalmıyor, günlük hayatı kolaylaştırmıyor."

[72] For more discussion on local domestic workers and employers see Bora, A. (2005) p. 174-182.

Moldovan friends or relatives until they returned. On average, each of them had work experience in about four or five houses. In total, about forty to fifty households were described in detail by the Moldovan women I talked to.

The locations of the houses where they work are crucial in shaping the interactions of my informants with "others". Almost all of my informants work in the central districts of Istanbul. They claimed that they prefer working in central parts of the city where they can be closer to their friends, visit one another on their off-days, and easily reach Laleli to send money or gifts to their families in Moldova. Moreover, being employed far away from friends also increases the transportation costs and leads to a waste of time on most of the off-days due to Istanbul traffic. I did not interview those working in newly established suburban areas. Therefore my research may reflect a biased perspective of some Moldovan migrants' preferences and experiences. For example, living in the city center shows the strength of their networks. As they become more experienced with working in Istanbul and accumulate resourceful relationships, they intentionally arrange for their work places to be closer to one another.

Ironically, Moldovan live-in domestic workers seek privacy and freedom outside of the houses; that is in public space.[73] Yet, they still experience the city as a threatening and hostile territory, both because they are "foreign"

[73] By employing Goffmans's (1959) metaphors of "front" and "backstage", Lan (2003b) also argues that during the work days Filipina domestic workers "act like maids" in front of their employers, and on their off days, they display "a distinct "offstage" identity beyond the supervision of employer. This backstage is situated in public space, which ironically provides migrant workers with more freedom and privacy" (p. 539).

women and "illegal" migrants. As one of my informants, who is looking for a new place of employment in order to be closer to her friends, explains:

> I am far away from Elena, far away from Tatiana. There is no one here. Where shall I go on my off days? When I go to my friends' places, I spend all my money on the travel cost...I am always alone...I cannot go to a tea garden on my own. When you go there alone, men look at you.[74]

Furthermore, by using their networks, they increase their access to public spaces. Even though these networks do not necessarily lead to material or economic gains for these women, such as finding a place of employment, they provide women with meaningful ways in which to share their unique experiences in Istanbul. They often come together in relatively unmarked public spaces, like parks and shopping malls, where they can go together without being afraid.

The locations and physical conditions of the houses were also significant for Turkish employers, though of course they had different meanings for employers and workers. From the point of view of some employers, the location of a house in the suburbs of Istanbul or in a "site"[75] with security services are crucial precautions in terms of controlling domestic workers. A single working mother of two girls, who spends most of the day at work,

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[74] From an interview with Maria, September 2005. "Ben uzağım Elena'dan, Tatiana'dan uzağım, ben burada kimse yok, izine çıksam kime gideyim, onların yanına gidince, izin paranı harcıyorsun sadece yola…Hep yalnızım, yalnız bir çay bahçesine giremezsin, oturuyorsan yalnız, erkekler geçiyor bakıyor, burada."

[75] The word "site" connotes residential estates for the Turkish Middle classes. According to these estates appeal to middle class families because they provide them with "a homogenous, safe, orderly environment, distant from both spatially and socially heterogenous population of Istanbul". For further discussion see Öncü, A. (1997) p. 56-81.

explained why she feels more comfortable employing Moldovan domestic workers due to the fact that she lives in a well secured "site," far from the city center:

> It depends on the conditions. My house is outside of the city. It is impossible for her to go somewhere whenever she wants. There is no vehicle. There is a kind of strict "site" conditions. There are security guards. They are strictly warned not to accept visitors to the house. Security guards are very careful about these things. But if I were living in an apartment in the city center, I couldn't feel this comfortable. I would wonder whether she invites someone to the house...It is forbidden for her to go out with the kids. The security guards would never let them go. So, the surroundings that you live in change your attitudes towards them. We take some precautions beforehand, and then we behave accordingly.[76]

As the above quotation illustrates, employers do not approve of the mobility and networking of their Moldovan domestic workers, which they know increases their autonomy.

Moldovan women are often employed in middle-class households, since they demand less payment than alternative Turkish domestic workers in the city. Unlike local domestic workers, they are willing to live in the house, since they have no other place to stay. Moldovan domestic workers can make about ten times more money in Istanbul than they could possibly earn in Moldova. They often prefer to receive their payment in dollars; payments vary roughly from 400 dollars to 500 dollar per month. The amount varies according to the size of

[76] From an interview with Zeynep, September 2005. "Koşullarla ilgisi var benim evim şehir dışında, her dakika bir yere gidip gelmesi imkansız, araba yok falan, bayağı sıkı bir site ortamı, güvenlik görevlileri var, onlar tembihli katiyen misafir kabul edemezler eve, sitenin görevlileri çok hassastır o konuda, ama şehir içinde apartmanda bir daire olsa ben bu rahatlığı yapamazdım acaba eve birini alır mı diye düşünürdüm…Çocuklarla dışarıya çıkmaları kesinlikle yasak kapıdan bırakmaz zaten güvenlik görevlisi, dolayısıyla kişisel olarak, yaşadıkları çalıştıkları ortam bizimde onlara karşı davranışlarımızı değiştiriyor. Kendinize göre bazı önceliklerle bazı tedbirler alıyorsunuz, sonra da ona göre davranıyorsunuz."

the house. My informants often expressed that they preferred working in smaller middle class households for elderly care, although they are paid less there. They did not like performing domestic tasks in villas, which often involves service for Turkish families and for small children.

Nearly all of my informants agreed that receiving respect and humane treatment from employers and household members were more important than the amount of money they could make. Having flexible off-days, separate rooms, being allowed to have friends visit, and enough food were also cited as important considerations, in addition to the well-being and quality of the place of employment and treatment.

As the quotations above have already illustrated, conditions of employment for Moldovan domestic workers varied. Furthermore, the ways in which women employed strategies and practices to cope with these conditions also changed in relation to the contextual encounters with the employers. For instance, in some households they are prohibited from using the telephone, while in others they were allowed to have visitors. In some houses, even their children from Moldova can come and stay with their mothers for a while. Yet at other times, they are allowed very little free, private time. Often, they do not have fixed hours and are on duty from very early in the morning to the late hours of the night.

As we have also seen above, the conditions of employment in Istanbul houses were perceived differently by employers and workers. The question of off-days is a site of contestation throughout these encounters that involves constant struggle over time as a source of control. Difficulties concerning the scheduling

of off-days were mostly related to the lifestyles of employers. For instance, working employers told me that they do not like Moldovan domestic workers to have off-days on the weekends. The weekends are also their time to rest. They would like to be served, rather than serving family members at home during the weekends. Some Moldovan domestic workers complained that they are rarely allowed to have off-days (izin günü), or could only leave the houses according to the time schedules of the employers. There is a constant struggle over scheduling off days with those of employers, who spend a lot of time outside either working or socializing with others. Some employers claimed that the controversy over the flexible use of off-days is exploited by Moldovan domestic workers, because they started to have their own networks to socialize during their off-days:

> They are dependent on their off-days. Their networks are expanding. It is necessary to pay attention to this expansion. These kinds of things are open to misuse, I mean, misusage of the employer. (Can you give an example?) For example, you are making a deal for 24 hours of free time per week, but she goes beyond that. On Saturday, she has to go out at 5 pm, and come back at 5 pm on Sunday. But she asks if she can go out at noon, and she goes out at 10 am, and comes back at 8 pm on Sunday. These kinds of thing happen because of the network. She has got her own network to socialize with during her off-days.[77]

Another issue of conflict and negotiation concerns the space domestic workers are allowed for their private lives at home. According to one of my employer

[77] From an interview with Figen, May 2005. "Hafta sonu izinlerine bağımlılar, networkleri genişlemeye başladı, onlara dikkat etmeli, bunlar aslında şeye açık konular haline geliyor istismara, yani iş verenin istismar edilmesine açık hale geliyor (örnek verebilir misin) mesela 24 izin vermek koşuluyla anlaşıyorsun ama o izin 24 saati çok aşıyor, cumartesi normalde akşam 5 te çıkması gerekir, ertesi gün 5 te gelmesi gerekiyor, cumartesi öğlen çıkabilir miyim diyor, 10'a çıkıyor, Pazar akşamı 8 de geliyor, bu tür şeyler olmaya başlıyor neden çünkü bir network var, off olduğu anda gidip sosyalleşebileceği bir network var."

informants, arranging an "isolated" room for a live-in domestic worker was a way of manipulating the proximity of the domestic worker. It is a way of avoiding undesirable contact with the domestic worker. Their homes are sites of privacy for the employers, whereas the same spaces are work places for Moldovan domestic workers. One of the employers described her house, where she could provide a separate room for her domestic worker in the following way:

> Our house is 140 square meters, three bedrooms, and one living room. We are lucky, because her bedroom is isolated. We see her when she goes to the bathroom or the kitchen. So it is unlikely to run into her…She has a television in her room, and the room is next to the entrance door. Actually this room is the best room in the house. Sometimes people come to our house, and she is always around us…It is very annoying…[78]

Middle class households usually did not have an extra room for a live-in domestic worker to stay in. For Moldovan domestic workers, having a separate room not only means having privacy but also having a place to rest during the day time. Both parties try to solve the problem of an appropriate space for domestic workers. Sometimes they find creative solution, as Svetlana's case illustrates.

Svetlana is a 47 year-old Moldovan woman and has been working in Istanbul since 2001. She used to work in a post office for twelve years as a telegrapher in Moldova. She is a shy lady because of her appearance. She was born with her eyes almost closed, a condition which progressively worsened. While in

[78] From an interview with Zerrin, June 2005. "Bizim evimiz 140 metre kare, 3 oda bir salon, yine de şansımız şu onun odası izole gibi, o tuvalete gidince, mutfağa girince görebiliriz ama zorda yani görmek…Odasında televizyonu var, ve oda giriş kapısına yakın, balkonu var aslında evin en güzel odası, bazıları mesela hep geliyor hep aramızda o rahatsız edici bir şey…"

Moldova, she had several unsuccessful surgeries and finally lost her job because of her appearance. A few years later her husband left her and their son in order to marry another woman. She and her son literally became homeless, and took shelter in her mother's house for a few years, but she was neither able to find enough food to survive nor was she able to send her son to school. Even though she was afraid of not finding a job in an Istanbul household due to her appearance, she decided that moving to Turkey was the only way to provide a living for her son. Fortunately, she found a job in a small middle class household for elderly care. Soon, however, the old lady passed away, and her family did not need Svetlana anymore. Nonetheless, the employers did not want to leave her alone in Istanbul, so they agreed to let her continue to work until she could find another place of employment. Svetlana's new duties were simply cooking and cleaning; she agreed to be paid less for her new tasks. She was glad that this family treated her well, yet she complained about the difficulties of not having her own room. She could only get rest when the household members moved to their rooms to sleep and left the sofa in the living room free:

> I haven't got a bedroom in this house, and I sleep in the living room. They are awake till the late hours. Nuri Bey comes and reads the newspaper. I have to wait till they go to bed. Only then can I make my bed and sleep…[79]

Those days were very difficult for Svetlana since she worked all day but did not have a place to rest and to keep her personal belongings in the house. As soon as she became friends with the woman doorkeeper, she arranged to stay

[79] From an interview with Svetlana, May 2005 "Benim odam bu evde yok, ben burada salonda yatıyordum, burada (salonda) geç vakite kadar oturuyorlar, Nuri bey geliyor gazetesini okuyor, salonda, ben mecbur bekliyorum, onlar yatacaklar ben de yatağımı yapacağım da uyuyacağım…"

with this lady, who was living alone in the basement of the apartment. It was an excellent solution for both parties. However, not all of my informants were as lucky as Svetlana, who was able to adjust to difficult work conditions and arrange a comfortable residence for herself. Some Moldovan women had to leave Istanbul households because they could not tolerate such difficult working conditions where they didn't have any private space at all.

Moldovan workers often narrated bad and humiliating stories concerning Istanbul households by citing their friends' experiences. Performing extra work in a big upper class house and not having off-days were some of these difficult work conditions. The manners of employers toward the workers seemed to be the most significant aspect in describing a place of employment as either good or bad. Moldovan domestic workers expect empathy from their employers concerning their working conditions and problems. Such empathy would be a sign of inclusion within the households; however my informants often felt that this empathy was not achieved. The following story was told to me by Lara, concerning her friend's short experience in Istanbul:

> She was working in a three-story house, and she didn't have any off-days. She was always standing… down the stairs and up the stairs like a robot…She put up with this for fifteen months, but each time she called me in those days, she was always crying and crying. She said she did not want to see Istanbul any more, and she did not want to see the Turks. She had suffered that much.[80]

Natalia's daughter came to Istanbul two years after her mother's arrival. She found a job through an agency. She was only able to work for a month in this

[80] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Üç katlı villa, izni de yoktu, bir de bütün gün diyor ben ayakta, ben robot gibiydim diyor, böyle merdivenlerden in aşağı, çık yukarı, aşağı yukarı, aşağı yukarı...O beş ay dayandı, çalıştı, ama bana telefon açtı hep ağladı, ağladı, ağladı, ben bu İstanbul'u görmek istemiyorum, Türkleri görmek istemiyorum, o kadar sıkıntı çekti yani."

household and returned to Moldova soon afterwards. Here, Natalia explains why:

> They placed my daughter in a two-story house for cleaning up. She worked there for a month. It was very hard for her. She lost 6-7 kilos there. They gave her a room in the basement. It was cold and snowing. There was no stove or any kind of heater…I told her it was better for them to go back. I spent a lot of money on them, and I even gave her money for food…I told them to return home and not to come back here. I said I would send money…[81]

Many Moldovan domestic workers whom I interviewed were care givers for elderly and sick persons. They claimed that care-giving for the elderly is their own preference. One of my informants explained that she is often employed in middle class households in order to perform elderly care. Lara has worked in different households in Istanbul since 2001. Now she considers herself a "trained student", as she has performed all types of domestic work. In the end, she thinks the most suitable type of domestic work is care for the elderly:

> I mostly worked in middle class houses, because I was looking after old people…I also looked after children, and sick people. I worked for a family, too. So, I passed the class. Looking after old people is the best. Looking after a child is very difficult. Children are very spoiled. Their parents allow them to do whatever they want.[82]

[81] From an interview with Natalia, March 2005. "Koydular kızımı iki katlı ev, temizlik yapacak, kızım 1 ay çalıştı, çıktı oradan, çok zordu kızıma, orada 6-7 kilo kesildi (verdi) orada koydular onu aşağı mağzada (bodrum) orada yaşasın, soğuk, kar, kış zamanı geldi, yemek vermediler…Orada ne elektrik var, bu ısıtma, soba bir şeycik yok…Ben dedim, gidin daha iyi, para harcadım burada onlara, yemek parası verdim hep…Geri, dedim aman durun yerinizde, ben göndereceğim size para…"

[82] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Ben orta halli evlerde çalıştım, çünkü neden ben yaşlı insanlara bakıyorum…Çocukta baktım, hasta da baktım, yaşlıda baktım, ailede de çalıştım, yani geçtim okulu geçtim. En iyi çalışma yaşlı insan yanında, çocuk bakmak zor, çocuklar çok şımarık, lafta anlamıyorlar, o istediğini yapar diyor aileleri."

Most of my informants agree with Lara, because working for elderly gives them more space and freedom in the house. This could be explained by the absence of another woman's authority as an employer. In these households, they can cook whatever they like, and they can perform domestic tasks according to their own preferences and time schedules.

Natalia has been shuttling back and forth between Moldova and Istanbul since 1999. When I met her, she was taking care of an old lady who was an Alzheimers patient. Natalia said she is taking care of this lady compassionately because she knows that if this old lady passes away, she will have to find another job which might not be as comfortable. Natalia's explained that she is happy with the job because the woman lives alone and her children and grandchildren visit her only occasionally:

> I don't have much trouble here…I do cleaning and ironing. I plan them beforehand. I say I did these yesterday, and I will do those tomorrow… The people in this house treat me very nice. I am very glad here, happy with my life…I cook and eat the meals I like. I drink whatever I like…There aren't many fruits and vegetables back home. It is very hard to find them…We can only afford the bread…[83]

Natalia's story, however, is an exception. Most of my informants complained that they did not have adequate food, and some claimed that they were left hungry or were only given leftovers by their employers. This was expressed as a common problem in work places where employers remain outside all day for

[83] From an interview with Natalia, March 2005. "Burada sıkıntı yok üzerimde…bu temizlik, yada ütü, ben kafamda plan yapıyorum kendi kendime, dün yaptım bunları, yarın yapacağım bunları…Bu insanlar bu evde çok iyi davranıyorlar, çok menunum bu yerden hayatımdan…ben sevdiğim yemeği pişiriyorum yiyorum, sevdiğimi içiyorum…Meyva sebze bizde bunlar yok, çok zor, bizde anca ekmeğe para yetiştirebilirsek."

work or social activities, and often ate their meals outside. Lara had to leave her previous job for this reason:

> I feel ashamed. I do not want to remember…There is food in the fridge, and she tells me not to touch these, not to eat these. She tells me to eat something else. Am I not a human? You cannot eat this, because we will eat it. And they want you to eat those left over meals. It is very bad.[84]

One should note that Moldovan women often define the conditions of a good work situation in a contradictory manner. For example, while they preferred to be employed by middle class families because it was often easier to establish social intimacy--to be treated like a person--with employers and family members, these houses usually do not have a separate room where they can rest and maintain their privacy. Furthermore, these households generally pay less. Nevertheless, women try to maximize the quality of their work situation through different arrangements, as we have seen above.

