

INTIMACY OF LONGING



Intimacy of Longing

For all the brave women

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Globally, the topic of female migration has been underrepresented for decades in the research about migration. Also the Turkish female migration has been overlooked. The assumption that the exodus of male workers constitutes and fully describes the Gastarbeiter (guest worker) phenomenon in Germany has resulted in a significant disregard of the women's history on this topic. The perception of women as individuals directed mainly by the social roles of bride, wife, and mother has resulted in researchers overlooking their personal decisions, desires, and goals. Public opinion focuses on women as victims of the patriarchal system. This approach is exacerbated by the temerity of women in sharing their stories.

To see the bigger picture of the story of Gastarbeiter women, we combined three major narratives: the personal one brought, in biographical interviews emphasizing women's personal experience; the popular one delivered by songs; and recent anthropological research.

The "Intimacy of Longing" project owes the most to the individual women and their children who agreed to tell their stories. Real meetings and long conversations—both face-to-face and via Zoom—provided us with a unique opportunity to glimpse the emotional lives of women who migrated to Germany between 1961 and 1991. Most of the women met with us in their homes in Germany this July 2021. Some of them spoke to us from their summer houses in Turkey or their family villages or towns in Anatolia. Their personal stories are the most crucial elements of the

The intimate questions about love, strength, struggles, joys, disappointments, longing, and music helped us catch something genuine. The micro-histories of the women have strengthened our understanding of macrohistory.

The role of cultural products such as popular music, one of the tools for building the narration in "Intimacy of Longing," can not be underestimated. Popular songs and movies that present the topic of Gastarbeiter culture, created both in Turkey and Germany, supported the vision of women as subjective and passive individuals sent by their families to accompany their husbands. Ironically, the only "active" role of women eagerly exploited in popular music was their performance as victims subjected to the misery of being lonely, forgotten, or abandoned (which applies equally to those who stayed in Turkey as to those who immigrated). Popular music highlights some particular, agreed-upon elements but obscures those perceived as uncomfortable or harmful for the established cultural order. Asking our questions and listening carefully to the answers, we learned that music was an essential element in the everyday life of migrant women. More than that, we began to understand how they managed to use music as a tool for survival.

"Intimacy of Longing" is an attempt to tell the story of the migration of people from Turkey to Germany from the perspective of women. We looked at the emotional life of women from Turkey who tried to gain legitimate identities for themselves in a new reality. The project shows only a tiny fragment of the history and explores only a few aspects of the communal experience. Not everything related to the Gastarbeiter issue is mentioned here. The story's frame originates from intimate conversations, where not everything can or should be told immediately.

1.

On October 30, 1961, Germany and Turkey signed a mutual agreement on labor export. The work deal was to change the lives of many generations. How do we visualize the profile of a Gastarbeiter? Let's take a look at the numbers.

„Given the high numbers of migration flows from Turkey to industrially developed countries of north and western Europe starting from the 1960s, migrant women from Turkey form a significant part of this female migrant population in the EU”, Ezgi Güler, 2021

The proportion of women as foreign employees in West Germany was 23% in 1965 and nearly 30% by 1973. As Lea Nocera claims: "Between 1961 and 1973, the period when immigration was in force in West Germany, over 138,000 women set off for German cities and the main industrial hubs". Every third Turkish migrant who left for Germany to work after 1961 was a woman. The demand for men's labor was much higher in Western European countries, and therefore men were the majority of the people who applied and immigrated to Germany.

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Labor migration was designed according to a gender-specific labor demand. Industries such as mining, metallurgy, construction, civil engineering, the growing sector of car factories, electric and metal plants required strong hands of male workers. But on the other hand, textile, teleconnection factories, the hotel industry, and hospitals were hiring women for precise and manual work.

Following the recession in industrialization, the demand for female workers increased greatly from 1966 to 1967. German employees had a specific demand for female workers and they requested, in most cases, for single women, or those who had no children. Therefore, the women who left Turkey in the early years of the workforce agreement were usually single and young, from the rural areas of Turkey but also bigger towns and metropolises. It is important to note that many of them came from large Turkish cities like Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Adana. They were educated (with a high school or university education) and came from various social strata, both from the working-class and the bourgeoisie. In other words, female migration was extremely heterogeneous.

„Of the women who left Turkey for work, 37.3% were single, 44.8% were married, and an equal percentage—9% were widowed or divorced. In contrast to widely held beliefs, and in particular, during the early years of the phenomenon, women often did not set off for Germany to join their husbands. In many cases, the women were the pioneers of family migration and were only subsequently joined by their families.”, Lea Nocera, 2015

In the first years of recruitment to Germany, women came alone and freed themselves from their families' supervision and control. Very often, they lived in dormitories with other women, working extremely hard every day but having at the same time more space for self-recognition and discovery of a new reality, new people, and their culture. The story of the mother of İpek İpekçioğlu is a powerful illustration of the heterogenic migration of Turkish women in the 1960s:

“My mother came in the early '60s. (...) she came on her own and started to work as an office manager and was selling insurance. She planned to go and stay; she didn't intend to come back to Turkey. She was not married, and she came with two kids. Later, here in Germany, she married five times, twice with the same guy, primarily Turkish men, once to a German.”

İpek, 2nd generation

The situation changed in 1974 when the official legal migration deal stopped bringing an increased number of women migrants coming as a part of a family reunification program. This particular wave of Turkish female migration was a game-changer. The number of women from rural areas of Turkey who emigrated to Germany was on the rise. Many of them joined their husbands and landed in the same family-structured reality they knew from their villages.

The differences between those who came independently and those who came with husbands were highlighted by Gülüzar, who told us about her arrival in Germany in 1973. Her sister Perihan was the first to go to Munich to work as a single woman. Gülüzar joined her husband, who had lived and worked in Germany since 1971, when she was pregnant with her first son.

“My sister came before me; I came nine months later. She stayed in Heim (dormitory), so she made good friends. She went in new, different directions. So let me say she made a better choice. I went to a house with other members of my husband's family - with two of his brothers and their families. It was a house with three families in one flat, with very low privacy. I felt like I moved from the house in my village (in the Malatya region) to another house in the village; there was not much change.”

Gülüzar, 1st generation

Gülüzar and other women lived in households with parents-in-law, brothers, and other members of their spouses' families. „This phenomenon also affected the legal status of migrant women by limiting their entitlements, and also strengthen their dependency on their spouses. Therefore, the conditions these women confronted after their arrival in the host country made it difficult to enter the labor force.” Ezgi Güler, 2013.

The second wave of the female migration to Germany can be described as the foundation of a stereotype of Turkish migrant women as without work permits, illiterate, conservative, subjected to home violence, and separated from the outside world and its possibilities.

Most of the women from Turkey who emigrated to Germany experienced external and internal factors of segregation. The gender-segregated work market with minimal wages offered by the employees (much lower than provided for men) and the patriarchal system of the Turkish family kept them at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Still, only a few of them decided to give up and come back to Turkey after the expiration of their job contracts. Not many of them experienced genuine emancipation from the oppressive patriarchy (they were still defined in private spheres such as home and reproduction). Still, many learned about their power in ways that helped them to survive in a new reality.

2.

When we try to examine the reasons for the migration of men and women to foreign countries, the most common factor is economic. The goal seems to be obvious: to earn money, get out of poverty, unemployment, debts, make a better present and the future of themselves and their families back in the home country. The exact cause is fundamental also for the Turkish case. Looking from the states' point of view, "(...) The reason for Germany to ask for migrants was to satisfy its domestic demand for the extra labor force. and the reason for Turkey was to reach the development goals set by the government", Ezgi Güler, 2013. But within the economic reasoning of immigration of women, there are also more individual needs such as emancipation, personal growth, education, and freedom.

„The reason our girls and women go to Germany does not lie in the desire to earn money but in their wish to live in a state of 'freedom and equality.' compared to the men, the women from Turkey who work in Germany have a higher level of education, belong to the middle classes from the big cities, and decide to leave with the aim of escaping from family and social pressures and living in conditions of freedom and openness". Tercüman, 1964

This extract from a Turkish newspaper pairs with the testimony of Ipek Ipekcioglu about the background of her mother's decision to go to Germany:



"[My mother] wanted to study here. She came because she was fed up with the patriarchal rule in Turkey. She wanted to be free and she felt that women could not be free in Turkey."

Ipek, 2nd generation

The story also matches Aysel's, a woman interviewed by Lea Nocera, who left Istanbul for Germany in 1965 with a worker's contract at Telefunken in Berlin. She led a comfortable urban life in Istanbul but needed to quit her education soon after marrying a rich man in Turkey. She was encouraged to start a new life of Gastarbeiter to give her son a chance to study at Freie Universität.

But some women who arrived in Germany were guided by pure curiosity or a need for financial benefits "only for themselves." Turkish daily newspapers covering the stories of migrants' adventures described young Turkish women who decided to leave for Germany to get financial independence, buy a new car, and come back to get married to a decent Turkish man. The headline of the article in a newspaper from August 30, 1963, cited one such woman: „I will buy a limousine and get married..."

A sister of famous Turkish female singer Gönül Turgut, Sabahat, joined the recruitment and moved to Berlin to earn money and purchase a luxury car. In the interviews with women, the topic of the girls who came to become "rich" also appears:

"When we came back from work, we stayed in the rooms of the Heim, and we used to chat. There was one girl who had come to Germany because she wanted to buy a fur coat. Another woman wanted to buy a car, then return to Turkey and drive around to show off."

Aysel, 1st generation



3.

Telling the Gastarbeiter's story very often starts from their arrival to Germany. But for the Turkish migrants, both men and women, the history begins back in Turkey: first in their villages or hometowns and then in Istanbul, where the long application and selection process started. It was followed by the 50 hours long train journey to Germany. The preparation to departure was a year-long process with testing, medical exams, appointments, and visa applications procedures.

After saying farewell to their families, for most of the migrants the journey began in the Istanbul Liaison Office of the West German Employment Bureau (Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung). The officials designed the trip with details such as exact times of departure and arrival, the number of seats, allowed baggage, prohibited goods, and calories in travel provisions. The trains were highly overcrowded, dirty, without water, and late, creating anxiety among the travelers. From 1961 to 1973, around 866,000 Turkish workers came to West Germany and most of them came with the organized rail transport, experiencing harsh conditions during the journey. In 1970, the German Employment Bureau decided to transport new workers, especially female workers, by planes. By this time, many women who traveled to Germany with the trains had experienced harassment and lack of comfort, privacy, or even a place to sit during the more than a 50-hour journey to Munich Central Station.

The *Almanya Treni* was a vehicle taking Turkish migrants to their new life. For the workers and their families, it became a symbol of hope and new opportunities, but also separation or longing. The journey by train to Germany from Sirkeci Train station in Istanbul had a lasting impact. It became an individual and group experience strongly remembered and commented on both in personal stories and cultural products such as music. The journey was emotional and personal, changing the people involved and their families forever.

"I remember very well the day that my father left for Germany ... People came to say goodbye ... My mother and I were alone in Ankara ... [When my mother joined him a year later] I was dropped off at my grandmother's. It was the most painful day of my life ... In Turkey, everybody told us, "your mother and father are sweeping up money from the ground in Germany."