Moldovan women's problems do not end with finding a job with good working conditions. Securing a good position is another problem. Maintaining jobs over a long period of time is difficult, partly because they have to leave Turkey every six months or so, and then make a new entry. During their absence they have to find someone trustworthy to take over their positions. Such a substitute must be good enough to secure the job, but must not be better than the worker herself. I observed that my informants generally preferred to choose substitutes from among their relatives, because they trust them more in this sense.

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[84] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Utanıyorum, hiç hatırlamak istemiyorum…Buzdolabında yemek var, bana söylüyor, buna dokunmayacaksın, bunu yemeyeceksin, onu yemeyeceksin, şunu yiyeceksin. Ben insan değil miyim? Bunlara dokunma sen, bunu biz yiyeceğiz. Sonra o kaç günlük yemekleri sen yiyeceksin. Yani çok kötü."

Intimate Encounters in Istanbul Households: "Comrades" or "Professional" Housekeepers?

In the literature on migrant domestic workers, scholars have argued that employee-employer relations in domestic spaces are significant for analyzing broader class inequalities among women. There are many studies which have examined how class inequalities between women are reproduced through the interactions of women in domestic service (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001, Lan, 2001, 2003b, 2003c, Kaplan, 1987, Constable, 1997a). In the narrations of Moldovan domestic workers, "proper" housekeeping is an important area where class inequalities and conflicts are expressed. Indeed, for Moldovan domestic workers, class inequalities play a significant role in the demarcation of the self. For example, they try to distinguish themselves both from middle class Turkish employers and from local domestic workers. Moldovan domestic workers employed "education" and "professionalism" as discursive strategies for distancing themselves from local domestic workers, and highlight similarities with their employers.

In the accounts of Moldovan domestic workers, there was not a monolithic category of the "Turkish" woman. Rather, they had had work experiences in several households with different employers and under different circumstances, as I mentioned above. An informant who had work experience in a middle class Istanbul family would meet a certain group of people and accordingly evoke class differences not so much in terms of economic conditions as by separating herself form the femininity performed by her employer. The narration below articulates various stereotypes of Turkish women from whom

the narrators distance themselves, through employing different notions of womanhood:

> Turkish women are separated into a number of groups. The highest ones, they are the high society. You can't reach them. They are arrogant, wiseacre people. They humiliate you, they are sure of themselves…There are normal people like me. I see myself as normal. My previous work was in a surrounding like that…When you show respect to them, they show respect to you, too. They want mutual respect. They are good people. When my lady and her friends would come to the house, they come to the kitchen near me. They would kiss me, say hello. They ask me how I am, how my children and husband are. Everyone used to treat me this way. If I had a problem my lady would understand it from my face (when she looks at my face). In addition to these, there are the lowest ones, doorkeepers' wives for example. They are so stupid…Their wives (doorkeepers') look at me as if I have slept with their husbands. Do you understand? They have some kind of a look in their eyes. If you saw it, you would think we came here to steal their husbands...[85]

In this account, my Moldovan informant distances herself from her upper class Turkish employers, with whom she cannot possibly have social closeness and intimacy, and from lower class women with a rural background. In terms of "reciprocal respect" and "attention", Moldovan domestic workers highlight their similarities with the "normal" middle class employers. In this case, she

[85] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Türk kadınları birkaç şeye (gruba) ayrılıyor, en yüksek (olanlar) sosyetik, onlara yetişemezsin, o sosyetik kadınlara, onlar çok kendini beğenmiş, çok bilmiş, çok yüksekten bakar, kendilerinden çok emindir…Öyle bir ortam var benim gibi, ben kendimi öyle sayıyorum, normal insan, ben öyle çevrede bulundum, eski çalıştığım yerde….Yani kendilerine saygı gösteren insanlar, kendileri de saygı gösteriyor, karşılıklı böyle (saygı) istiyorlar. Onlar bilmiyorum, iyi insanlar…Hanımda, arkadaşları da böyle çok evin içine girdiği zaman, bana geliyorlardı mutfağa…beni öpüyorlardı, merhaba diyorlardı, öpüyorlardı, böyle yanak yanağa, çocukların nasıl, kocan nasıl her zaman soruyorlardı, herkes böyle davranıyordu bana, benim bir sorunum varsa benim hanım hemen anlıyordu, benim yüzümden hemen anlıyordu. (yüzüme bakınca)…. Bir de en aşağı insanlar böyle kapıcının karıları mesela, o kadar aptal insanlar ki…(Kapıcıların) Karıları böyle bakıyorlar ki sanki ben gittim yattım onla (kocasıyla). Anlıyor musun? Öyle bir bakışları var ki sanki onların kocalarını almaya geldik buraya…"

defines herself as a peer of her employer through a denial of differences; in other words, she establishes intimacy with her employer. The narrator considers herself an equal, a member of the family. She has achieved social and physical closeness with the employer and her friends in their daily encounters.

My Moldovan informants anticipate their employer's empathy for their families, and solicit womanly support and practical advice for problems concerning their left-behind families. The anticipation of employers' empathy towards workers' problems and worries fosters a "maternalistic" relationship between the employer and employee. Employers act like mothers by protecting and helping Moldovan domestic workers to solve their problems both in Turkey and Moldova. Moldovan domestic workers often see these as performances of protection and benevolence.

Aksu Bora notes that these maternalistic relationships, which are established through intimate and socially close encounters between the employer and employee, must be seen as strategic. These maternalistic relations are effective in making employee-employer relations seem as though they are free from hierarchical relations in domestic service (Bora, 2005, p.169). In a similar way, Arnado suggests that in these relations the "mistress camouflages the controlling aspect of maternalism by emphasizing benevolence and "charity" (Arnado, 2003, p. 154); however, this maternalism is also negotiated by both parties according to their opposing aims. In such an employer-employee relation, employers see themselves as having the right to intrude in and manipulate the workers' private lives. Nevertheless, receiving respect and

empathy from employers implies being treated like a person, and, therefore, achieving social intimacy with the employers.

Maternalistic relations are embodied in the daily encounters of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers. Turkish employers give advice to Moldovan domestic workers on how to deal with their husbands, who spend their earnings irresponsibly, and on how to handle problems concerning their children in Moldova while they are away. They buy toys, clothes or different kinds of foods for Moldovan women to send to their children. They also help them deal with the dilemmas of illegality in Istanbul. For instance they might provide a taxi or their private cars so that Moldovan women can go to Laleli and send their remittances safely. While such empathy lets workers feel socially included, familiar, and secure in the house of employment, as well as in Istanbul as a whole, being seen as helpless and inadequate also reproduces power asymmetries between the employer and the employee. Ultimately, such a relationship still situates workers as socially inferior.

In my field study, maternalistic relations were mostly established by Moldovan women through their encounters with middle class employers, especially those who spend most of their time at home. In general, middle class employers are more likely to establish maternalistic relations with the Moldovan domestic workers strategically, since class hierarchies are unclear between the employers and employees in these types of households.

With young, working employers, establishing such intimacy was relatively difficult for Moldovan domestic workers. Younger employers preferred to maintain a distance from their workers, and often see such "intimacy work" as a burden. Their attitudes towards domestic workers could also be interpreted as highlighting changing notions of homemaking and womanhood among young, middle-class Turkish women. Nergis is 37 year old; she runs her own architecture company. She indicates why she views such an intimacy as a burden in the following way:

> I prefer not to talk and make conversation with her unless there is something serious. Because I get tired when I talk to her. I get tired because of her crying. She talks to me and cries all the time. She starts crying and my nerves can't endure this. When something happens, or a meal is cooked, she starts to tell dramatic events like "you are eating these here, but my child can't, etc". She starts to cry her eyes out (she mimics it with her hands). She says, "we haven't got these, we haven't got those, we can't do these." I am sick of it.[86]

In contrast, while Moldovan domestic workers employed "professionalism" in order to highlight their similarities with their employers, some of the Turkish employers referred to "professionalism" in order to maintain their distance from the workers.[87] I believe this contradiction reveals the unsettled and

[86] From an interview with Nergis, September 2005. "Ciddi bir şey olmadığı sürece asla sohbet edip konuşmamayı tercih ediyorum. Çünkü yoruluyorum. Yani ağlamalarından yoruluyorum, çünkü devamlı bir şey söylüyor ve devamlı ağlıyor, böyle başlıyor ağlamaya benim de sinirim kaldırmıyor onun ağlamasını, işte bir şey oluyor bir yemek pişiyor, siz işte burada bunu yiyorsunuz benim çocuğum orada yemiyor, böööyle ağlamak (taklidini yapıyor) bilmem ne olmuyor, o öyle olmuyor, biz bunları yapamıyoruz bundan çok sıkıldım."

[87] The role of "household manager" that is given to educated middle class women in the formation of the Turkish Republic resembles what Najmabadi discusses concerning the constitution of a new womanhood in the formation of modern Iran. Najmabadi argues that "like the transformation of the womb from a vessel to school, the transformation of woman from house wife to manager of the house was at once a regulating and an empowering moment." While it emancipated women from their subordinate position beneath their husband's management, it also diminished female

dynamic nature of worker-employer encounters in the field of domestic service. By highlighting professional aspects of housekeeping, Turkish employers try to avoid the burden of "intimacy work", and maintain class differences between themselves and the workers. For instance, Zeynep is 46 years old and a mother of two. She is an executive manager in a stock market firm; she prefers a business-oriented relationship, and finds such social closeness "unprofessional":

> I prefer professionalism. I treat the woman who works in my house as I treat the person who works in my company. I also don't want to interfere with my employee's privacy at work, because I think this will spoil out professional relationship. It is about the style of management. I don't think this kind of intimacy is healthy. When it happens, it spoils the relationship, whatever the nationality is.[88]

Akin to my observations in the field, Bora (2005) illustrates that maternalist strategies were often employed by elder housewives, whereas young, working employers preferred more sterile encounters, through which they can maintain distance from their employees (p. 168-169). In this contested terrain, through the "professionalization" of housekeeping, foreign women become service providers, while employers come into being as household managers, supervising domestic workers and their performances in maintaining the household.

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homosociality in the domestic space. In this new household, the wife was to supervise her domestic helper, instead of socializing with her (Najmabadi, 1998, p. 102).

[88] From an interview with Zeynep, September 2005. "Profesyonellik diyorum ya hep ben evdeki çalışan kadına da şirketimde çalışan kişi gibi yaklaşıyorum, ben şirketimde de personelimin özeline girmek istemem, o aramızdaki profesyonel ilişkiyi bozar diye düşünüyorum, bu ama yöneticilik tarzı ile alakalı bir şey, ben o yakınlığı çok sağlıklı bulmuyorum o zaman hangi milletten olursa olsun biraz işin suyu çıkıyor."

In the accounts of Moldovan women, local domestic workers are described as "ignorant", "unsophisticated", "rural" and "uneducated". As I discussed in the previous section, in both the representations of Moldovan domestic workers and the narratives of employers, similar undesirable qualities of local domestic workers were cited to differentiate Moldovan domestic workers. Being a "proper" housekeeper gives Moldovan workers a sense of autonomy and allows them to maintain proximity to their employer. Tatiana articulated being a good housekeeper in terms of having proper knowledge of how to serve employers in a sophisticated manner:

> They would always want me to serve them. They want to be served by a sophisticated person, because peasants cannot serve meals or coffee properly. I serve the plate properly. I know how to do it according to my own experience. When we sat down to eat with Nur hanım (a local domestic worker) she would serve the plate as if she were throwing it. Don't serve me, I can do it by myself, don't throw me the plate![89]

In my study, there was another group of employers who were as emotionally "needy" as Moldovan domestic workers--this group is composed of solitary, elderly Turkish employers. They need the company of a care taker and domestic worker in order to cope with their isolated existences. These employers were not in such a powerful position to act as protectors or guides for their Moldovan domestic workers. In such a condition of employment, maternalistic relationships between employers and employees were not mentioned. Intimacy between workers and employers was established through different practices. In these situations, Moldovan domestic workers often

[89] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Derlerdi ki…Her şeyi sen getir bize, ben istiyorum kültürlü bir kadın versin yemeği, kahveyi bana, çünkü köylü doğru vermez. Ben şimdi o tabağı veriyorum güzelce. Ben kendimden biliyorum, biz sofraya otururduk Nur hanımla (Evdeki Türk hizmetçi) böyle atardı tabağı, hiç koyma ben kendim koyayım, bana tabağı atma!"

described themselves as peers or friends of the employer and they distanced themselves from local domestic workers deliberately.

Tatiana is 45 years, and has been in Istanbul since 1995. Her life story was summarized in the beginning of chapter one: She is a high school graduate and worked as an assistant director in a state farm. At the time of our interviews, she was performing elderly care for an educated and retired secretary. She told me the brief life story of her employer by pointing out their similarities: Her employer had to work for a long time and raise her children on her own because she had become a widow at an early age, and, in general, had had many difficulties in her life. Therefore, Tatiana felt comfortable working for her; she says her employer is empathetic and knows how to treat people, because she has also had a difficult life.

In this case, we see that the distance between the employer and the employee can be bridged by sharing similar kinds of life stories. Moldovan domestic workers' downward class mobility makes such an encounter possible with elder middle class employers. Tatiana explained why her employer prefers a migrant domestic worker instead of a local domestic worker in the following way:

> They (local domestic workers) are uneducated. They earn their living by doing housework. (They only know how to do the housework). But we can chat with Semiha Hanım for hours. We eat and drink together, and we do everything together. We are friends.…[90]

[90] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Okumamış insanlar (Türk hizmetçiler) Ev işiyle hayatlarını kazanıyorlar. (Sadece ev işi biliyorlar) Ama biz mesela saatlerce oturup konuşuyoruz Semiha hanımla. Beraber yiyiyoruz beraber içiyoruz, her şeyi müşterek yapıyoruz, biz iki arkadaşız…"

Throughout my field study, it was possible to observe that establishing social closeness and intimacy with elderly and lonely employers was relatively easier for Moldovan domestic workers. This is also one of the reasons why my informants see elderly care as the most desirable job: They often find it easy to eliminate class and status differences, which would otherwise subordinate them in domestic service.

Nonetheless, in as much as conditions of employment in Istanbul households vary, it was not always easy to achieve intimacy with the elderly employers. When class differences were more apparent between workers and employers, establishing social closeness and intimacy was more difficult with older employers, too. It is important to note that Moldovan domestic workers narrate themselves as "sophisticated" and "professional" housekeepers not only when class differences with their employers are more apparent, but also in the presence of additional local domestic helpers in the same household.

Silvia is 55 years old, a university graduate, and has worked as a food technician in the restaurants in Moldova and Siberia. Now, she is performing elderly care in an upper class Istanbul household. She lives with an old and well-educated lady who has never worked in her life. She lives in a nice Istanbul flat with a wide view of the Bosphorus. Silvia often criticizes her employer as being selfish and not sympathetic toward other people, because she does not know what "real life" is. In our conversations, she often ridiculed her by saying "let her sit like a princess in her corner."

In this house, there were two other additional domestic helpers, a cleaning lady, who comes once a week, and the employer's "old and faithful" cook, who comes twice a week and stays over for two nights, during which time she shares the room with Silvia. Silvia told me that she did not like to be treated or seen as one of them. For her, to be treated like the local domestic workers signifies being in an oppressed and inferior position.

Hondagneu-Sotole (2001) argues that educated migrant domestic workers initiate conversations with their employers in order to show their cultural tastes and knowledge (p. 199). Similar to her argument, I found that Moldovan domestic workers often recall past experiences and habits to highlight similarities with their employers. For instance, Silvia joyfully told me stories about how she likes surprising her employer with her knowledge, talents and education. Silvia viewed challenging the image of a domestic worker that her employer has as a means for recognition of her superior social status. Furthermore, this challenge legitimatized and reinforced her differences from local domestic workers, and thereby, proved that she is a "better" housekeeper.