DOMiT Interview 8, 'Aygül'

The travel by train to Germany became a popular motif in Turkish music, highlighting the context of separation, fate, or longing and excitement about new life opportunities. Some songs romanticized the missing context, like "Almanya Treni" by Ferdi Tayfur. Others served as illustrations of the misery of the one who stayed. "Zalım gurbet treni seni elimden aldı" (The cruel expatriate train took you away from me) sang Gülcan Opel in "Gurbet Treni" (1973). The music was initially composed by Arif Sağ and served as a testimony to the longing and disappointment experienced by the lovers left behind. The piece was written in 1971, a decade after the first train with Turkish Gastarbeiter left Sirkeci Station in Istanbul. The lyrics show the bitter fact that many who left broke vows and abandoned the idea of coming back:

"Yıllar geçti aradan, haber bile salmadı/ Döndü gurbet treni, yârim neden gelmedi?/ Artık sabrım kalmadı/ Dön gel gurbet treni"

(Years have passed, no news from him/ The expat train came back, my love why didn't you come back too?/ I don't have any more patience/ Come back expat train)

Gülcan Opel "Gurbet Treni"

Since 1961, when the first train left Sirkeci, the Black Train (Kara Tren), German Train (Almanya Treni), or Istanbul Express entered the vocabulary of every Turkish family who experienced enormous transformation in their lives due to the migration to Germany.

They started their new lives in Munich and moved to industrial cities like Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg, Solingen, Bochum, Hamburg, Hanover, and Berlin. And even after so many decades, the mythology of the Black Train remains among Turkish families living in Western Europe. Nuray, who belongs to the 2nd generation of the late migration (her parents came from Trabzon in 1981), recalls how the symbol of the Kara Tren remains vivid in one of the favorite songs of her parents:

"We used to play Yavuz Bingöl's "Kara Tren" for 20 - 30 times in my parents' house: "Black train is late, maybe it never comes" ... Since then it has always been in my ears".

Nuray A., 2nd generation

The culture of modern Turkish nomadism got imprinted in biographies of Turkish people. Individual and group observations or experiences became part of the mythology of exile. The impressions from the trip to Germany were mixed with stories about hard work waiting for all of them just after they arrived at the Munich Hauptbahnhof.

4.

All of the guest workers traveled to Germany to work. They expected hardships but also hoped to be paid enough to send at least half of the money back to Turkey. For women from Turkey who came as workers, the idea of work was understood as the freedom of making their own decisions. The right to decide for themselves was absent for most women from various social strata.

"The thing that helped me was work," says Gülüzar when asked about her emotions connected to longing, separation, and the oppressive power of her relatives. The situation she lived in—a small house shared with many members of her husband's family—improved when she could get out of the house and experience a different reality. "After starting work, one sees the change," she added.

The goal to work and earn money enabled them to endure pain and ignore tiredness and sicknesses for the sake of a better life in the future.

"My family see themselves as a family of workers. My grandma was saying: 'We have always been thinking about work. Let's not stand out! We came here to work.' All my relatives had the same concept. My grandma planned to work for years and earn money here and invest in Turkey.."

Aynur, 3rd generation

Female migration was not homogeneous and differences between classes were reflected in the biographies of the women we interviewed. It is impossible to align all the stories and draw out a picture of a female worker who immigrated from Turkey to Germany. The modern urban girls from good families in Istanbul, Adana, or Izmir did not feel a cultural connection with young women from rural Anatolia. They dressed, spoke, and behaved differently from each other. Finally, they listened to different music to comfort their longing. But the feeling of missing something or someone was similar for all of them.



5.

Missing family, homeland, friends are inevitable elements of the migrant experience. Gurbet—the word in Turkish used to express the missing of homeland—is one of the most significant patterns of Turkish culture. Even though the word gurbet existed before the mass migration of people from Turkey to the Western countries and referenced spiritual migration in Sufi culture, it gained a new meaning thanks to the experience of the guest-workers. Gurbetçi is a person who misses, who feels a sorrowful calling of from their homeland. The issue of gurbet is represented in Turkish pop culture, both in music and movies. In all our conversations with women about longing, the topic of gurbet was a natural element of the biographical stories. But its character is multidimensional and reflects personal attitudes and life experiences.

The first guest workers stuck together in dormitories and rented flats, where after work they spent time together listening to Turkish music. Soon the massive migration of people from Turkey to Germany since the early 1970s managed to establish new migrant communities in many German cities. Some neighborhoods turned into "Little Turkey," with groceries stores (bakkal), coffee houses (kahve), cultural associations (dernek), markets (pazar), mosques, travel agencies, and finally record labels (such as Türküola, Uzelli, Alparslan, Yüksel, and Minareci) and cassette stores. Those places helped deal with longing for family, friends, language, and communities left in Turkey. The concept of "sticking together" was a fundamental factor for social activities: common picnics, trips, visits to Turkish restaurants, bazaars, live music shows, weddings.

„For us, everything was Turkish around us: our music was Turkish, our friends were Turkish. We were going to a Turkish market to buy something from Turkey and everything was bringing us to memleket (homeland).”

Emine, 1st generation

6.

Turks living in Germany followed all the news from Turkey with great interest. Also, the freshest music recorded in studios of big Turkish labels in Istanbul and the success of the biggest stars reached the Turkish diaspora, matching with their hunger for emotional songs from the homeland.

"My father was very fond of Ferdi Tayfur. It is fascinating because he was born in a small village and until primary school, he stayed there. Most of Ferdi Tayfur's songs are about nature, mountains, flowers, insects, and sounds of nature where my father used to live. His favorite song was "Emmioğlu" by Ferdi Tayfur. But my mother comes from a very political family; she comes from a family with politically involved brothers. My uncle was a very active person in 1968. My grandmother and my mother lived in tough conditions, so political folk songs, folk songs with messages, were essential. Onur Akın's "Gaybana Geceler" was the one she loved the most and Ahmet Kaya's "Kum Gibi". For all of us, it was "Leylim Ley" by İbrahim Tatlıses, which we used to listen to a lot on the way to Turkey."