Moldovan domestic workers also often talk about the good old days in their encounters with Turkish employers. Stories of good times were employed as a source of cultural capital, to highlight similarities with Turkish employers when they could not build effective social intimacy in other ways. In the following encounter Silvia narrates, she tries to modify and define the qualities of a "good" housekeeper, as a "mannered" and "educated" woman, who shares cultural tastes and knowledge with her employer, by referring to her life in the

past. While she distances herself from local domestic workers by addressing local domestic workers as "sizin kadınlar" (your women), she makes a case for her equality with her employer:

> My boss said, "There is foreign movie on TV tonight (the name of the film was The Bodyguard), let's watch it." I said, "I have seen it before." "Oh, when did you watch it?"…"We also had good days, my lady. Don't think we haven't seen anything,". I said, "This is an old film." And she says, "Oh, really, my girl?" They see us as lower than themselves…But here, I proved myself; she doesn't treat me like that. But our women were humiliated a lot…My employer thinks that we are like *your women*, who haven't worked anywhere, haven't got an education…[91]

Silvia and her employer also maintained social closeness and intimacy. Besides spending time at home together, her employer often goes with Silvia to her social visits, to luxurious hotels, and to the cinema. However, Silvia never sees herself as a friend of her employer. She affirms her position in the household, and underlines that she performs her tasks professionally.

In general, within the literature about migrant domestic workers, it has been argued that the analysis of class positions is important to understand how different hierarchies are produced. By highlighting status similarities or disparities, both parties of domestic service manipulate social distance and intimacy in the place of employment. Lan argues that Filipino domestic workers maintain a sense of integrity by displaying a higher degree of

[91] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Hanım diyor bir yabancı sinema var (Bodyguard) akşama bakarız, ben diyorum ben onu seyrettim, "aaa ne zaman seyrettin?"…Dedim hanım efendi biz güzel yaşadık zamanında, zannetmeyin biz bir şey görmedik. Ben diyorum bu eski film, "haa gerçekten kızım öyle mi?"…Bizi çok böyle alçak gibi görüyorlar…Ama ben burada yerimi koydum, bana öyle edemiyor. Ama çok ezildi bizim kadınlar burada…O zannediyor (hanım) sizin kadınlar geliyor çalışıyor ya, zannediyorlar bizde öyleyiz. Türk kadını gelmiş, çalışmamış bir yerde okumamış…"

education and more linguistic capital than their employers. Filipino domestic workers often speak English well, and this language ability provides them with a better social status and means of recognition.[92] Moldovan domestic workers do not possess this type of linguistic capital, because Gagauz Turkish sounds like a broken dialect of Turkish to middle-class Istanbulites, and therefore can cause misunderstanding in their encounters with Turkish employers. They often feel humiliated due to this linguistic difficulty. However, like Filipino domestic workers, by referring to their earlier skilled work experiences and lifestyles, they try to attain equal or higher status in relation to their employers, especially through highlighting the professional aspects of domestic service.

Most of the Moldovan domestic workers I interviewed interpreted intimacy with their employers in terms of being given a comfortable bed to sleep in, eating better food or receiving extra payments and gifts. Compliments and promotions from the employer were also considered as a sign of intimacy. Furthermore, they expected to receive the employer's empathy and support for their problems and to share their concerns and worries over being away from their families and homes. It was interesting to see that with the presence of local domestic workers, intimacy, which often meant a denial of differences between the employer and the employee, was perceived differently by my Moldovan informants.

[92] See Lan, P.C. (2003b), (2003c) for more discussion about how the English language and level of education mediate resistance and domination between Filipina domestics and Taiwanese employers.

In her work on local domestic workers and employers, Aksu Bora argues that for the employees, performing domestic work requires a different recognition--they do not consider themselves as merely paid workers. Such recognition is related with the nature of domestic work which entails "intimacy work", especially because it occurs in private space. She illustrates that receiving gifts and attention from employers for their problems were seen as indicating recognition of the additional meanings attached to domestic work that remains unpaid. Both employers and workers are aware of this and see their exchange in monetary form as never completed. They try to bring this exchange into closure by using the phrase "May God be Pleased (Allah Rızası)" (Bora, 2005, p. 117).

Silvia thinks that this verbal exchange, as a sign of intimacy that registers "extra" work, devalues the meaning of the work done. Furthermore, it humiliates and belittles her position as a paid worker, as a "professional" engaged in a business-oriented relationship:

> I work, and she pays me for it. Why would I say, "May God be pleased" (Allah razı olsun)? I work for it, and she has to pay me that money. Why would I give my thanks for it? I don't understand that. Your women get the money, and say "May God be pleased." Why do you say that? She gave you your money.[93]

Neverthless, for Moldovan domestic workers too, gift-giving on the part of employers is significant for establishing a maternalistic relationship, as well as intimacy. However, in the presence of local domestic workers, Moldovan

[93] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Ben çalışıyorum, veriyor bana para, ben neden ona Allah razı olsun diyim, ben onu çalıştım, o bana mecbur verecek onu, ben teşekkür ederim.…Sizden bilmem ne, ben bunu anlamıyorum…Bu sizin kadınlar, parasını alıyor, diyorlar Allah razı olsun, niçin Allah razı olsun diyorsun, senin maaşını verdi."

domestic workers also criticize this strategy of gift-giving to distance themselves from local workers. Silvia's attitude toward the gifts given by her employers indicated how she distances herself from this type of intimacy. She likes to receive gifts but she often finds them improper, not according to her tastes but to the tastes of local domestic workers. She considers these gifts as a sign of status and class differences between herself and her employer. She mimics her employers' attitude and gives these presents to other local domestic helpers, in order to situate her position at home as superior to that of local domestic workers.

In this section, I tried to illustrate how class differences play a significant role in defining the positions of both parties in domestic service. Professionalism and intimacy are the two most frequently employed idioms that employers and workers use in negotiating their class differences. Domestic workers see intimacy with employers as a sign of their similarity to them. In the absence of intimacy and social closeness, both parties highlighted the professional aspects of domestic work and housekeeping. Their intentions in employing these meanings changed according to their opposing interests. For instance, while employers underline professional aspects of domestic work to maintain social distance with the workers, workers highlighted their previous experiences as "sophisticated", "educated" and "professional" workers in the Soviet Union in order to claim superiority over their employers as well as local domestics.

"Hidden Transcripts": Contested Meanings of Femininity

Power asymmetries between the employer and the employee limit how far one can talk about "proper" meanings of womanhood and housekeeping. However,

this does not mean that they are not employed strategically as sources of power and resistance in everyday encounters. Indeed contested meanings attributed to femininity and different performances of femininity play an important role in the formation of women's subjectivities. In my interviews with both employers and workers, femininity was negotiated by deploying different definitions of wifehood, dressing codes, and bodily sexual practices, as well as by competing performances of good homemaking. Here, I argue that the self-descriptions of my informants in terms of their "femininity" reveal implicit forms of practicing power and resistance which they employ through their daily encounters.

By evoking James Scott's (1995) conceptualization of "hidden transcripts," which refers "to the discourses that take place 'offstage', beyond direct observations of powerholders" (p. 5), I approach the narratives of my Moldovan informants as texts that affirm their subjectivities while excluding their employers. In this hidden realm of conflict, different notions of femininity and women's sexualities were promoted. On the one hand, Moldovan domestic workers' femininities and their bodies are viewed as posing a challenge to employers' roles as wives and mothers in Istanbul households. On the other hand, Moldovan women narrated qualities that aggravate the jealousy of the employers in order to affirm their femininity and wifehood. Furthermore, I also think of these narratives as symbolic sites of empowerment and struggle in the formation of their subjectivities.

The notion of the "hidden transcript" is employed by scholars in domestic work studies. In the case of Filipino domestic workers, Parrenas (2001) describes

"hidden transcripts" as discourses which domestic workers produce outside of the view of their employers; workers express their true feelings and share their experiences in order to invent tactics to deal with their work conditions and migrancy (p. 194). Aksu Bora (2005) notes that "hidden transcripts" constitute a form of resistance through which workers employ hidden tactics and strategies to undermine the authority of their employers (p. 178-179). In this study, I also consider "hidden transcripts" as disguised and undeclared forms of resistance, although they are acknowledged by both parties.

My informants typically narrated themselves as "brave", "strong", "hard-working" and "sacrificing" mothers and wives. They claimed that such qualities did not exist in their employers. An employer who is not working and spending most of her time outside, without carrying out her duties as a wife and a mother at home, is described in the following way:

> She used to leave the house in the morning in her jeep. I don't know where she went. I was at home with the child. When her husband came home in the evening she wouldn't be at home. She didn't used to tell me to do anything, like do this or do that. Anyway, I was looking after the child. What could I do? I would cook some potatoes and macaroni for myself, and something for the child. They would have a fight when the husband came, because there was no food…Who would stay silent? They are very young. They are like my children. She was 25 years old, and her husband was four years older. He was 29. I was thinking these things, but how could I tell her? One day I told her:
> Lara: Look, Gaye, don't upset your husband. You are at home all day. He is working. When he comes home and finds no food, it is normal that he gets angry. Cook some meal…
> Employer: It is not your business.

> Lara: I really take pity on your husband. You are very young. If you continue to act this way, he will go to another woman.[94]

Lara is an attractive university graduate, in her early 40's. Because her employer is younger than her, she sees the young couple as "her children," so she can tell her employer how to be a "proper" woman. Yet after having this conversation, she was fired. According to her, she was fired because the employer suspected that Lara would try to have an affair with her husband.

Throughout my conversations with Moldovan domestic workers, I noticed that they explicitly distance themselves from their upper middle class employers, whom they described as "spoiled", "arrogant", "lazy", "irresponsible" women. According to Aksu Bora (2005), narrating the employer as merely self-interested and irresponsible mothers and wives is also a commonly-used discursive strategy by local domestic workers to gain higher social status and power (p. 76).

However, unlike the encounters of local workers and employers, these struggles over womanhood had different implications for Moldovan workers. This can be explained in relation to Moldovan women's ambiguous positions

[94] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Bütün gün Jeeple sabah biniyordu nereye gidiyordu bilmiyorum? Yani ben çocukla evdeyim, kocası akşam geliyor, evde yok, bana da hiç bir şey ısmarlamazdı yani şunu yap bunu yap, ben zaten çocuğa bakıyorum, ne yapayım bütün gün, ben kendime bir patates pişireyim, bir makarna yapayım, çocuğa da bir şeyler yapıyordum…Kavga ediyorlardı, kocası geldiğinde yemek istiyor yemek yok…Ee tabi kim susacak yani! Yani onlar da çok genç benim çocuklarım gibi, 25 yaşındaydı bu kocası da 4 yaş ondan büyük 29 yaşındaydı. Şimdi ben böyle düşünüyorum nasıl söyliyim…Bir gün ona dedim;
Lara: Gaye bak! Kocanı üzme, sen bütün gün evdesin kocan çalışıyor, akşam da buraya geliyor, bir de yemek olmasın tabi sinir olacak. Sen bir yemek yap…
İş veren: Sen karışma' dedi
Lara: Ben acıyorum senin kocana gerçekten, siz gençsiniz, bak başka bayana gidecek."

as “temporal” and “illegal” outsiders in Istanbul households. Furthermore, their downward class mobilities and “modern”, “European” images also contributed to the escalation of conflicts between employers and workers over proper femininity.

Employers believed that Moldovan workers envied and resented them because of their higher class position and because Moldovan women had lost prestige and status in the Moldovan society. Moldovan migrant domestic workers experience “contradictory class mobility” (Parrenas, 2001), as they no longer have the benefit of their previous status or privileges. Furthermore, they perceive performing domestic work and care tasks for others as underemployment. Their attempts to adjust to this downward class mobility were perceived as resistance and resentment by their employers. If Moldovan domestic workers highlight their level of education or better qualities of womanhood in order to criticize the lives of Turkish employers, they can be seen as “transgressing the boundaries” of employee-employer relations, as the next case illustrates. Aliye is 34 years old and an instructor at a university. She explained the difficulties of employing someone with a high level of education at home:

> She has studied economics, so she is unsatisfied with domestic employment. She says, “I am an economist, but because of my country’s economic conditions I have to do housework here.” She has some kind of hatred for Turks. She was very wiseacre…She was like a middle-class working woman in Turkey. When she saw something that does not fit herself, she felt very comfortable criticizing it. She’d think she has the right to do so…[95]

[95] From an interview with Aliye, August 2005. “Ekonomi okumuştu, ama çok mutsuz br şekilde çalışıyordu, yani ben ekonomistim yani, benim ülkemin ekonomisi

On the other hand, most of my Moldovan informants stated that being envied by the employer would only cause difficulties and discomfort in their lives. As one of them said:

> The woman is jealous of her husband. She doesn't give you food. She leaves you hungry.[96]

Although the employer's jealousy is viewed as potentially dangerous for maintaining good conditions of employment, the number of stories that I heard during my field research about resentment and jealousy was extraordinary. Moldovan women perceive their femininity and practices of womanhood as a site of resistance to undermine employer's authority. For instance, for both parties, practices of cooking were an important medium of marking differences and displaying the finer qualities of a homemaker. My employer informants often complained that Moldovan domestic workers did not know how to prepare proper Turkish meals, because they do not recognize vegetables and do not know how to cook "tasty" food. Therefore, employers claimed that they often prefer to cook for themselves, or to employ a cook or an additional local domestic worker for cooking. On the other hand, some of my Moldovan informants claimed that their employers were jealous when their cooking was appreciated by family members. Similar to Lara's story, Tatiana too told me that she was fired because her employer's husband liked her cooking:

> Believe me, I worked places where my employer was jealous of me. After I cooked manti and a soup, she

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yüzünden ben burada ev işinde çalışmak durumundayım, hafif bir Türk düşmanlığı vardı onda, çok ukala bir bayandı…Bizde orta sınıf çalışan kadın gibiydi yani eğer bizde kendilerine uygun olmayan bir şey gördükleri zaman gayet rahat eleştiriyordu, o hakkı kendinde bir şekilde görüyordu…"

[96] From an interview with Maria, September 2005. "Kadın kocasından kıskanır, yemek vermez, aç bırakır."

> fired me from the house…When you are cooking, if you add a little love, the meal will be great, won't it? The woman cooked a meal in a pressure cooker[97]; she put all the stuff in it, and it has no taste. When I cooked the manti, and the soup, the man loved it: "Tatiana, it is very delicious, thank you." Actually I did not see the man's face, I just gave him the meal on the plate.[98]

Displaying qualities of better womanhood in the presence of men, and acquiring recognition and respect from other family members, were considered a challenge to the employer's status and power. As I mentioned before, even though my Moldovan informants knew that such a challenge would exacerbate their relationship with the employers and cause further stress in the place of employment, they nonetheless continue to struggle to display better qualities of womanhood.

My Moldovan informants often compared their positions as wives and mothers with their employer's. They also conveyed disapproval of their own relationship with their husbands in Moldova and dissatisfaction with the notion of femininity embedded in their previous roles and duties. In our encounters, I often heard that they would like to live like a Turkish woman. When Tatiana remembers her duties and life in Moldova, she expresses her jealousy:

> I am very jealous of Turkish women. Because men bring everything to the house…Your women are too lazy. Believe me, I used to cook for my children and husband in the middle of the night. This woman (a

[97] Here, cooking with a pressure cooker signifies economization of time and care that one devotes cooking for the family. My informant, Tatiana, regards this as not being womanly enough.

[98] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "İnan ben bir yerde çalıştım, kadın kıskandı beni, ben yaptım bir mantı bir de çorba, beni gönderdi evden kadın…Yemek yaparken biraz da sevgi koyarsan o yemek harika olur değil mi? Kadın yapmış düdüklü tencerede, doldurmuş içine, o yemeğin tadı yok, şimdi ben yapınca bir çorba bir mantı, adam bayıldı: "Tatiana eline sağlık" dedi. Ben adamın yüzünü görmüyorum, aslında tabak veriyorum."

> Turkish woman) doesn't even stand up…They got used to comfort. Their husbands bring home food, the women just lie there; they become spoiled.[99]

In contrast to the self-identifications of Moldovan women as "loving", "sacrificing" and "committed" mothers and wives, some of my informants also emphasized that they are sexually more "desirable" than Turkish women. Marina is an attractive, 39 year old Moldovan woman; she is a mother of three daughters and widow; her husband passed away before she came to Istanbul. She described herself as more open-minded and as more "sexually attractive" than Turkish women.

> Turkish men prefer our women; I find it very curious (do you have any idea?) I mean, Turkish women happen to be so cold blooded. (She wanted me to turn off the recorder. She claimed that Turkish women are sexually frigid towards their men.)[100]

Each of these accounts suggests the ways in which Moldovan domestic workers ascribe conflicting meanings to their femininity. They perceive themselves to be simultaneously more sexually "attractive" and more "proper" than Turkish women. While Lara makes a similar point concerning why Moldovan women are more "desirable" than Turkish women, she also underlines that their relations with Turkish male friends express their need for male company in the absence of their husbands:

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[99] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Benim kıskançlığım çok var Türk kadıLara, yani adam almış her şeyi getirmiş…Sizin kadınlar çok tembel, İnan bana ben gece yemek hazırlardım çocuklarıma, kocam gelirdi, bu kadın (Türk kadını) hiç yerinden kalkmıyor…Rahata alışmışlar, koca getiriyor ekmek eve, bunlar yatıyor, şımarmışlar."

[100] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Türk erkekleri tercih ediyorlar bizim kadınları, ben bunu çok merak ediyorum, (hiç var mı fikrin) ben duydum ki, nasıl çok Türk kadınları çok soğuk kanlılarmış, (kayıt cihazını kapatmamı istedi, burada cinsellik konusunda Türk kadınlarının daha kapalı, erkeklerine karşı daha soğuk olduğunu söyledi)."

> For example, they say that I am warm-blooded and attractive, that it is very nice to talk to me. They say their own women are cold, that they can't feel anything with them, and that there is no attraction. It is a little bit simple as far as we are concerned…We need it, because our husbands are not with us. We are also humans, and we need friendship. We don't go out from the house for a week, so we need a friend to talk with once a week.[101]

Nevertheless contrary to Moldovan women's assessment, employers argued that the relationships between Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish men are improper according to the norms and values of Turkish society.

Suzan is a 43 years old mother of one and works as a stockbroker in a private company; she has employed approximately seven Moldovan domestic workers in the last three years. She describes the sexuality of Moldovan domestic workers as follows:

> For them sexuality is an ordinary matter, natural, like having meal three times a day. Then at night, she will sleep with a man. On the weekend, she goes out and sleeps with a man, and the other day, she comes across another man and sleeps with him too. Another weekend, another man--and they talk about these freely."[102]

Aksu Bora illustrates that not only employers but also local domestic workers define the sexualities of Moldovan domestic workers as threatening and bringing disorder to domestic space. They construct a narrative of the

[101] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Bana mesela söylüyorlar çok sıcak bir kadınsın, böyle çekicisin, seninle konuşmak böyle şey oluyor, ama bizim bayanlarla böyle bir soğukluk var hiçbir şey hissetmiyorsun, bir elektrik versin yok, neden. Bir de şey, biz daha nasıl basit…Bizim ihtiyacımız buna var çünkü bizim kocalarımız burada yok, bizde insanız hani arkadaşlık olsun istiyoruz. Bütün hafta çıkmıyoruz kimse yok, hafta da bir arkadaş olsun yanında bir konuşacaksın bir şeyler."

[102] From an interview with Suzan, September 2005. "Yani cinsellik onlar için çok sıradan bir konu, 3 öğün yemek kadar doğal bir parça oda.akşam da yatacak ne olmuş, hafta sonu gitti bir Türk erkekle yatıyor, bu hafta bu adama rastladı yattı, başka bir hafta başka bir adamla yatıyor, anlatıyorlar işte."

"iffetsiz", (dishonorable) woman and map it upon the "foreign" bodies of Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul households.[103] As I mentioned in the chapter on journeys, from the very beginning of their journeys, their femininity and sexualities are subject to negotiations and control at home in Moldova. Stigmatization of Moldovan domestic workers as "prostitutes" and "dishonorable" women continues in Istanbul households. Furthermore, these narratives are also reinforced by media representations.

The Moldovan women I spoke with were often offended by their image as sexually rampant women, which the word "Natasha" implies. As I mentioned previously, the Turkish media also stigmatizes Moldovan women as *Natasha*s or prostitutes, and implies that their sexuality is a threat for Turkish families. Moldovan women attempt to counter these negative public images by highlighting their good qualities in terms of performing proper womanhood. They also complain about the resentment and jealousy of Turkish women:

> Maybe your women are offended. Turkish men like our women. It is not our fault. Our women see it as natural. Turkish men talk to women very nicely. All women like beautiful words. They may be angry with us…I am sorry. They use a name here, Natasha…I am very angry about it. Because it is the name I like the most. But here in Turkey it is bad. Natalie and Natasha are the best names in our country. When I love my children I say Natashka. It is a very rude word here. It has become like that since we came here.[104]

[103] For further discussion see Bora, A. (2005) p. 94-95.

[104] From an interview with Tatiana, May 2005. "Belki de küsüyorlar sizin kadınlar, Türk erkekleri seviyor bizim kadınları, o bizim suçumuz değil. Bizim kadında tabi görüyor, o Türk erkek nasıl güzel konuşuyor kadınla, her bir kadın güzel laftan hoşlanır, kusura bakma, belki de kızıyorlar. Bazen söylüyorlar bir isim var nataşa…Çok sinirleniyorum, benim en çok sevdiğim isim, o da sizin burada kötü, inan bu lafı duyunca çok üzülüyorum. Natali, Nataşa bizde en güzel isim. Ben çocuklarımı severim Nataşka diye, burada çok çirkin bir laf, buraya biz gelince çıkartmışlar."

Because of this public discourse of "Natasha the prostitute", Moldovan women--especially those who are blond--are continuously harassed in Turkey. Throughout my field study, I heard that Moldovan domestic workers mimic the bodily practices of Turkish women; they wear headscarves and long skirts and paint their hair darkish colors to look like Turkish women, thus transforming their appearance to distance themselves from the stereotype of a "foreign" looking femininity. One of my Moldovan informants expressed her feelings about these types of harassment in the following way:

> Dye your hair blond, and put on blue contact lenses, and you will see what I mean…I can't walk in the streets comfortably at my age…This is being a stranger, being blond, having light skin, blue eyes…There is a doorkeeper on the road, for example…He asks "would you go out at night?" I ask why? He says we will go around Istanbul. I stare at him…He says he has a car…(With an expression of disgust) Who cares?[105]

In my field study, Moldovan women's relations with Turkish men are often described as involving "prostitution". The sexualities of Moldovan domestic workers appear to be another area of control, and their affairs with Turkish men constitute a concern for the employers. When I asked the employers what Moldovan domestic workers do on their off-days, an employer started talking about her suspicions concerning Moldovan women's involvement in prostitution:

> Some Moldovan women get involved in prostitution, it is quite interesting, during the week they work in our home, but on their off days, you know they are prostitutes…You do not think such a thing is possible.

[105] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Sen de saçını boyasan sarıya, mavi lens taksan gör bakalım…Ben bu yaştayım sokakta rahat yürüyemiyorum…İşte bu yabancı olmak, sarışın olmak, beyaz tenli olmak, renkli gözlü olmak, gidiyorum öyle bir tane kapıcı çıkmış gece çıkar mısın? Niye diyorum, bir iki tur çekeriz İstanbul'da. Böyle baktım, arabam var, böyle baktım (küçümser ifade) bana ne?"

> You only understand at the end, when something unusual occurs.[106]

In her study of domestic work in Hong Kong, Nicole Constable argues that foreign domestic workers' self-representations and femininity evoke different contradictions within households. The way they dress up or assert their femininity can cause them to be viewed as sexual competitors who transgress the class boundaries between the employer and worker (Constable, 2002, p.259). Throughout our interviews, Turkish employers also revealed feelings of jealousy for Moldovan domestic workers. The way they dress, use make-up and have intimate relations with men in Istanbul households all caused resentment on the part of their employers.

Zerrin is 42 years old, a mother of two, and works as a medical doctor. She argued that local domestic workers know how to behave according to the norms and values of Turkish society and family--they dress properly and they know that they need to maintain distance from the husband of the employer. She complained about her former Moldovan domestic worker, whom she eventually sent away:

> When we are about to go out in the car to entertain the child, we are waiting for her to finish her make up. Don't make us wait, or if we are waiting cut it short. When the landlady doesn't do any make up, do it a little lighter. She has no communication with me, but she is very close with my husband. She is talking too much to him. I don't think anything in that sense, but it is not right anyway.[107]

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[106] From an interview with Zeynep, September 2005. "Bazıları fahişelik yapıyor, çok enteresan hafta içi bizim evimizde çalışıyor, ama hafta sonu biliyorsunuz ki, ilaveten bunu da yapıyor…Siz zaten bunu çok geç öğreniyorsunuz, bir olay vuku bulduğunda öğreniyorsunuz, kondurmuyorsunuz ki genelde."

[107] From an interview with Zerrin, June 2005. "Biz dışarı çıkacağız çocuğu gezdireceğiz arabayla, biz onu bekliyoruz 3 kişi, o makyaj yapacak. Bekletme bir

Nearly all of the employers who found Moldovan domestic worker's dressing and manners out of place told me that they eventually find an excuse to fire them. They often do not prefer to express their true feelings of jealousy and resentment, because they think that these feelings degrade their status and womanhood.

As Hondagneu-Sotelo and Huisman (2005) argue, "body adornment and dress serve as a discursive daily practice of gender", and, furthermore "dress acts as a nonverbal language" (p.46).In the case of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers, dressing codes meant different things. While employers criticize their employees' ways of dressing as excessively feminine for a domestic worker, my informants enjoyed their flamboyant appearance, because they are able to distance themselves from the position of the domestic worker through it. Silvia proudly told me that Moldovan women often mistook her for a Turkish lady and thought that she looked like an employer:

> When I was working in Ulus, I went to the bus stop. Our women (Moldovan women) were coming. I was sitting at the bus stop. I asked where they were going. They said, "Aaa, we thought you were the boss." I don't know how I appeared to them. We were stylish, and our hair was proper. They said they thought I was a Turkish lady. If I get dressed properly when we go out, my boss and I look so alike.[108]

çırpıda yapıver, bekliyorsak da kısa kes, veya evin hanımı yapmıyor, sende hafif yap, yani illa göz göze girmek istersen, benimle sıfır diyalogun var kocamla çok samimisin, çok konuşuyorsun, o anlamda hiçbir şey düşünmem ama bence o da doğru değil."

[108] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Ulus'ta çalışırdım, çıktım durağa baktım bizimkiler (Moldovalı kadınlar) geliyor. Bende oturuyorum. Ben dedim "nereye gidiyorsunuz", "aaa biz sandık onların hanımlarısın sen". Nasıl görünmüşsem ben onlara, süslüyüz biz, çıktın hani saçın falan süslüyüz biz. aa diyorlar biz seni sandık Türk hanımısın. Ben giyindiğim zaman, dışarı çıkarken şey gibiyiz, hanımlan ben bir duruyoruz."

Western forms of feminine dress and the "foreign" bodies of Moldovan domestic workers serve as one form through which sexuality is expressed; they become sites where counter-power is exercised. Constable (2002) argues that an employer's discipline and control over the bodies and appearances of domestic workers can also be seen as "an attempt to reduce them to docile social bodies, to deprive them of full personhood, and to craft for them a less morally ambivalent--but sufficiently subordinate--position within households" (p. 260). Indeed, employers perceive what they consider to be "inappropriate manners" on the part of Moldovan women as a form of resistance to authority and as imposing a challenge to the employer's wifehood.

Larisa told me that she heard that her employer and her mother-in-law talked about her body and then gave her something "proper" to wear:

> The man's mother had broken an arm, and they hired me to care for her. They gave me a t-shirt. The lady said, "Give her something else." I had stretch trousers, and the t-shirt was short. The way that she looked at me disturbed me a lot. She was looking at me from behind and I heard her saying: "Give her something longer." She didn't want my ass to be seen.
> Arzu: Who said this?
> Larisa: The mother-in-law says this to her daughter-in-law. She says, "Give her something longer" because as they say, my ass moves too much.[109]

[109] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Adamın annesi oradaydı, kolunu kırmıştı, beni aldılar ona bakmak için, böyle bir tane t-şört verdiler bana, hanım dedi bir şey daha ver, benim böyle taytlarım vardı, t-şörtte böyle kısaydı, onun bakışları o kadar beni rahatsız ediyordu ki, böyle şey bakıyordu benim arkamdan, ve duydum onun sözlerini duydum: "daha uzun bir şey versene buna" popom gözükmesin, popomda tayttan. Arzu:kim diyor bunu?
Larisa: Kayınvalidesi gelinine diyor. "Daha uzun bir şey versene buna" çünkü benim popom bana söylediklerine göre çok oynuyormuş."

Throughout my interviews, employers often complained that Moldovan women tried to look more "feminine" than their employers. From the employer's point of view, this was deliberate and aimed at attracting men's attention. An employer, whose ex-husband married a Moldovan domestic worker, relates her conversations with another employer, emphasizing how Moldovan domestic workers' styles of clothing and behaviors change when men are present in home:

> In the day time, my friend's employee works in normal clothes, with a pony tail. But when her husband comes home in the evening or when there are guests, she changes her clothes, she wears tight blouses, puts her hair down, and wears lipstick. She serves the meal this way…My friend was very disturbed and finally asked us, "Do I misunderstand it? Or can you observe this, too?" Then we paid a little more attention to this. Our ashtrays were full of butts, but theirs (male guests') were being changed 10 times. She serves them with incredible attention. But her intention was different. My friend dismissed her. My ex-husband also got married to a Moldovan woman who was working for him. But I did not divorce him because of it. It occurred after we were divorced.[110]

Both public representations and accounts of employers portray Moldovan domestic workers simultaneously as possessing desirable and undesirable qualities of womanhood. On the one hand, they are considered to be desirable workers and good women because they are "educated", "European", "clean" and "hard working". However, in contrast to this affirmative view, they may

[110] From an interview with Nergis, September 2005."Gündüzleyin diyor normal işte saçı at kuyruklu evin içinde iş yapıyor, akşam kocası geldiğinden itibaren üst değişiyor, askılı bluzlar yada eve misafir geldiğinde, saçlar açılıyor, rujlar sürülüyor, kıyafet değişiyor ve öyle servis yapıyor…Arkadaşım bundan çok rahatsız oldu ve en son bize sordu, dedi ben mi yanlış anlıyorum ne olur sizde gözlemler misiniz bunu (kadını)…Ona dikkat ettik, söyledikten sonra bizim küllükler taşmak üzere ama onların (erkek misafirlerin) küllüğü 10 kere değişiyor. Oraya inanılmaz bir servis onun niyeti başkaydı zaten, onun niyeti başkaydı. İşten çıkardı. Benim eski eşim, ayrıldığım eşim de yanında çalışan Moldavyalı ile evlendi, biz ayrıldıktan sonra ben ayrıldıktan sonra, ben ondan dolayı ayrılmadım."

also become *Natashas* in the eyes of Turkish employers when they are perceived as "sexually dangerous". These contradictory representations constitute an ambiguous position for Moldovan domestic workers, and gives their employers the chance to exercise continuous control and surveillance over them. On the other hand, Moldovan domestic workers intentionally keep their western forms of dressing and appearance in order to highlight their similarities with the employers. This, in turn functions as a means of undermining the authority of Turkish employers.

This chapter has explained how different female subjectivities are produced and reproduced in the private spheres of Istanbul households, which have recently become a realm of new encounters and new global social inequalities. The interactions of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers do not reproduce the existing dichotomies embedded in the relationship of local employees and employers in the Istanbul community. In the meetings of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers, notions of femininity are negotiated, contested, redefined and reinvented along with the contradicting class positions of parties, cultural and national differences, as well as public discourses that represent Moldovan domestic workers simultaneously as possessing desirable and undesirable qualities of housekeeping.

I argue that the narratives of these encounters reveal women's symbolic struggles and claims of recognition for their reconstituted subjectivities in rapidly changing transnational contexts. Through the strategic shifts between multiple and ambiguous positions, which both inform and are informed by the

meetings of both parties in Istanbul homes, my informants attributed particular meanings to their femininity while excluding other notions of womanhood. The changing meanings of womanhood serve as a means of symbolic domination and resistance in their daily encounters with the parties of domestic service. They dismantle traditional notions of womanhood and appropriate new meanings. However, motherhood and mothering practices constitute a significant place in their struggles for recognition in both Moldova and Istanbul. The redefinition of the self as a "proper" woman was often trapped by traditional ideals of motherhood. In the following chapter, differing mothering practices and expanded meanings of motherhood will be the base for examining the lives of Moldovan women in Istanbul.

CHAPTER III LINGERING LIVES:

Moldovan Mothers Between Two Worlds

My analysis of Moldovan domestic workers' journeys and the transformation of their subjectivities through these journeys does not end with their encounters with Turkish employers in Istanbul households. For my informants, leaving their children behind contradicts the gender roles and notions of ideal motherhood that they have learned in Moldova. Therefore, I also think of Istanbul households as a place of temporal and spatial separation where Moldovan domestic workers are not able to perform their previous traditional and ideal gender roles and duties as mothers. In order to cope with the dilemma of how to fulfill the role of motherhood when they are away, they constantly negotiate the meanings of motherhood and mark their differences from other mothers, both in Moldova and Turkey

All of the Moldovan women who participated in this study have children. The ages of their children vary between nine to twenty-five; some were even married and had their own families, while some women had to leave their children with their husbands, female relatives or with their neighbors. Their employment as live-in domestic workers and status as illegal migrants make it impossible to bring their children to Istanbul; on the other hand, even if they could arrange a place for their children to stay, their wages would not be enough for securing a future for their children in Istanbul. As such, Moldovan migrant domestic workers try to diminish the negative affects of their absence on their children by being here and there simultaneously and employ various strategies to make their presence felt at home.