Nuray, 1st generation

For many men and women, music was a shield to survive the hardships of migration. Nuray, who emigrated to Turkey in 1979 at the age of 16 together with her mother-in-law, confessed that particular songs of famous Germany-based Turkish artists helped her to survive the enormous loneliness and forget her exhaustion:

"Yüksel Özkasap was my favorite. She had a song [Almanya'da Ölenler] which was saying: "Tell my mother, get it on her way, my funeral is coming." I used to listen to her and I was getting more sentimental. "I'm tired, guys, my friends, I'm tired. I climbed up and down this hill, begged," and when she said that no one was holding my hand, I would interpret it as my own, my own life story, so it fitted me."

Nuray, 1st generation

Yüksel Özkasap, mentioned by Nuray, is one of the most recognizable Gastarbeiter female singers whose artistic career seems to be a perfect example of a cultural product of Turkish migration to Germany. She arrived in Cologne in 1966 as an unmarried, young, educated woman from Malatya, whose guest-worker experience became the leitmotif of her musical path.

She started her career with a recording of the “Gülom / Dere Kenarından Geçtim” single for the Turkish label Sayan in 1966 in classic türkü (folk song) style, with saz accompaniment by Ali Ekber Çiçek. The songs helped Yüksel Özkasap gain recognition both in Turkey and Germany. “Gülom” song tells about universal feelings of longing and pain of separation. Soon Yüksel was to focus only on expressing the specific emotions of the people she wanted to represent, the Turkish migrants from Germany. She married Yılmaz Asöcal—the founder of the German-based Turkish music label Türküola—and became the “Nightingale of Cologne” and the voice of Gastarbeiter people. The sorrowful, heartbreaking songs of Yüksel Özkasap matched with the feelings of many Turkish migrants of the 1st generation, who arrived in Germany in the 1960s and ’70s.

The titles of the songs like “Gurbet Mektubu” (The Letter from the Exile), “Ben Yüksel Özkasap Almanya’da Neler Çektim Mehmedim” (I’m Yüksel Özkasap, What Have I Suffered in Germany, Mehmed), “Nasıl Oldu Yolum Düştü Köln’e” (How did I come to Cologne?), “Almanya’da Ölenler” (People Who Died in Germany) became very popular among Turkish migrants, helping them to channel their emotions related to migration, exploitation or loneliness.

The singer’s impact decreased together with new waves of the migrants, who were more emotionally and psychologically prepared for the hardships of gurbet. Songs like “Ben Bilirim Almanya’nın Derdini” (I Know the Troubles of Germany) or “Almanyada Şunlarda Var” (What There Is in Germany) by Aynur Altan reflected awareness of the reality

The phenomenon of Yüksel Özkasap lost its power for the next generations. The emotions from her sorrowful songs were not relevant anymore. The 2nd and 3rd generations of Turkish migrants were experiencing new emotions related to discrimination, identity crisis, or cultural confusion. Artists like Yüksel Özkasap, Asuman Çevikkalp, Mührican Bahar, or Metin Türköz, who focused on describing the 1st generation’s experience, didn’t answer their questions anymore.

The choice of songs to heal their gurbetçi soul corresponded with regional belonging, a social class, and political beliefs.

“I loved Selda, both in Turkey and here. Mahzuni Şerif, Ali Akber Çiçek, Cemile Cevher Çiçek. I used to love ‘İnce İnce Bir Kar Yağar’ from Selda. At those times ‘Yuh Yuh’ was a big thing for us in our bachelor times. I love many songs and türkü of Selda. While listening to “Yuh Yuh”, one would feel more courage, it was showing us how to be honest and how to resist.”

Gülüzar, 1st generation

Turkish musicians and singers like Selda Bağcan, İbrahim Tatlıses, Ferdi Tayfur, Müslüm Gürses, Orhan Gencebay, and Hakkı Bulut were recognized by Turkish migrants to the same extent as by their compatriots in Turkey. For many people, folk music was the most emotional—especially İbrahim Tatlıses, whose uzun matched with the feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

"I used to listen to Nuri Sesigüzel and İbrahim Tatlıses.
He is one of us".