Indeed, narratives of mothering practices and contested meanings of motherhood constituted a significant part of the stories that Moldovan domestic workers shared with me. On the one hand, informants ruthlessly criticize themselves as mothers who are no longer able to perform their "proper" duties, and they constantly try to find ways to perform mothering from afar. On the other hand, they rearticulate the image of an ideal mother, and reaffirm their positions as mothers, by marking their differences from other mothers, both in Moldova and Turkey, in order to claim recognition and make sense of their new positions as mothers.

All of my Moldovan informants had many years of work experience before the collapse of the Soviet Union. They were working mothers in Moldova. The socialist ideal of motherhood is often associated with their involvement in the Soviet labor force, both as workers and as citizens of collective Soviet life. Women were seen as significant actors within the nuclear family, and were considered to be the providers of family life. Their participation in the labor force was celebrated, and perceived as an important measure for the equality of men and women in Soviet Russia (Verdery, 1996). Soviet women who preferred to stay at home were represented as "declining to exercise their supreme privilege" and referred to as "drones" or even "parasites" (Mace, 1961, p. 330).

Nonetheless, leaving home and children to work in Istanbul households in order to provide for the basic needs of the family is often viewed negatively

both in Moldova and Istanbul. Keogh's study (2006) illustrates that Moldovan women working in Turkey were often presented as "irresponsible mothers" and "immoral wives" for "abandoning (their) children" and "splitting up families" in their villages (p. 442). They are simply blamed for causing social disorder in their communities. For example, the fact that husbands now have to perform "womanly" tasks was seen as one of the primary indicators of disorder in their villages (p. 445). Similarly, Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul houses were perceived by their employers as "emotionally tough", "irresponsible" and "apathetic" women because they had left their children behind. In other words, Moldovan mothers working in Turkey have to defend their current mothering practices, which contradict ideal notions of motherhood, both in Turkey and in Moldova itself.

In this chapter, I argue that as women's physical proximity to their home diminishes, the ways in which they attach themselves to family life become more complicated. While women are away from home, they constantly rearrange their transforming lives through expanding and negotiating the meanings of motherhood. They both deal with the stigma of being away from home, and, as a response, create new ways for claiming recognition of the femininity they experience by dismantling patriarchal definitions of motherhood. Their positions as mothers play an influential role in shaping their journeys from the very beginning, since they leave home with the promise of providing a secure future for their children. Furthermore, accomplishing their roles as mothers is also decisive in shaping my informants' decisions to either stay permanently in Istanbul or return to Moldova. Depending on the

conditions of their children, on whom they perceive their identities to depend, they make strategic choices and determine their life trajectories.

What Kind of a Mother Am I?

> Aaah…Mom, if she were alive, she would be really shocked. When we were naughty and made her angry, she used to say "I will leave you and go to Istanbul". We did not know where Istanbul was, we just knew it was very far away. Now I can understand why she said Istanbul, because we are Gagauz Turks… Now, look at us, not my mom but I myself am here in Istanbul, and I left my children behind. Look mom, look what happened to us.[111]

When Silvia thinks of herself and what she has been gone through as a mother, she immediately recalls this childhood memory, which has an ironic relationship to her current condition. It is ironic that her mother never abandoned them but still threatened to leave her children for an unknown place named Istanbul. Now, Istanbul is a well-known place for the children of Silvia, because she has worked in Istanbul since 2000. She has not threatened to abandon her children like her mother did; instead she was obliged to go to Istanbul in order to secure their well being.

From my informants' point of view, a "good" mother must stay at home and take care of the family on her own. A mother's separation from her children disrupts both their traditional subjugation at home as well as the ideology that a family exists "in one place". Moving to Istanbul households and performing care work for an employer's family contradicts Moldovan migrants' notion of

[111] From an interview with Silvia, May 2005. "Ahhhh…Annem, eğer hayatta olsaydı, çok şaşırırdı. Küçükken biz yaramazlık yapınca bize şey derdi annem, "sizi bırakıp, Istanbul gidicem" Biz bilmezdik İstanbul neresi, sadece bilirdik ki çok uzak. Bak şimdi ne oldu bize, annem gelmedi ama ben İstanbul'dayım. Çocuklarımı bıraktım. Bak anne ne oldu bize."

ideal mothering. In other words, it requires them to challenge the patriarchal notion of the nuclear family, which previously constituted their gendered identities as full time mothers. Throughout their journeys and their encounters with Turkish employers, meanings of motherhood are contested, depicted differently, and sometimes even employed paradoxically in order to make sense of their new positions.

Moldovan domestic workers worry about the negative effects of their absence on their children, and they also experience the lack of family life in their own lives. “What kind of a mother am I/ is she” is a question that was constantly asked by both the Moldovan domestic workers themselves and the Turkish employers that I interviewed. Larisa, for instance, asked herself this very question a couple of times in my company. She repeatedly pointed out that the reason for her separation from her family is the fact that she does not want her daughter to go through the same difficulties that she had, being away from her family to perform domestic work for others in Istanbul houses. Even though this remained a rhetorical question for most Moldovan women, it continues to imply quite a lot even in its unanswered form. As such, rather than focusing on the spoken answers given to this question women pose to themselves, we should look at the ways in which the answer to such a question is embedded in the everyday stories which Moldovan mothers tell about their own mothers, their daughters, and the mothering practices of other women that they encounter throughout their journeys.

These encounters and the lingering lives of Moldovan mothers between their home country and Turkey produce new contrasts and inequalities among the women in relation to whom the subjectivities of migrant mothers are constituted. In her discussion of migrant women's identity formation, Fortier (2000) defines "identity" not as a fixed concept but as "a process…that produce(s) *both* sameness and difference"; therefore, it does not yield "finite, smoothed out and always already coherent narratives" (p. 3). Here, I consider motherhood as a particular and paradoxical site of negotiation among women, in the course of ongoing formation of feminine subjectivities.

Like Larisa, many women give sense to their presence in Turkey by juxtaposing their own experience of motherhood with that of their daughters. They know that in the absence of women, families in Moldova are torn apart. Sacrificing one's privileged position and dealing with the stigmas of being away are justified because they ensure the well being of their daughters, and allow their daughters to perform proper motherhood and homemaking by coming to Istanbul. Lara explains why mothers do not want their daughters to leave home in the following way:

> My mother, she tells me not to come here. (Do mothers want it?) No they don't. But I would not want my daughter to come (here) either. If I were there, I would have wanted to see my daughter, my grandchildren. Mothers want their children to be with them, by their side. But money, it is because of money…My daughter's children, they are so little, they need to be taken care of…If my daughter came here, her family would be torn apart. If a young girl finds a friend here, if her husband hears it…Or her husband may find someone else, and they will break up. God forbid. I

> wish for them (the daughter and her husband) to always be together.[112]

Leaving families and going abroad to work is a constant negotiation between mothers and daughters in Moldova. This also indicates the fact that Moldovan domestic workers not only fail as mothers but also as "ideal" daughters. Their mothers do not want them to leave, because they need the company of their daughters in their old age. However, they deal with their failure to meet their daughter roles by pointing out to the sacrifice that they undergo for their own daughters.

Marina explains that her view of life is different than her mother's. Her mother wants her to return to Moldova and be with her children, but Marina thinks that she could not provide a good future for her daughters with the money that she would earn in Moldova:

> I called mom on Saturday. She told me to leave my job, to return home and to be together with my children. I told her that this is not possible. From her point of view, I should be there and work there to support my children. But I cannot raise them there, my daughter goes to university, the others go to school. How can I take care of them? My viewpoint and my mother's viewpoint do not match. She wants me to be together with my children. I also want to be together with them, but it is impossible.[113]

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[112] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Annem asla diyor hayır, gitme (anneler istemiyorlar değil mi) yok istemiyorlar, ama şimdi bende istemezdim, kızım gelsin, çünkü ben orada olsaydım, istiyorsun yanında olsun onunla görüşeceksin, torunlarını göreceksin, anne yani istiyor çocuk yanında olsun. Ama para, para peşine…Kızım yani çocukları küçük onlara bakmak lazım…Zaten kim geliyor burada gerçekten Allah göstermesin kızım gelsin buraya çünkü aileler ayrılıyor. Bak genç kız mesela burada bir arkadaş buluyor, kocası duyuyor. O (kocası) da orada bir başkasını buluyor, işte ayrılıyor, o yüzden Allah göstermesin, onlar beraber olsun."

[113] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Cumartesi telefon açtım, annem diyor artık gel eve, bırak işini de gel evine, çocuklarının yanında ol, nasıl geleyim diyorum ona. Onun bakışında ben orada olmalıyım ve orada geçindirmeliyim çocuklarımı. Ama ben yetiştiremeyeceğim orada, kızım üniversitede Çadır da Moskova üniversitesi,

Some of them, especially mothers with older children, believe that they can best fulfill traditional expectations of care-giving through earning income abroad. Tatiana claims that her mother could not endure what she has gone through to provide a good living and to secure the future of her children. Although she suffers from not being with her sons, because she has not been able to witness how they have grown up and become adults, she is proud that her sons have their own business and are able to take care of their own families in Moldova, with the money that Tatiana earns in Istanbul.

> My mother would never do the things that I do for my children. My mother had five children, five daughters, and she could not do something for every one of them. Now I have two sons. I was able to give them a better life. I had a debt, I was not together with them, and they grew up by themselves, because I had to earn money for them all of the time. My mother was always together with her children, but I was always far from mine. Of course my mother would never have gone far away, she would never have left her children, but we did. She would not have been able to go either.[114]

The way in which migrant Moldovan mothers define their mothering as different than that of their own mothers could be seen as a contradiction, because they both affirm traditional ideal notions of motherhood, and also try to legitimize their experiences which contradict with the image of the ideal mother that their own mothers represent. I consider this to be very significant

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öbürleri okula gidiyor, onlara ben nasıl bakayım. Annemle bakışlarımız uymuyor, o tamam, ben de isterim çocuklarımın yanında olayım, ama yok."

[114] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Ben ne yaptım çocuklarım için, benim annem hayatta bunu bana yapmazdı, benim annem beş çocuğu vardı, beş kızı vardı tabi hepsine yapmaya yoktu, benim iki oğlum var, ben daha iyi bir hayat verebildim. Bir de benim borcum vardı ben onların yanında yoktum, onlar kendi kendilerine büyüdüler, ben onlara her zaman yardım etmem gerekiyordu. Benim annem her zaman çocuklarının yanındaydı ama maalesef ben uzaktaydım. Tabi benim annem hayatta uzağa gitmezdi, çocuklarını bırakmazdı ama biz bıraktık. Gidemezdi de zaten."

in terms of understanding the emotional struggles that my informants experience between their needs and wishes, their experiences and their ideals. In the quotation below, the emotional turmoil that Svetlana has to go through in her everyday life while negotiating her motherhood is clear. Svetlana's son is 9 years old--he does well in school, and she wants to send him to university. Staying away from him, in order to work in Istanbul and make enough money for his education, is a must for her. She tries to maintain closeness via weekly phone calls, but, as her case illustrates, it is difficult to have a shared understanding that being apart is the only way for them to make ends meet:

> I wish I could be together with my child. It is because I do not want him to have difficulties. Like how our mothers raised us, we did not have difficulties. But now, our children, they go through difficulties, we are not together with them. I am so sad that he is with a stranger, well not so much a stranger (her nephew takes care of her son), but I wish that I could help my son with his lessons. He is sad because I am away…I don't want him to lack anything. I ask him what he wants me to buy for him. But he says he needs nothing except me. I become very sad, but I have nothing to do.[115]

Just as Moldovan women ask the question, "What kind of a mother am I, I am not with my children and away from home?", employers also questioned Moldovan women's mothering by saying "What kind of women, and mothers are they? They leave their children and go to a foreign country, live in peoples' houses strange to them". Even if Turkish employers prefer Moldovan domestic care takers, they deliberately distance themselves from the figure of a mother

[115] From an interview with Svetlana, May 2005. "Ben mi nasıl isterdim çocuğumun yanında olmak, bu bizde nasıl hani, para sorunu hani sıkıntı çekmesin çocuk hani, bizi nasıl annelerimiz büyüttü biz sıkıntı çekmedik. Küçüklüğümde sıkıntı çekmedim hani, her şey okulda da evde de biz sıkıntı çekmedi, ama bizim çocuklarımız şimdi sıkıntı çekiyorlar, biz yokuz yanlarında…Çocuğuma çok üzülüyorum, alemin yanında, alem sayılmıyor ama kendim isterdim derslerini onunla beraber yapayım, yanında olayım, yardımcı olayım…Üzülüyor ben yokum yanında diye. Orada eksik kalmasın diye, soruyorum ona "ne alayım sana", bana bir şey lazım değil anne, ben seni istiyorum diyor. İçim kopuyor ama ne yapacaksın."

who has left her family behind. According to them, one must be "ignorantly brave", "apathetic" and "emotionally tough" in order to do this:

> They come from a very distant place to a country they have never been to and they work in someone else's house. They are far braver than us, this is for sure. Maybe because they are brave, maybe because they have nothing left to lose, maybe they trust in themselves, maybe their bravery comes from their ignorance. Maybe it is because of the Communist regime or because they were raised very strictly, we are far more emotional than they are, I do not think that they have the same emotionality that we have. I feel like they are hard-hearted. Even though they are mothers, they are not emotional. Of course, if they were not so unemotional, they would not be able to leave their husbands, children, mothers, and fathers for six months or for a year. Can we leave ours? No we cannot, we die of starvation. But they do.[116]

In the houses where Moldovan domestic workers are employed, struggles over the notion of motherhood are especially effective in revealing common, as well as opposing, interests among women who are positioned differently within national, cultural, class, gender hierarchies. It is important to note that this struggle and the process by which it shapes women's subjectivities arise in a context of women's increased mobility in a globalizing world, defined by neo-colonization, and consequent economic and political crises.

Motherhood constitutes a major domain which both domestic workers and employers refer to in order to make sense of their identities and choices.

[116] From an interview with Nergis, September 2005. "Dünyanın bir ucundan kalkıp ilk defa hayatlarında başka bir ülkeye gelip, başkasının evinde çalışıyorlar, bizden çok daha cesurlar bir kere, gözleri ya çok kara ya kaybedecekleri hiçbir şey olmadığından, ya çok çaresizlikten, yada kendilerine olan sonsuz güvenden dolayı, böyle bir cesaretle, yani cahil cesareti ile geliyor. Oradaki Komünist rejim yada çok katı yetişmenin verdiği şartlardan dolayı belki, bizler daha duygusalız, onlarda ben aynı duygusallığı görmüyorum, onların daha yürekleri katı, öyle bir hissim var. Anne olmalarına rağmen daha katı daha sert duyguları…Zaten o katılıkta olmasalar, altı ay bir sene kocasını, çocuğunu, anasını, babasını bırakamazlar, biz bırakabiliyor muyuz, asla yapamıyor, acımızdan ölsek bunu yapamıyoruz değil mi, ama onlar yapıyor."

Turkish employers affirm their identities by ascribing the position of the "sensitive" and "caring" mother to themselves, unlike Moldovan mothers, who have "abandoned" their children. Moldovan mothers, on the other hand, often defend their mothering practices against these prejudices and stigmas. Even though they describe themselves as being "bad" mothers and as no longer content with themselves as ideal homemakers, they nevertheless consider themselves to be better mothers than their employers. Moldovan women believe that the mothering practices of upper class Turkish employers give rise to "spoiled" and "disrespectful" children. Lara redefines herself as an "ideal" mother by expressing her disapproval of the way her employer disciplines her children:

> The children, they are so spoiled, they do not obey what you say. If you tell about the situation to his/her mother, the mother tells you, 'my child can do anything he/she likes'…I have children, yes, we also have children. But when I tell my son not to do something, or to do something else, he understands it. But here, it is not like that. The employer tells me that it is God who gives children. I know that, I am also sent by God. But they (children) cannot do whatever they want to do.[117]

As one can easily detect in their respective narratives, women map out their differences in gender performances as either class difference or national/cultural difference. Cleanliness and raising well-mannered and disciplined children are attached to middle-class-hood by Moldovan domestic workers and help them to distance themselves from the mothering practices of upper class Turkish employers. While Turkish employers attribute the capacity

[117] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Çocuklar çok şımarık, lafta anlamıyorlar, söylüyorsun annesine anlamıyor, diyor "o istediğini yapar"…Benim de çocuğum var evet, bizim de var…"Hayır, yani oğlum bunu yapmayacaksın Bu iyi değil bunu yapmayacaksın, şunu yapacaksın. Sizin burada yok yani…Patron diyor, çocuklar Allah'tan verilmiş, tamam biliyoruz, bende Allah'tan geldim. Yani ne yapmak istiyorlarsa, yapsınlar, ama olmaz."

of Moldovan women to their roughness produced by the Soviet regime, Moldovan informants refer to their previous lives under the Soviet regime as a source of cultural capital:

> Here, the children of the rich are spoiled, but our children are disciplined. Even when our children are small, they go to the toilet by themselves; they put on their underpants by themselves. Here, even the grown-up children, they go to the university, but they do not flush the toilet. They know that they have to use the fork with their left hands and the knife with their right hands, but why do they not know that they have to flush the toilet? (Did you tell them?) Yes. They tell me that it is because of the Soviets that we are so cultured. We teach things like this to our children when they are very young. These children (in Turkey) do not know about these things even when they grow up.[118]

In contrast to the accusation that they are "bad" mothers, Moldovan domestic workers validate their identity by constituting a generalized difference based on culture and class between themselves and Turkish mothers. Moldovan women not only perceive themselves and their background in the Soviet Union as a legitimate source of skill and knowledge for childcare, they also redefine the nature of their work as caretakers by referring to their superior qualities as middle class mothers. Moldovan domestic workers expand the meanings of proper motherhood to include their relationships with the children they take care of in Istanbul in order to deal with their positions as outsiders and the self-estrangement that they experience as a result of their journeys.