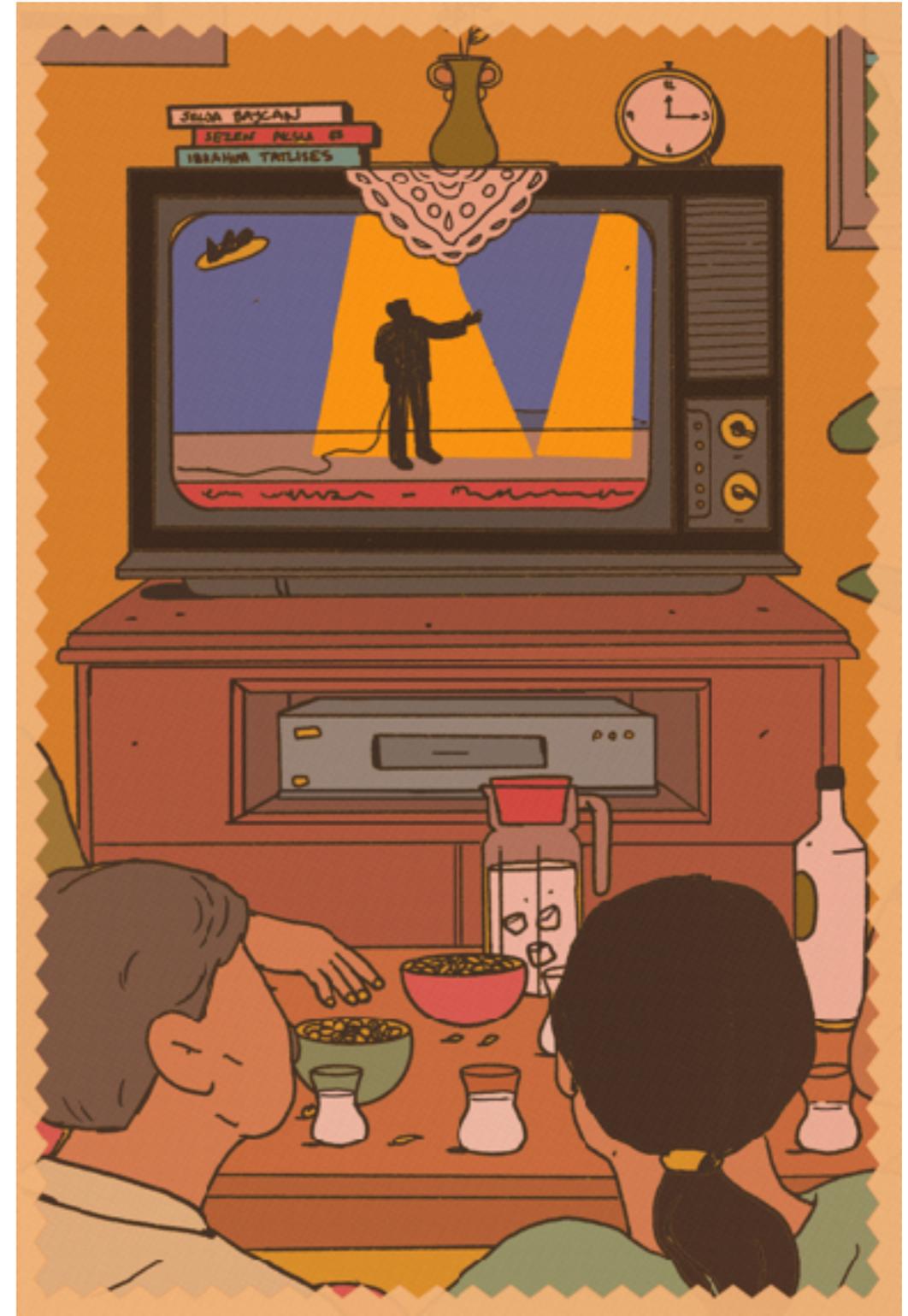
Hatice, 1st generation)

Nurhan recalls that her mother, who immigrated in 1971 after the earthquake in Kütahya, listened to Orhan Gencebay, whose songs relieved her. A new cassette or a record from Orhan was the best Mother's Day present.

"We couldn't go to Turkey, but if there was a concert here, we wouldn't miss it. There were also movies, video cassettes. We watched them all the time. There was this one song about separation, "Ben de Özledim." After watching the tapes of Ferdi Tayfur, we would start to cry."

(Emine, 1st generation

It was also similar for Behiye, who arrived in Germany from Gaziantep in 1971 as a young bride surrounded by new people



"I loved music at that time, especially Orhan Gencebay and his song "Kaderimin Oyunu" affected me a lot. I felt a longing and I didn't know the people around me. I got engaged with my husband, but we didn't meet earlier, so it was like I was going away with two strangers [a husband and a brother-in-law]. That song had a great impact on me and I still live those moments every time I hear that song."

Behiye, 1st generation

Their concerts in German cities would sell out and video recordings of their performances were immediately distributed and sold in Turkish cassette shops and bazaars.

"We used to go to the orient bazaar. The first generation would go there for concerts of Turkish music, belly dancing, rakı. My mother used to take us there. We would visit Hatay Engin, who was a transgender singer, there in the bazaar."

Ipek, 2nd generation

Turkish migrants observed turbulent times of Turkey marked with political wars between left and right, numerous military coups, and coup attempts (1960, 1962, 1971, and 1980) from a safer position in Germany.

Popular music reflected the political and social divisions and echoed in Turkish neighborhoods in German cities. The demarcation lines between Arabesk, Art Music, Folk, Anatolian Rock, and Westernized pop were also visible in the musical choices of Turkish expats.

"Arabesk was a big thing back in the '70s, but it was forbidden to listen to it in our house. With some exceptions, pop music was not allowed."

Ipek, 2nd generation

In İpekçioğlu's family house of her single and progressive mother, it was forbidden to watch arabesk movies. Still, since her mother was an insurance seller and often took the kids to her clients' houses and they could watch those movies there. "We watched all the Ferdi Tayfur's movies there," remembers İpek.

The 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations of women born in Germany in the '70s and '80s, like İpek and Aynur, who we spoke to, experienced different issues connected to the migrant identity. They were growing up in a new context of Turkish migration to Western countries and faced not only dominant hardships of migration but also benefits of it. The women from Turkey of those generations started to ask questions about their identity and found different answers independent from the judgments and conclusions of their parents and grandparents.

"My grandmother used to say that we are different. They [Germans] are different from us. But she still didn't want me to stay behind. My grandma had the Gastarbeiter mentality. I can say that I broke that logic."

Aynur, 3rd generation

Factors like the language barrier and isolation, social relationships with only Turkish neighbors, friends, colleagues, and dependence on family and relatives were not relevant any longer for the people from Turkey, especially the women, born in Germany. It is essential to add that adaptation and integration to German society with a parallel appreciation of their roots were more successfully achieved by the 2nd and 3rd generation women than men of Turkish descent. They were trying to establish a conscious dual cultural Turkish-German identity.

"The 1st generation came here and wanted to live here for a couple of years and go back. They stayed. The second generation grew up feeling that we might go back soon, so we should not get attached too much. I was in classes with the other second-generation kids. They were always saying, "Oh, don't be too German, don't eat any pork, this is haram!" My mom was very progressive, but we lived in proletarian and religious neighborhoods like Wedding in Berlin. Some people of the 3rd and 4th generations still have a cultural issue.