[118] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Sizin zengin çocukları şımarık. Bizde çocuklar disiplinli, her zaman küçükte olsa oturuyor tuvalete, lazımlığına, kapıyor, kilodunu kendisi çekiyor, burada olmuş eşek kadar üniversitede okuyor, suyu arkasından, sifonu çekmiyor…Bıçağı, sağ eline alıyorsun çatalı, bunu biliyorsun, tuvalete gittiğinde sifonu çekmeyi onu neden bilmiyorsun (söyledin mi) evet…"Sovyetlerden siz çok kültürlüsünüz" diyor. Bunları küçükten biz öğretiyoruz çocuklarımıza, bu kalkmış olmuş, eşek kadar bilmiyor…"

Some of my informants claimed that they are, in fact, fulfilling the mothering duties of their employers. Tatiana differentiates her mothering from her employer's notion of motherhood by claming that she has done for the child what the mother could not do. She proudly tells how she changed the attitudes and manners of her employer's child, by teaching the child how to love this life:

> I looked after many children…There was a girl. Believe me, after two months, they could not recognize her. She was fifteen and she used to have fights with her mother. We were living on the sixth floor; she wanted to jump out of the window. I caught her, told her that she should live, that life is beautiful. Do you have to cry if you have a fight with your mother? What happens when you die? Your mother cries, and then she forgets about it. You will decay, but life is beautiful. The girl was fifteen. When I left the job, she told me that she loved life because of me.[119]

In the case of Filipina domestic workers, Cheng (2004b) argues that workers may like to be close to the employer's children, despite the fact that they know their love is replaceable. She claims that "emotional labor is a part of the package of paid domestic labor" (p. 44). However, some of my informants said that they do not like to be employed as nannies because they get attached to the children of employers; they transfer their love, guidance and care-giving to those kids which they cannot express to their own children. In general, they intentionally prefer other domestic jobs, because they know that they are only surrogate mothers, and sooner or later they will be separated from these children, too.

[119] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Ben çok çocuk baktım…Bir kız vardı. İnan bana iki aydan sonra o kızı hiç tanıyamadılar, o kız böyle 15 yaşında, annesiyle kavga ederdi, altıncı kattaydık, hop aşağı atlayacak camdan atlayacak, ben onu tutardım yok kızım yaşayacaksın. Hayat güzel, annenle kavga ettim diye ağlaman mı lazım. Öldün ne oldu, annen ağladı unuttu. Ama sen çürüyeceksin, ama hayat ne güzel. Kız 15 yaşında ben ayrılırken dedi bana, 'ben sana baktım sevdim hayatı.'"

In the accounts of Moldovan mothers, the figure of the working mother is cited repeatedly in order to differentiate themselves from Turkish women, as they are both mothers and breadwinners for their families. Even when they compare themselves with working Turkish mothers, such as other domestic workers, they attribute a different meaning to their labor in terms of being exclusively for the well-being of children:

> I reached this age, I may even enter into apprenticeship here, but the young, what will they do working in strangers' houses? We did not grow up like this as well. They (Turkish women) do not understand this. But I understand Turkish women as well. They come in the morning, go in the evening, and hug their children. You want to be with your children even if you can only find onions and salt to eat. I cannot talk to anyone about my sorrow; they always want you to smile. We smile but on the inside we cry. Why do we come here? Look at what we have to put up with for our children. I also have a husband at home; I also wish I were together with my family. But I have to (work). They tell me that their husbands would not let them to work, I tell them that they (women) do not want to work. But I want my children to go to school, to wear nice clothes; I want to make a living for my family.[120]

The number of female-headed households in Moldova is noticeably large. While Moldovan mothers become the only breadwinners of their families, fathers become surrogate mothers in these households. As Keough's study (2006) illustrates, due the absence of women in many households in Moldovan

[120] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Ben hani bu yaşa gelmişim, burada çıraklıkta edersin, ama onlar yapacak gençler böyle, ailemin köşelerinde kapılarında mı? Biz de böyle yetişmedik biz. Onlar (Türk kadınları) anlamıyorlar, zira ben Türk kadınlarını da anlıyorum. Şimdi mesela sabahtan geldi, akşam gidiyor, sarılıyor çocuklarına sarılıyor, bir tuzla ekmek soğan yiyesin, ama çocuklarının yanında olasın. Kime dökeyim içime, onlara hep lazım gülesin. Güleriz de onlara ama içimiz kan ağlıyor. Biz neden geliyoruz buraya. Çocuklar için bak neye katlanıyoruz biz. Bende diyorum, benimde kocam evde bende isterdim ailemle olayım, ama mecbursun. Diyorlar "bizi bırakmayacak kocalar", diyorum siz istemiyorsunuz çalışmak. Ama ben istiyorum ki ben çocuğumu okutayım, çocuğumu güzel giyindireyim, geçindireyim ailemi."

villages, husbands now make the bread, pick the vegetables from gardens, cook meals for the kids, and dress them and send them to school (p. 445). In Turkey, even if women work, men usually do not perform such tasks. Neither do women see their role as breadwinners as their primary role as mothers. For instance, as Aksu Bora (2005) has examined in the case of local domestic workers, even if they are the only breadwinners of the households for a long time, the female-headed household will still be perceived as a stigma or a breach of a norm. Therefore, they tend to see the unemployment of their husbands as temporary, and even if they act both as a homemaker and breadwinner (p. 101), they often deny that they are the sole breadwinner of the household. The encounters of Moldovan women with Turkish mothers who define their proper motherhood role as home based and their work only as an additional quality, combined with the fact that now men in Moldovan society are increasingly forced to perform domestic work, puts earning money at the center of Moldovan domestic workers' conception of motherhood. Moreover, such a perception was already promoted in the Soviet society, as I have already argued.

This becomes more obvious in the following excerpt, where Maria defines herself in opposition to Turkish mothers:

> Your women are committed to home; we are also committed to our homes, we are concerned, because we want our children to be educated, to wear nice clothes. I would do any job for my children to have these things, for my grandchildren as well. Here, women do not work. It is the men who work. In our society, there are only a few women who do not work.[121]

[121] From an interview with Maria, September 2005. "Sizin kadınlar eve bağlı, bizimde kadınlar eve bağlı ama çünkü biz düşünüyoruz, çocuğum olsun okumuş, istiyoruz

Besides being grounded in the everyday experiences of women, I think that these meanings that Moldovan women attribute to mothering could also be interpreted as empowering symbolic sites within which my informants cope with the stigmas of "bad motherhood", as well as a way in which they mark their differences from Turkish women.

As Glenn (1994) has stated, "mothering--more than any aspect of gender--has been subjected to essentialist interpretation: seen as natural, universal, and unchanging" (p. 3). It has been argued that women's gender identity is strengthened by motherhood (Arendell, 2000). Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avile's study illustrates that the increasing mobilities of women challenge traditional notions of home life and homemaking, which promote "the glorification and exaltation of isolationist privatized mothering" (1997, p. 550). In contrast, the new mobilities of women demonstrate that mothering is historically and culturally constructed. In the globalizing world, while the labor of women migrants has been manufactured as the only way to overcome financial crises, both for the survival of families and states, their participation in transnational population flows has been perceived as a breach of a norm.

Indeed, throughout their journeys, Moldovan domestic workers dismantle such notions of mothering: On the one hand they employ networks of relatives and friends to pass their roles and duties on, and, on the other hand, they simultaneously seek ways to redefine care-giving in terms of bread-winning. In

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çocuklarımız güzel giyinsin, güzel okusun, bunun için her bir işi yapabilirim, çocuklar için, sonra da torunlar. Sizde çok kadınlar çalışmıyor, erkek çalışıyor, bizde az var çalışmayan kadın."

other words, they innovate a particular practice which could be called "mothering from afar."

In the narratives of my informants, meanings of "proper" motherhood and mothering practices were an important, and perhaps unique manner, in which they were also able to claim superiority over other Moldovan friends and relatives working in Istanbul. Some of my informants complained about Moldovan friends and relatives because they spend too much money for their own needs and pleasure on off days, instead of saving their earnings for the children. From their point of view, spending money for their own needs and pleasures was equated with the definition of a selfish and neglectful mother. Some of my informants criticized other friends and relatives who do not return to home and abandon their families in Moldova. In the chapter on encounters, I cited the affirmative aspects of Moldovan women's point of view on having affairs with Turkish men, as well as on sexuality in general. When my informants talk about motherhood, their self-conceptions as "sexually desirable" women come into potential contradiction with their positions as mothers. When talking about the proper meanings of motherhood, the same informants said that they do not want to get involved in with Turkish men. In agreement with general judgments which blame them for causing disorder in their villages, they viewed their own sexualities and affairs with Turkish men as threatening to their family life:

> Women stay here in Turkey, they do not return to their children…(Are there many?) Yes, there are lots of women like that, like my brother's wife. My brother also came and stayed here for four years. My brother's wife, she had children and a husband back in Moldova, but she left her husband, left my brother. (Is your

> brother now in Moldova?) Yes. She (his wife) has lived here with a Turkish man for four years; there are lots of women like that.[122]

"I am a Mother!"

While mothering is generally understood as a practice of preservation, nurturing and training of children for life, these journeys preclude Moldovan domestic workers from performing gender as it is culturally inscribed for them. Financial struggles to provide the best future for their children become an important assessment in defining what a good mother is. Just as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avile (1997) argue in the case of Latina domestic workers, Moldovan mothers, too, not only "embark on an immigration journey but on a more radical gender-transformative odyssey" (p. 552). This journey requires them to cope with stigma, guilt and the criticism of others. By highlighting their differences as mothers both from their previous positions--stay-at-home mothers--and from the mothering practices of other women, including their own mothers, they try to make sense of their new positions.

Nevertheless, migrant mothers have to be available for their children while they are away from home; transnationalism allows and forces women to construct a "home" which includes both home and host countries. They span their mothering practices across borders and rearrange their lives according to the needs of their children in-between two worlds. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avile (1997) define new arrangements of mothering practices as "transnational

[122] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Türkiye'de kalıyorlar bizim kadınlar, dönmüyorlar çocuklarına…(Öyle var mı) var, çoğu var, ben uzağa gitmeyeceğim benim yengem, abimde geldi 4 yıl durdu burada, kocasını bıraktı, benim ağabeymi bıraktı, uzağa gitmeye gerek yok, (ağabeyin Moldovya'da mı) Moldovya'da ağabeyim, 4 yıldır burada başkasıyla yaşıyor, çok var böyle."

motherhood", in which women no longer act on the basis of their traditional gendered roles as mere care-givers in the home society, but redefine motherhood by combining the roles of breadwinning and care giving. Parrenas (2001) calls this new role "commodified motherhood", which ties them with their children through financial aid for education, clothing and nutrition.

This dilemma became more evident when migrant Moldovan mothers talked about the conflicting material and emotional needs of their children. Either directly or indirectly, they claimed that the reason for being away from home is to earn money to send their children to school, and to buy them food and clothing. They often tend to see their journeys as a means of satisfying the needs of their children and providing them with a better future. During the period of separation, the care of the children left behind is an important site of negotiation between Moldovan mothers and surrogate "mothers"--female relatives and friends, as well as their husbands--in Moldova. The responsibilities and roles of Moldovan women as mothers were important means for continuing relationships and ties with people, ideas, and institutions in their places of origin.

Larisa is a mother of two; she left home to work in Istanbul in 1997. Now, her son is a high school student and her daughter is studying law at Kishinev University. As the quote below illustrates, Larisa describes her job and current position as a painful experience. In other words, it is a "labor of grief" (Parrenas, 2001). Moldovan women relentlessly expressed their stress and pain over being away from home, by emphasizing their personal failure as mothers.

Furthermore, being away from home to serve others is viewed as stigmatizing by my informants. In my field research, I observed that my informants articulate their refusal of this stigmatizing position through feelings of grief and pain, by emphasizing their own estrangement in relation to themselves.

> Here, I do not have a life! Those whom I serve, they have a life. I left my life back there, and my thoughts are split up between here and home. I wonder what my children do, I wonder how they are, whether my daughter went to the marketplace, whether she succeeded in selling some things, whether my son went to the disco, whether he came back home on time…My life here is 'Larisa, can you do this, can you do that?' Of course I do, I do everything they tell me. If they ask me to smile, I smile. I do it even if they do not ask me to, but here 'I' am not me.[123]

Many of the Moldovan domestic workers whom I questioned about how they define themselves as women shared this sense of crisis, particularly related to notions of motherhood. Larisa's words reveal a sense of a crisis as she tries to combine simultaneous ways of being here and there. Larisa is constantly trying to negotiate her duties and role as a mother, while she is performing domestic tasks in Istanbul for her employer's family. As she described, even if she is in Istanbul, her mind is always on her children in Moldova. The manner in which she describes her current position as temporary and her life as not her own illuminates how her life is trapped between Moldova and Turkey.[124]

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[123] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Buradaki benim hayat değil ki! Onların hayatı kime hizmet veriyorum onların. Ben kendi hayatımı orada bıraktım, evdeyim, benim şu kısmım beynim evde. Çocuklarım ne yapıyor, nasıl onlar, kızım bu gün pazara gitti mi, sattı mı ne, oğlum çıktı mı diskoya ne yaptı ne etti, geldi mi zamanında. Gelmedi mi? Benim buradaki hayatım, Larisacım onu yapar mısın, bunu yapar mısın, tabi ki yaparım, her şeyi yaparım. Bana karşı güler misin, güler misin demiyor da, güler yüzlü ol, gülerim tabi ki. Siz söylemeden de gülerim, ama buradaki "ben" ben değilim."

[124] Even if the nature of domestic work and commodification of migrant domestic labor implies that these workers are seen as "bodily beings for others"--feminine and dehumanized bodies--without subjectivity, (Tadiar, 2002), the claims of my Moldovan

While a traditional understanding of "motherhood" emphasizes the presence of the mother at home, the increasing mobility of women across borders requires dismantling ideologies of home life and leads to redefinitions of gender roles. On the one hand, my informants often expressed feelings of shame, guilt and sadness, because they become "bad" mothers by being away from home. This indicates another form of in-betweenness--they simultaneously confirm and resist traditional and patriarchal notions of motherhood. On the other hand, they see themselves as the most responsible person in the home even though they pass their gender roles and duties as mothers to other family members, female relatives or friends. Furthermore, they expect their children to see them as mothers, even if there is another person who performs their roles and duties at home.

Marina's three daughters, who are 16, 18, and 20 years old, live together in their house in Moldova. Marina frequently calls them to be sure that everything is fine and asks her sister to visit her children regularly to check if they need anything. I asked her if her daughters still look for her guidance. She told me that as time passes her daughters have started to make daily decisions independently, without asking her opinion. Similar to Larisa's concerns, Marina was sad and worried that something might happen to her children while she is away. She says she is a mother; therefore she has to be concerned about everything in advance:

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informants reveal that they are never "nowhere", but rather their lives are trapped between at least two different communities, two different homes.

> My daughters, recently they started to go to their friends' houses to stay overnight. They do not tell me. I do not like this. My eldest daughter, she stayed in her friend's house. I got very angry last Friday. (She stayed there without informing you?) Yes. (Would you not let her if you were there?) I would not. I fear that something bad can happen. I am a mother. As a mother, you think of every possibility.[125]

In the quotation above, the statement, "I am a mother," connotes that a mother's care and attention is not replaceable. These cases point out that while my informants attach new meanings to motherhood and dismantle traditional gender ideologies, they simultaneously reinforce the understanding of traditional gender roles whereby it is mothers who should take care of the kids.

For instance, Larisa neither trusts her husband nor her mother-in-law, because they can not control and discipline her children well. She feels extremely responsible and concerned about the possibility that something bad could happen to the children in her absence. She was also concerned that her children might become idle, because they are not cared for and controlled enough by her husband and her mother-in law:

> How can she control them? If the grandmother cannot go out of the house, how can she keep an eye on them? She asks them where they have been, what they have done. But what happens if the children do not respond? (What would happen if you were there?) When I ask ten or twenty times, they would have to respond…[126]

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[125] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Şimdi biraz kızım hani habersiz çıkıp gidiyorlar arkadaşlarına orada gece kalıyorlar bunu ben sevmiyorum. Büyük kızım arkadaşına gidip orada kalıyor. Cuma günü ben çok kızdım ona (sana söylemeden mi) evet, (orada olsan izin vermez misin) vermem, anneyim ben yanlış bir şey olmasın, her türlü düşünüyorsun."

[126] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Bunları nasıl kontrol edicek, babaanne evden çıkmazsa onların arkasından nasıl şey edecek. Geldiğinde soruyor, neredeydin, ne yaptın ne ettin, bu cevap vermeyince ne olacak? (peki sen evde olsa) Ben 10 kez 20 kez sorduğumda mecbur cevap verecek…"

In these quotes, care work is represented as mothers' natural calling, one that reinforces the dichotomous construction of masculinity and femininity. While thousands of miles and political borders prevent "illegal" Moldovan domestic workers from engaging in direct care of their children and families, they continue to identify themselves as the only legitimate care-takers for their children. Larisa told me that she tries to accomplish her mothering from a distance through telephone calls:

> This morning, his father told me that my son came home when it was about to be morning. I asked my son when he came home; he told me that he didn't know when he came. I told him to speak quickly. We spoke for a long time. I speak from the line in the house where I work. When I talk too much, the employers yell at me. He does not know when he came home, he does not know about the clock. He is only sixteen, which is why I get so upset.[127]

Besides the frequent phone conversations to control their children, Moldovan women try to maintain intimate relationships with their children by sending letters, photographs, text messages, and gifts. They load objects with symbolic meanings and utilize them to show their love and care, and to gain the respect of their children. According to Parrenas (2005), what makes it possible for us to talk about "long distance intimacy" is the advance in technologies of communication and transportation. Most of my informants spend their off-days shopping for their families in Moldova. The objects sent from Istanbul to their homes in Moldova vary from fruits, vegetables, and chocolates to electronic devices such as computers, televisions, and so on. What to buy and send to the

[127] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Bu sabah mesela babası benim kocam kendisi söyledi, oğlun sabaha karşı geldi. Oğluma soruyorum, kaçta geldin, bilmiyorum anne, hızlı konuş dedim, çok konuştuk, evden konuşuyorum da dedim çok konuştuk bana bağırıyorlar. Çok para ödüyorlar, bilmiyorum, kaçta geldin, bilmiyorsun, saati mi bilmiyorsun kaçta geldiğini…16 yaşında o daha yüzden işte sinirleniyorum."

children was one of the important concerns of my informants, and dominated their daily talks with their friends. As Parrenas (2005) claims, regular communication is part and parcel of everyday life in transnational families. Moldovan domestic workers try to perform mothering across vast geographical distances, and the rapid flow of objects allows them to overcome the distance between them and their families.

The act of sending remittances and gifts was equated with care and love by my informants. While Moldovan mothers send their remittances and other objects to their children to demonstrate their care and love, they also expected to receive letters or small gifts from their families. For most of my informants, the proper use of the remittances by the families is seen as a sign of respect and healthy ties with the families. Women use gift-giving from a distance as a strategy to satisfy both the material and emotional needs of the children. In other words, it is a way to cope with the contradiction between the experiences of Moldovan mothers and the ideal notions of motherhood which they still hold dear.

> They want sweets, I send them *çokokrem*, they like it very much. We also have similar foods. But when I send them money, they do not want to spend it on these things, because they are very expensive. I buy it here and send them. (Is it cheap here?) No, but there, they do not want to spare money for it.[128]

Some of my informants expressed worries that their remittances are used thoughtlessly or that they no longer receive letters from their children.

[128] From an interview with Marina, April 2005. "Tatlı istiyorlar, çokokrem, onlara gönderiyorum çok seviyorlar, bizde de var, ama ben para gönderdiğim zaman onlar kıyıp paraya alamıyor, çünkü fiyatları yüksek. Ben buradan onlara gönderiyorum. (burada ucuz mu) hayır değil, orada ucuz ama onlar paraya kıyamıyorlar. Ben buradan alıp, gönderiyorum."

Throughout the interviews, I heard many complaints from Moldovan domestic workers concerning how their remittances were wasted by their husbands or elder children:

> I send money. My son tells me that he wants to buy this and that. I sent him the money, but he spent it on something else. And he told me that he spent all the money. I asked him what he bought. He bought a used car. Here, I gave him seven hundred dollars, and also one thousand dollars for transport. He told me that he was going to buy a used car to learn how to drive better. But then he spent all the money on fuel. Then he also sold the car. I asked him what he did with the money. He told me that he spent it all. That is what happened. What should I do? Do I kill him? I shouted at him, I got angry. And then I told him that it was all right, there was nothing left to do.[129]

As Parrenas (2005) puts it, "mothers contest the myth of the male breadwinner; they retain the myth of female homemaker" (p. 344). In our conversations, Moldovan mothers often emphasized the negative effects of their absence on their children by pointing out the failure and inadequacy of those who perform their roles while they are away from home. Throughout their journeys, Moldovan domestic workers search for ways to engage in both care-giving and breadwinning. Because of this, my informants often began to question basic assumptions about what it means to be a mother, as they carve out new feminine subjectivities. The Moldovan mothers redefine "proper" mothering through new mediums of mothering such as schooling, clothing, and food for the children. To some extend this is very similar to the way in which my

[129] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Şimdi para gönderiyorum bana diyor, anne şunu almak istiyorum, bunu almak istiyorum, tamam oğlum dedim göndereceğim sana parayı al, ama o parayı başka yere harcadı. 'Anne para bitti!' oğlum nereye harcadın? Araba aldı ama kullanılmış, buradayken ben ona verdim 700 dolar ve yol parası 1000 dolar verdim. 'Anne ben bir kullanılmış araba alayım da öğreneyim' dedi, ne yaptı? Gezmiş ne kadar gezdi bilmiyorum, benzin parası lazım ya, bizim gibi araba da yemek istiyor, bir de çalışmıyor oğlum. Ne yaptı sattı arabayı, eee paraları ne yaptın? 'harcadım'. İşte bu oldu, ne yapayım şimdi öldüreyim mi onu, burada bağırdım kızdım, sonra da dedim sağlık olsun ne yapalım."

informants describe themselves as "real woman" through traditionally masculine narratives of travel, as I illustrated at the end of the first chapter. It is a challenging dilemma for the mothers because mother-child isolation must be dissolved in order to raise their children as individuals who are eligible to have access to privileged social positions and institutions in their society. I argue that the constitutive potency of "in-betweenness" opens new spaces to perform their gender roles in different ways.

Motherhood in Transition: Ambivalent Returns to Home

By drawing my argument upon Edward Said's positive assertions of the "plurality of visions" and the "ambivalence of not belonging" (Said, 1984 cited in Constable, 1999, p. 224), which argue for the altering awareness of migrants, I claim that the journeys and encounters of Moldovan women with Turkish women constitute a social space where women become aware of the possibility of multiple and shifting representations of the category of woman. As Constable puts it, "in circumstances of change and mobility, plural vision no longer permits the self as the illusion of a unified, bounded or coherent whole" (ibid.). Throughout my informants' narratives of return to Moldova, it was possible to trace how my informants view themselves and life in Moldova differently. Return was presented with feelings of ambivalence that mostly revealed changing relationships with family members, as well as a self that needs to negotiate and rework her relations in order to fit into the social and family life in Moldova again.

Here, I would like to revisit the life story of Tatiana, which I told at the beginning of the first chapter, Journeys. Besides the economic problems that

she confronted in providing for the basic needs of her family, escaping from domestic violence was another reason that she decided to move to Istanbul. She had two married sons who started to run their own business in Moldova with her remittances. They were high school students when she left Moldova in 1995 for Istanbul. Her sons had to grow up on their own, but they would not be able to have the life they have now if she had not left Moldova to work in Istanbul. Tatiana feels that she accomplished her responsibilities successfully as a mother, because her sons now live a better life in Moldova. Now, her husband is the only person who stays at home; her sons married and have their own houses with their families. Tatiana does not want to return and continue to share a life with her alcoholic husband in Moldova. She thinks that Istanbul is a better place for her to live:

> If I had stayed in Moldova, I was going to kill my husband and go to jail. He did bad things to me. I leave him for God to judge because he is the father of my children. He is alone now, he is suffering. I do not want to remember those days; it is difficult to live with an alcoholic husband. He beat me a lot. I had a very serious surgery, he did not even come to visit me in the hospital, my children took care of me. So, I sacrifice my life for them. But now, my children earn money, I did everything for them, and now I work for myself. My sons are twenty years old now, they can support themselves…I wish I could bring my house here. It is better here. I work, I save money. Not so much money, but I can do something for myself. In my country, I do not have a job. I am happier here.[130]

[130] From an interview with Tatiana, June 2005. "Hani kocamı öldürüp ceza evine gideceğim daha kötü. Kocam çok şeyler yaptı ama ben Allah'a bırakıyorum onu, çocuklarımın babası, o çekiyor zaten şimdi, yalnız kaldı. Çekiyor. Hatırlamak istemiyorum, içkili adamla yaşamak zor bir şey. Dayak çok vardı, ben büyük bir ameliyat geçirdim 4 saat kocam gelmedi, çocuklarım baktı bana. Onun için onlara canım feda olsun. Şu anda herkes kendi ekmeğini kazanıyor, artık verdik hepsini, şu anda ben kendime çalışıyorum. 20 yaşında çocuk düşünsün kendini. Keşke evimi buraya getirebilsem. Burası daha iyi, ben çalışıyorum, para biriktiriyorum, çok değil ama kendime bir şeyler yapıyorum…Memleketimde benim işim yok, ben burada daha mutluyum."

Lan (2003a), in her study on Filipina migrant domestic workers, argues that after long periods of separation, migrant women, often "find (it) difficult to readjust to the lifestyle and material conditions back home." This creates an ambivalent sense of homelessness in women after return and increases migrant women's intentions to stay in the host country permanently (p. 201). Throughout my interviews with the Moldovan domestic workers, similar feelings were often expressed. "I do not know where my home is" and "When I am there I miss here, when I am here I miss there" were statements that I often heard from my informants.

Throughout their journeys, Moldovan women carve out different femininities, and their attachments to home and family life alter. Performing good mothering is the most important concern they have in making sense of their new positions. However, when their children start their own lives and have their own families, mothers begin to feel less attachment to "home". In other words, they perceive themselves as having successfully accomplished their roles as mothers. Even if they say that they are longing to see their children or grandchildren, for them the separation becomes more manageable.

When I met Larisa for our second interview, she was about to leave Turkey for Moldova. She was exhilarated over the fact that she would see her family soon, after a long period of separation. Yet, she was concerned about how to fit into her previous roles and duties as a homemaker, because she believes that things have changed during her absence. Larisa told me that she will have to rework her relationship with her children and her husband. Her worries were important

in illuminating how difficult it is to maintain ties with the family, because they no longer share a spatially bound life together. I consider her story to be an exemplary instance of the ambivalent return of Moldovan domestic workers:

> Our situations affect the families so much, deteriorate them…When we are together, we change together, we do things together, and we go through everything together. But when I am not with my son for a year, he grows up and becomes a man and I do not even have a clue about it. He goes to discos. I feel like he is a small child, but he is no longer so. (What will you do when you go back?) I will pull them to home a little bit, pull them to my side. I will try to do this, but I do not know whether I will be able to.[131]

On her way back to Moldova, Larisa thinks of her home in Moldova as another space to negotiate. She could only diminish the sense of unfamiliarity with her children and her husband and fit into a home that had changed during and because of her absence by reworking her relationships with her family and home itself.

Nicole Constable (1999) mentions the necessity of "reworking" and "creating another space" as a shared concern of migrant women upon their returns. She examines the return stories of Filipina domestic workers, and suggests that "it is not always easy to fit back into their old lives and relationships because they have changed and the home has been altered by their absence" (p. 223). In my study, this was primarily a concern of mothers with small children; mothers

[131] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Bizim bu durumlar aileleri çok etkiliyor, çok bozuyor…Yanında olunca hani beraber değişiyoruz, beraber bir şeyler yapıyoruz, beraber her şeyi geçiriyoruz. Ama böyle bir sene böyle ben yanlarında yokmuşum, oğlum büyümüş delikanlı olmuş, benim haberim yok. Şeyler diskolara çıkıyormuş, ben biliyorum küçücük, annesinin kuzusu ama artık öyle değil. (ne yapacaksın gidince) biraz evin içine çekicem onları, yanıma çekicem, çalışıcam en azından bunları yapmaya ama başka bir şey bilmiyorum."

with older children were less worried about the changes at home during their absence, and were therefore more likely to postpone their returns.

My informants often articulated these feelings as symbols of personal failure and of their changing lives. With the separation from "home," their sources of power and control are no longer constituted by social ideals of motherhood. Even if they gain a different empowering status as the breadwinner of household, in comparison to their former habits and practices, they believed that they lost the respect of their children and their authority. Therefore, while in some cases sending remittances and materials to home regularly were perceived as part of care work, in some cases, remittances became a medium of control, especially when their home arrangements fail and their children are not taken care of properly. Larisa told me how she tried to warn her husband that she would not send money to him anymore, because he had become irresponsible and did not care for the home and the children:

> I told him that I will not send him money. He hung up the phone. He did not talk to me. Then I told them that I will send money, but I did not. (Didn't they ask about it?) Yes, they did. But I told them that I would come home soon. I told them that one morning they will get up and see me at home. They continued to ask me when I was coming. I told them that I will come home at an unexpected moment and break a thick stick on each one's back.[132]

It is important to note that, while the younger mothers mostly talked about their worries over how they will fit in at home upon their return, informants with

[132] From an interview with Larisa, August 2005. "Söyledim dedim göndermeyeceğim para, tamam yani göndermeyeceksen gönderme yine kapattı telefonu, konuşamadı benimle, ondan sonra konuştum dedim ki göndereceğim size para ama göndermedim. (sormadılar mı) sordular mı ama dedim çok yakında eve geliyorum. Çok yakında eve geliyorum bekleyin beni dedim bir sabah beni bulacaksınız karşınızda, ne zaman geliyorsun, dedim beklemediğiniz an ben orada olacağım, bir sopa senin sırtında bir sopa da oğlumun sırtında kırıcam."

older children think of their life in Istanbul as more enjoyable, rewarding and fulfilling than living in Moldova. Despite their grief of separation and their concerns over becoming "bad" mothers, they resist or delay returning to their homes in Moldova.

Most of my informants emphasized that they no longer have an intimate relationship with their husbands. They often assert that the separation violated their relationship, and their husbands become "jealous", "irresponsible", "selfish" and "lazy" men. Alcoholism was another common problem that women complained about concerning their husbands. Furthermore, some of them described Turkish men as more suitable partners than their husbands in Moldova. According to them, Turkish men were "hardworking", "generous", "loving" and "attentive". In different sections of this thesis, I have tied to illustrate how Moldovan women redefine and negotiate meanings of womanhood in order to make sense of their new position in between two worlds. To some extent, this process also reflects an attachment to a new notion of masculinity. My informants narrated their disappointment with their husbands in Moldova by referring to the "better" qualities of Turkish men, whom they met and had affairs with in Turkey:

> I prefer Turkish men, I find Turkish men kind- they show their attention and love for their women. It's okay, I had a good life with my husband, I do not want to put him down. But my boyfriend now, he is different, he comes and kisses me, keeps saying 'I love you' all the time. Our men do not do this, even if they are in love, they do not say 'I love you.'[133]

[133] From an interview with Marina, April, 2005. "Türk erkeklerini, sizin Türk erkekler bana kalırsa kadınlara çok daha çok vakit ayırıyorlar, daha nazik onlar ben bilmiyorum. Tamam ben kocamla çok iyi yaşadım, onu kötülemek istemem, ama nasıl bu başka, bu durup gelir seni öpsün, söylesin seni seviyorum, bizim erkekler bizde yok öyle, çok aşık olsun devamlı seni seviyorum desin. (Söylemezler mi) yok, (Nasıl

Not all of my informants romanticized their affairs with Turkish men. In these cases, having affairs or arranging a marriage was often described as a strategy to improve their well-being, or to deal with their illegal status in Turkey. The way they narrate their feelings and ideas about marriage with Turkish men could also be interpreted as a way to disguise the vulnerability of their positions in Turkey.