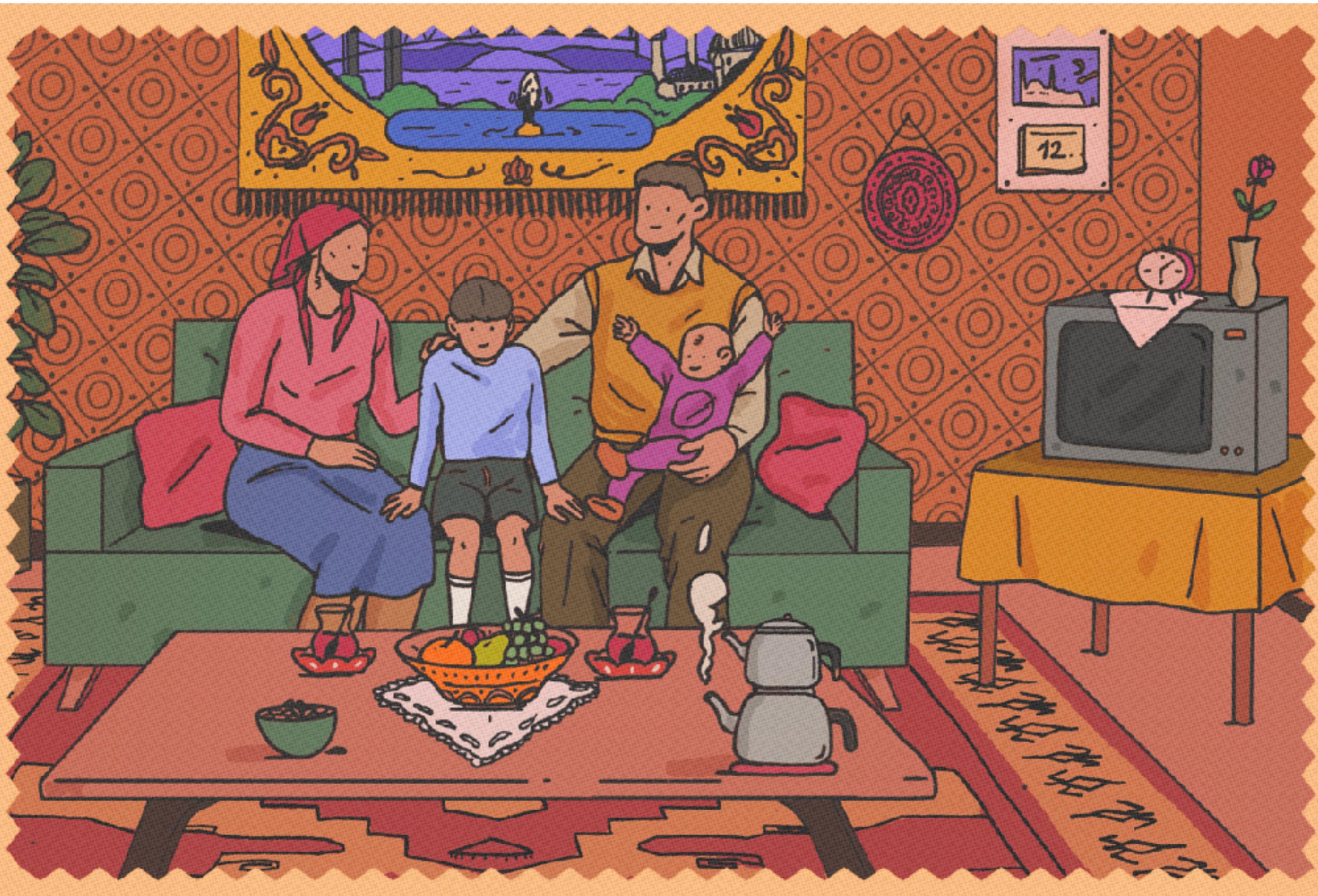
"We are Turks," they say. Why don't we say, "We are Turkish-German." However, they are more self-confident and they raise their voices against their parents. They definitely want to stay here."

İpek, 2nd generation

Their mothers and grandmothers looked back at Turkey, building their relationship with the country through longing. But for the next generations of migrant women like İpek and Aynur, Turkey was a place to look at and take inspiration. They followed new Turkish music and new role models, consciously absorbing vintage music with

"I was listening to Sezen Aksu, especially "Gitme Dur Ne Olursun" or "Firuze," and at the same time lots of Turkish psychedelic music from the '70s like Neşe Karaböcek, Gülden Karaböcek and Turkish tangos. During the 90s, Sezen Aksu was accompanying our first loves, in our teenage nonsense, and in more critical stuff like issues about violence against women. The same with the music of Esmeray with her song "13,5" telling about racism in Turkey. This song was a big revelation for us - Turkish people living in Germany, a white country."

İpek, 2nd generation



7.

For the migrants who came to Germany at the early stage, in the '60s and beginning of the '70s, the only way to communicate with families left behind was to exchange letters. In the case of illiteracy, which was common especially among women who arrived from rural areas of Turkey, they received help from a close family member or a Turkish neighbor.

"I didn't like Germany at all for the first three months. I always had a headache because I came from a small town. It was very crowded here. I didn't have a phone; I didn't read, I couldn't write a letter. I used to ask someone a week earlier: 'Would you write a letter for me?' Because they didn't send me to school, I didn't understand anything, like a child."

Nuray, 1st generation

Behiye remembers the loneliness of her first years in Germany. Back in 1971, letters were the only way to communicate with the family left behind, and it took at least 15 days for letters to reach an address between Turkey and Germany.

"The place where I lived was near the forest. Back then, the postman used to go through the city in his yellow car. And I would stand at the window and wait. Of course, he would go to the houses near the mountains first, but I couldn't move from the window. I'd wait until he stopped at our door."