Silvia's daughter is married and lives in Siberia, and her son graduated from the faculty of law this year. She complained about her husband because he changed in her absence, and began to treat her badly when she is at home. She is no longer content with her life in Moldova. Like other informants who have older children, Silvia told me that she would like to marry a Turkish man because she wants to gain Turkish citizenship. Achieving citizenship in Turkey is mostly seen as the only way to gain legal rights and social status, and it is also necessary for achieving better positions of employment other than domestic ones.

> There is nothing in Moldova; I lost my interest in that place. In fact, I really do not know where my country is…I tell our women jokingly that they were not able to find somebody for me to marry. I tell them to find me a man and make me a citizen here. I will get married, and then have you stay with me as well…I want to stay here as a citizen. If I were a citizen, I would have a small flat and then have my children stay with me as well. There is nothing to do in Moldova.[134]

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davranıyorlar) iyi davranıyorlar ama kendi içinden gelmesi yok. Hani söylesinler seni seviyorum yok."

[134] From an interview with Silvia, April 2005. "Orada (Moldovya) hiçbir şey yok, ben şahsen o kadar soğudum bilmiyorum, aslında bilmiyorum neresi benim memleketim gibi…Bizim kadınlara söylüyorum şakadan bulmadınız bana bir amca, bulasaniz bir vatandaş yapasanız beni burada. Ben evlenirim. Sizi de yanıma alırım diyorum…Ben istiyorum ben burada olayım vatandaş gibi, olaydim vatandaş, ben çoktan bir yerde bir dairecik alırdım, çocuklarımı çekerdim buraya, orada yapacak bir şey yok."

Lara also wants to continue her life in Istanbul, because she likes the city life. Like Silvia, she also considers arranging marriage with a Turkish man as a way to deal with her illegal position:

> In the beginning, I was looking for a real marriage. But now, I fear it. Turkish men cannot be trusted. I understand it now. I want to have a marriage on paper. I want to have an identification card. I just want to have this. If I had an identification card, I could go everywhere as I wish, and I would not have to fear the police…I tell this to everybody, our women tell me 'Lara, what are you doing?' I do not want to be there (Moldova), I just want one thing: I am staying away from my children, and I want to see them. But I would like to be here in order to live my life. I love Istanbul.[135]

Throughout their journeys from their villages to Istanbul, Moldovan domestic workers reconstitute meanings of motherhood as they shift through and among multiple positions. Aguilar (2002), who studied Filipina domestic workers, has conceptualized these journeys as "secular pilgrimages." In other words, they are a kind of "ritual passage" which entails a reconstruction of selfhood. Each instance in this chapter illustrates that Moldovan women keenly engage in their "in-between" positions, and by attributing different meanings to their femininity they try to improve their emotional and material well-being. Furthermore, what it means to be a good or bad mother becomes a site of contestation among women; Moldovan women dismantle the patriarchal ideology of nuclear family which imposes the necessity of a mother's presence

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[135] From an interview with Lara, May 2005. "Gerçek evlilik istiyordum önceleri ama şimdi korkuyorum…Türk erkekleri hiç güven olmaz. Ben şimdi anladım. Formalite evlilik yaptırmak istiyorum, yani kimlik olsun ben rahat olayım, sadece bunu istiyorum, kimlik olsun ben rahat gezeyim, polislerden korkmayayım…Ben herkese de söylüyorum, bizim bayanlar ay Lara sen ne yapıyorsun diyorlar, istemiyorum ben orayı istemiyorum, sadece bir istediğim var: çocuklarımdan uzak duruyorum, onları görmek istiyorum, ama hayatı yaşamak için burada olmak isterim. Ben şehri Istanbul'u seviyorum."

at home by comparing and contrasting themselves with the mothering practices of other women they encounter.

My informants distance themselves from other mothers, such as friends, relatives and Turkish women, in order to redefine themselves as mothers affirmatively and thereby cope with stigmas of being away from home and their children. As scholars of migration have argued, the "act of reaffirming one's identity also becomes a reminder of one's liminal position" (Yeoh & Huang, 2005, p. 423). In a sense this "ritual journey" does not end until the person returns home with a mark of success; she adjusts to the crises at home or she deals with the norms of another culture. In the case of my informants, the mark of success in one's journey was mostly identified by the accomplishment of mothering practices, now differently defined. However, this does not necessarily signify the closure of the journey, either in a literal or a metaphorical sense. Even if they continuously bargain and struggle to maintain their ties with their children, and to regain the respect of their families, upon their return they often consider family life and home as a new space to fit in. In addition to the ongoing economic and political instabilities in Moldova, home itself becomes a space of struggle for Moldovan migrants. Therefore, for some of them, staying for a longer period of time or even starting a new life in Turkey have become desirable options.

CONCLUSION

Today, we are witnessing a new global division of labor between women from wealthy countries and those from poor countries, as women move across the borders for poorly paid and informal domestic jobs, not only to "developed countries" in the West, but also to "newly industrializing economies" in Asia and the Middle East. Globalization has produced alternative cross-border circuits in which the roles of migrant women have become significant. I choose to call these 'alternative circuits', because although they are directly linked to the core processes of economic globalization, these circuits are not represented or seen as connected to globalization, unlike other circuits such as the movement of new professional workers or international entrepreneurs. Increasing female unemployment in many developing countries forces women to migrate to economically more developed countries in order to earn income in an increasing number of growing economic fields, including care work, domestic work, trading and prostitution. The growing presence of women in cross-border flows has been conceptualized as a "counter-geography of globalization" and the "feminization of survival," (Sassen, 2000) because more and more households, communities and governments are becoming dependent upon the remittances of these women working abroad.

Together, the periodic journeys of Moldovan women to Istanbul to work as live-in domestic workers provide an example of the feminization of survival that has come about as the result of global economic restructuring in both countries. In this context, Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul constitute a

transnational community, which is characterized by both the constricting and enabling effects of economic and political crises in their newly independent country, primarily due to the collapse of Soviet Union. This economic and political crisis has manifested itself in many areas; down-sized female labor, the general poverty level of the population, lack of basic necessities, increases in unemployment and malnutrition, and the depreciation of education, public health, and social security are among its most stringent effects. These ongoing crises are directly reflected by Moldovan women's mobility and transnational lifestyles, as they shuttle back and forth between Moldova and Turkey in order to provide a living for their families.

In this thesis, I have aimed to understand the ways in which stories of the self as a woman--particularly a housekeeper and a mother--are told and practiced, as well as contested, throughout the journeys and encounters of Moldovan domestic workers in Istanbul. The designation of journey as a metaphor for the temporal and periodic mobilities of women has allowed me to capture the reconstruction of ideas, meanings and changing practices of Moldovan women on the move. Furthermore, it has enabled me to grasp the dynamic formation of feminine subjectivities as fragmented, inconsistent and continuous performances. I formulated my approach to the periodic voyages of Moldovan women as "secular pilgrim(s)" (Aguilar, 2002), as self-transformative journeys that take place in a "multi-layered" and "multi-sited" social field. In other words, they participate in a 'transnational social field' that embraces those who move and stay behind, a field that grants them multiple encounters and positions which they combine in simultaneous ways of being and belonging.

I have shown that Moldovan domestic workers' ongoing, transitory lifestyles between Moldova and Turkey create the possibility of building a transnational social field as a realm of relations and interactions that span across national borders. At the same time, these transnational ties can trap women, as mothers and live-in domestic workers, in this "in-between" position, and, therefore, cause tensions between their multiple affiliations, memories, and wishes. It presents a wider, complex and contradictory set of conditions that affect the reconstruction, negotiation and reproduction of women's subjectivities. This transnational field is a "site of differentiation," within which meanings of womanhood are redefined and contested through the encounters of women themselves.

In the first chapter, by analyzing the narratives of the "good old times"--Moldovan domestic workers' longing for Soviet times--I argued that Moldovan women's journeys and the loss they feel are two interrelated experiences, through which they attribute different meanings to their sense of womanhood. In their narratives, a sense of loss was related to the economic and political crises of Moldova, whereas the journey was viewed as a means of compensating for this loss. Therefore, I had to outline the over-all conditions in Moldova in order to discuss when, how and under what circumstances a journey to Istanbul for work as a domestic worker becomes both possible and necessary. By retelling stories of the "good old times," Moldovan domestic workers indicate their longings for home as a secure place, where they could also perform their previous gendered roles and duties as mothers, daughters,

and wives, as well as workers--roles which were embodied by Soviet ideals of womanhood. I argued that Moldovan women take these journeys and establish their networks across the borders of Turkey and Moldova in order to provide for the survival of their families, in the absence of state-ensured economic and social production and reproduction.

A Moldovan woman enters a "transnational social field" from the very first moment that she initiates personal connections with people in both home and host countries in order to plan her journey. This field embraces a set of relationships and interactions that has come into being through the daily talks of Moldovan women in the houses, market places, churches of their villages and the streets of Laleli, work agencies and the private households in Istanbul. In the first chapter, I focused on how women actively partake in these networks during different stages of their journeys. They employ these networks in several interrelated domains, for multiple purposes. These purposes include efforts to resist the stigmatization of being away from home, care work for those who stayed behind, and providing for survival and work arrangements in Istanbul itself.

Istanbul households are a layer of this transnational social field. They are a site that embraces the multiple encounters and relationships of different groups of women at home: Moldovan domestic workers, Turkish employers and local domestic workers. In my analysis, I followed Sara Ahmed's consideration (2000) of the encounters of subjects as constitutive of their identities, in order to illustrate the heterogeneous, continuous and contradictory nature of

Moldovan women's negotiations over their identities and the struggles over meaning attributions to housekeeping and womanhood.

By focusing on the encounters of Moldovan domestic workers and Turkish employers, I traced the newly emerging codes of antagonism in employee-employer relations, which indicate how new forms of inequalities and imbalances among the actors of domestic work are being negotiated in the processes of these encounters. Here, I examined how women narrate themselves as "proper" women and housekeepers by invoking different notions of femininity. The different strategies and meanings attached to womanhood reveal different forms of power and resistance. These forms of power and resistance not only define gendered positions and roles, they are also often in conjunction with their ages, nationalities and classes. Chapter two illustrated how these power antagonisms form the conditions of encounter between different parties, and, consequently, how women claim recognition and privileged status by struggling over the constitution of femininity.

I argued that womanhood should be seen as a symbolic site of practicing power and resistance. The contradictory and ambiguous ways in which Moldovan and Turkish employ different notions of femininity reveal two interrelated facets of this encounter. First, it enables us to understand that Moldovan women do not necessarily view their circumstances as oppressive; rather, they forge multiple and complex positions to deal with potentially oppressing conditions of their work and displacement. How a Moldovan woman defines herself through multiple and shifting self-representations--as an 'educated', 'sophisticated' and

‘professional’ domestic worker, a friend of her employer, a foreign woman, a more sexually attractive woman or as a better homemaker and ‘sacrificing’ mother--differed according to the conditions of their encounters with Turkish women. Consequently, it is impossible to predict or enforce a closure on the fragmented, uneven, and struggling formation of female subjectivities in this social field.

The mobility of Moldovan women challenges traditional and historical understandings of mothering, which typically assume the physical presence of a mother at home. In many cases, their responsibilities as mothers were viewed as the main or the only motive for taking these journeys and reorganizing their worlds. Through the journeys of Moldovan women and their encounters with the others, the meanings and practices of motherhood become subject to the reformation and negotiation. My presentation has specifically characterized how the processes of migrancy affect Moldovan domestic workers and demand the reconstitution of their femininities. Moreover, it has emphasized the even more inconsistent and fragmented formation and reconstitution of feminine subjectivities through resistance.

In line with this perspective, the final argued that contesting meanings of motherhood and changing mothering practices epitomize Moldovan women’s simultaneous ways of being and belonging in this transnational social field. Their positions and duties as mothers are significant means of confining their lives within the domestic sphere. In this context, I argued that the accomplishment of mothering is decisive for the future plans of Moldovan

migrant women. Moreover, the degree to which they are able to mother from afar also determines their feelings about returning home to Moldova. While mothers with small children struggle to fit in and rework their relationships at home upon their return, mothers with older children, who feel accomplished in the role of mothering, often postpone their return journeys, or prefer to linger in Istanbul for longer periods of time. This difference shows that the successful completion of a journey--in other words, compensation for the loss of presence and securing a future for their families--does not necessarily imply a return to home. Instead of returning home and sharing their lives with their husbands in Moldova, they intentionally prefer to remain in this transnational social field, within which they construct a new sense of their femininity.

The experiences and journeys of Moldovan domestic workers result in a new sense of femininity born out of emerging inequalities in international capital accumulation and reproduced by dependence on the international division of labor in a globalizing world. This study emphasizes how each informant experiences and practices womanhood throughout the journey, not only in terms of the structural conditions of migration but, also through subjective processes involving their encounters with the other, everyday experiences, and notions of the past and the future that arise from transnational ties in this social field.

APPENDIX I

Moldovan Employees:

1- Anna is 47 years old, doing elderly care in Teşvikiye. She has been working in Istanbul since 2001. She is a high school graduate. She used to work in a kindergarten in Moldova. She is married, and has two sons. Her husband and sons are unemployed, and living in Moldova.

2- Liza is 52 years old, doing child care in Mecidiyeköy. She has been working in Istanbul since 2001. She has a secondary school diploma. She used to work in a kindergarten in Moldova She is married and has four children. She works to provide the living of her unemployed husband and university student son.

3- Elena is 40 years old, doing elderly care in Teşvikiye. She has been working in Istanbul since 2001. She is married and the mother of two children. She provides the living of the whole family. She has a secondary school diploma.

4- Silvia is 55 years old, doing elderly care in Taksim. She first came to Istanbul in 2000. She studied food technology at university. She used to work as a food technician in the restaurants in Moldova and Siberia. She has two children; her daughter is married and lives in Siberia, while her son lives with his father, who works as security guard.

5- Tatiana is 45 years old, doing elderly care in Arnavutköy. She first came to Istanbul in 1995, and worked in Laleli for a year. She is a high school graduate and used to work as director of a grape farmhouse. She is divorced, and has two sons. Her work in Istanbul has helped them to start their business in Moldova.

6- Marina is 39 years old, doing elderly care in Suadiye. She came to Istanbul a year ago. She is a high school graduate and used to work in a textile factory. Her husband is dead. She provides a living for her three daughters in Moldova.

7- Larisa is 42 years old, doing child care in Levent. She has been working in Istanbul since 1997. She is a high school graduate. She used to work in a textile company. She is married and has two children. Her husband is unemployed. She provides a living for her children and husband.

8- Lara is 44 years old, doing elderly care in Acıbadem. She has been working in Istanbul since 2000. She studied textile engineering at university. She used to work as a manager in a textile factory. She is divorced and has two children. She provides a living for her son and helps her daughter's family in Moldova.

9- Maria is 51 years old, doing elderly care in Pendik. She first came to Turkey in 2000. She is from Comrat, and studied biology at university. She was a nurse and worked as a laboratory assistant in Moldova. Her husband is dead. She has a daughter and several grandchildren.

10- Natalia is 54 years old, doing elderly care in Suadiye. She first came to Turkey in 1999. She is from Comrat and is a high school graduate. She used to work in a post office as a director. She is married and has a daughter and grandchildren. Her husband is unemployed.

11- Svetlana is 47 years old, doing domestic work in Taksim. She first came to Turkey in 2002. She is from Vulcaneşti, and is a high school graduate. She is divorced and has a 9 year-old son in Moldova. She used to work in the post office as a telegrapher.

APPENDIX II

Turkish Employers:

1- Ayşe is 52 years old. She is single and lives with her mother. Her mother is an Alzheimer's patient and needs intensive care. She is an instructor at a university; she needs someone to take care of her mother while she is at work.

2- Zeynep is 46 years old, the executive manager of a company in stock market. She is divorced and has two children.

3- Derya is 66 years old. She had a career in interior architecture, but is not working currently. She is married and has a son. Her husband runs a company. They live in a villa, and need a helper for domestic work.

4- Nergis is 37 years old, an architect. She is divorced and the mother of an 11 year old boy. She needs live-in domestic workers for domestic help and the care of her son, because she spends most of the time outside, at work.

5- Aliye is 34 years old. She is an instructor at a university, and single. She lives with her parents; she employs Moldovan domestic workers to care for her parents.

6- Selma is 58 years old, a high school graduate, and a retired secretary from private sector. She is single. She employs Moldovan domestic workers to care for her mother.

7- Zerrin is 42 years old, and a medical doctor. She is married and has two children. Her husband is a mechanical engineer.

8- Figen is 36 years old; currently she is not working. She studied English Literature at university. She used to work as an executive manager. She is a mother of one. Her husband is an industrial engineer, who now works as a business consultant.

9- Yasemin is 46 years old. She studied management at university and used to work in the marketing sector. She is married and has a child. Her husband runs an import/export company.

10- Suzan is 43 years old. She studied economics and works in a company as a stockbroker. She is divorced and has a child.

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