Behiye, 1st generation

Letters sent between Germany and Turkey also became a popular theme of songs in Turkish music. Titles like "Gurbet Mektubu" (The Letter of Homesickness) and "Zeyneb'in Mektubu" (The Letter of Zeynep) were recorded by various female artists both in Turkey and in Germany such as Yıldız Tezcan, Yüksel Özkasap, Asuman Çevikkalp. The songs served as public letters full of laments and sorrow at leaving the precious world behind. Keeping in touch with families, parents, siblings, and friends who stayed in Turkey was a ritual.

Technological inventions were also a big help. According to Michelle Lynn Kahn, some workers developed another communication strategy—they were sending audio recordings of their voices by cassette players. Also, making phone calls to catch up with the life in the hometown is remembered by one of our interviewees, Nurhan:

“Every morning before going to school, we used to call my grandparents in Turkey. I remember it very well. There were numbers 30 and 80. I have always felt connected to Turkey, so when I retire, I would like to go there.”

Nurhan, 2nd generation

For those who decided to stay and those who emigrated at the end, the need to be close to Turkey was strong and was fulfilled by the annual summer trip to the village, hometown, and popular summer holiday places on the Turkish seaside. The unique mixture of longing and pragmatism helped to establish another order in the life of Turkish migrants from Germany: leaving or sending children to Turkey.

8.

From an emotional point of view, the decision to go to another country, initially only for a maximum of 2 years, brought traumatic experiences of separation. For many men and women from Turkey, immigration to Germany meant leaving their children behind with their families back in Turkey. At the beginning of the Gastarbeiter movement, only one nuclear family member, man or woman, emigrated. Children grew up without a mother or a father, looking forward to being reunited upon returning. In reality, the initial plan of parent's returning to Turkey was postponed, quite often never fulfilled or transformed into reunification in Germany.

In popular culture, it was usually the woman who was victimized and presented as the one who was forgotten or betrayed. In reality, many women also left their children in Turkey and decided not to come back to their husbands after all. One of the significant illustrations of the phenomena was a story of a woman called Zeynep, who became a character of Ali Ercan's song "Zeynebim Almanya'nın Yolunu Tuttu" (My Zeynep Went to Germany) from 1972.

The song tells the story of Zeynep, who left her husband Mehmed and the children (two-year-old Ayşe, four-year-old Fadime, and six-month-old Ahmet) to go to Germany to work. The song became a warning for men and women about the destructive effects of the migration of women to Germany. Stigmatized Zeynep became a profile of a black female

character. Interestingly, decades after the release of "Zeynebim Almanya'nın Yolunu Tuttu," in one of the Youtube uploads of the songs a user wrote that the story of Zeynep is based on the life of a real Zeynep from Izmir. She was supposed to travel to Germany in 1968, leaving all the family and children behind after being abused and mistreated by her husband for years. Two of the children were taken to an orphanage and the neighbor adopted the youngest. The news about the Zeynep spread all around Turkey and became a headline of many local and national newspapers. However, public opinion and popular culture exploited only part of the history of Zeynep, portraying her as the one who committed the unforgivable crime against her family. But the case of Zeynep, even if highly radical, depicts a common heartbreaking experience of many women who moved to Germany to work. The story of Hatice, who came to Germany in the late '60s, leaving her children behind with her own family, is remembered as a painful passage of her life:

"Let me never open my longing; the longing is very difficult. I was very fond of my children. I was in the hospital here for a few months, because of sadness, I was thinking about my children all the time. My one day felt like a year. But I had to work with tears in my eyes."

Hatice, 1st generation

Also, children brought to Germany or born there were sent to Turkey due to the impossibility of caring for them. Physically demanding and time-consuming work in factories or hospitals made parenting very difficult. Maternity leave for guest worker women was only six weeks. Very soon after giving birth, women were forced to send their newborn babies to Turkey. Ercan, who spoke to us and introduced us to her mother, Emine, was also sent to Turkey at age 6, where he stayed for 11

"I call it "Second Gurbet." You are in gurbet (missing your home country), then you send your children to Turkey, and you experience a second gurbet with your children."

Ercan, 2nd generation

Turkish families' orientation toward returning created social practices of sending children to Turkey to go to Turkish school, learning their mother tongue, creating a stronger bond with Turkish culture, and preventing their children from *gavurlaşma* (becoming non-muslim or non-Turkish). No doubt, it had a massive effect on children's future life plans, choices of education, occupation, and personal relationships.

"When I was at the boarding school, there were many German Turkish kids like me because their parents back in Germany couldn't take care of them. We were very connected through our loneliness, being forgotten by our parents."

İpek, 2nd generation

Many children of Turkish immigrants in Germany had to leave relatives and friends behind several times. Some of them traveled back and forth, spending periods of their lives both in their parents' home towns and Germany. They would come with their families to go on holidays or to join family events such as birthdays and weddings.



9.

Gurbet and missing the home country were also managed with annual summer holidays trips to Turkey. *Heimaturlaub* was an essential component of guest workers' experiences. Guest workers had the same right to vacation as German workers; they spent from 1 month to 3 months in Turkey every year. The most popular way of transportation was a private family-owned car, which was packed to capacity with family

"Until 2005, every year we were having a summer break for six weeks in Trabzon. We had one week to clean the house, four weeks to host guests, then again one week to clean the house and come back. I remember that my grandfather and my grandmother used to go with us too and we used to fill the car from here and drive to Turkey. We even brought a washing machine from here in the car. „

Nuray A., 2nd generation

Every family who drove to Turkey for a summer break took the same road, Europastraße 5, 3,000 kilometers through Austria, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. A trip to Istanbul took a minimum of two days and two nights, and a journey to remote Anatolian villages took even longer. The annual ritual visit of Turks from Germany shaped a common perception of their wealth and prosperity in Turkey.

cars were yet not a common commodity in Turkey. At the same time, the Gastarbeiters drove their western cars, strengthening a stereotype of their easy and luxurious life among their compatriots from Turkey "Car ownership in Turkey was a privilege of the wealthy elite. Many villagers had never seen cars with their own eyes until a guest-worker arrived on his vacation." (Michelle Lynn Kahn, 2020)

A yellow Mercedes Benz, one of the most popular Gastarbeiter cars, became a symbol of the prosperity of Almançı. Guest workers' displays of wealth created tensions and anxieties between the migrants and people in their homeland.

"In my childhood, I was coming to Turkey once a year for holidays for 1.5 months. And also went 2 or 3 years to primary school at the age of 6, like many other Turkish kids from Germany. When I came to Turkey, I was not Turkish for other children; I was seen as a foreigner."

İpek, 2nd generation

10.

One consumer good became a symbol of Gastarbeiter people coming back "home" for the summer holidays: the car tape recorder. The car journey to Turkey and back to Germany could not happen without a car cassette player, which helped to endure the demands of a long trip.

"Gümüldür (Izmir) was a place where we were staying during our summers. Many German Turks were spending their holidays there. We were going by car. My mother was a driver, and we were always listening to music all the way in the car."

İpek, 2nd generation

They listened to every kind of music, but the most common genre on the road was Turkish folk music from the region their family originated. For Behiye, who came from Gaziantep, Nuri Sesigüzel's "Gurbet Oolu Gariplerin Yolu" song was remembered as a soundtrack on the road back to Turkey. A symbolic, temporary "return" to the homeland was often announced with loud music coming from the car's speakers. The car tape player owned by the Gastarbeiters attracted lots of attention from the villagers. Ercan remembers that his father, upon arrival to Turkey, got asked about his tape player many times. Even if the cassettes were already popular in Turkey, the car tape player was a serious novelty. Cassette tapes became the most recognizable element of the journey between Germany and Turkey. The personal import/export of cassettes was booming with every summer holiday season.

"We used to listen to lots of music on our long car trips, and we carried all the tapes in our bags. My uncle in Istanbul had a video and cassette shop, and when we went there every year, I could choose the tape I wanted. It was such a big thing; I would come back with tapes and show it to my friends when we were 13-14 years old"

Nuray A., 2nd generation

Three major Turkish music distributors—Türküola (in Cologne), Uzelli (in Frankfurt), and Minareci (in Munich)—delivered music to Turkish workers in Germany. However, for many people, Turkey was still the place to reach the latest releases.

"We took several cassettes to listen to on the road. There was a cassette from Selda: "Yuh Yuh." When we arrived (in Turkey), we noticed that Selda had a new cassette, "Ziller ve İpler." We bought it and opened it in the car. We listened to it only once. We immediately went back to "Yuh Yuh" again."

Ercan, 2nd generation

11.

The cassette industry started to boom in Western countries in the '70s and got swiftly noticed by the population of migrants in Germany. Music was significant for Gastarbeiter people from the beginning: for the first migrants who lived in dormitories. They gathered to listen to records or a fellow worker playing saz. At the very beginning, when cassette players were a rarity, the weekend meetings of Gastarbeiters at the train stations were spaces in which cassette players and cassettes exchanged hands. Soon tapes and the equipment to play them became more and more popular. Nuray, who came to Germany in 1979 as a 16-year-old freshly married girl, stayed at home alone for a long time. Each day after completing all the work expected from her in the house, she listened to

"I would work, I would finish the work from evening to morning, I would turn on the tape until my mother-in-law came. There was a neighbor girl downstairs; she would come and complain to my mother-in-law right away. There was a family from a village in Ankara, she said, 'Haji aunt, your electricity was on until the evening, your sister-in-law always listened to the music.' İbrahim Tatlıses had just appeared at that time with 'Ayağında Kundura' and I still love this song."

Nuray, 1st generation

Cassettes' durability and ease of copying helped to distribute and exchange music between households.

"There were 4-5 Turkish families around us and we used to exchange cassettes. When I heard about a new song, I would go and ask the neighbor, do you have a new Gökhan Güney? There was a family from Aksaray and they were crazy about Ferdi Tayfur. There was another family from Manisa who was crazy about Gökhan Güney, and I was crazy about İbrahim Tatlıses. I was saying: 'I can hear Gökhan Güney from your home. I would love to listen to it.' And she would say: 'I'll finish it and give it to you.'"

Nuray, 1st generation

A local music market of distribution and recording companies such as Türküola, Uzelli, and Minareci started their profitable activities as import/ export enterprises. They sold cassettes and records along with electronic toys, curtains, carpets, tea glasses, plastic flowers and porcelain, the latest electronic equipment, and meat mincer machines

In 1963, Yılmaz Asöcal, who came to Germany as a student and worked as a translator, founded the music company Türkofon (later renamed Türkiöla) in Cologne, which dominated the German market for decades. The Uzelli label was established a little bit later in 1971 by two brothers, Muammar and Yavuz Uzelli. The need for Turkish music in Germany was immense from the early years of migration, but a cassette tape was the most suitable medium to bring it to almost every Gastarbeiter home. There were also more Turkish music companies in Germany, like Melodi, Net Ses, Güra, Kopuz Aşkın, Kervan, Burak, Bayar, Ercan, and Meltem. Still, only three majors mattered in terms of nationwide distribution. Cassettes were sold in many corner shops, so access to

"My husband was going to Cologne to buy cassettes every 5-6 months. If you bought ten cassettes in Cologne, one was free. My husband couldn't read it either, but he guessed about the music from the cassette cover. The seller (*kasetçi*) already knew what cassettes I had already bought earlier. There were Uzelli and Türkiöla cassettes, there was Yüksel Özkasap, Bedia Akartürk, Orhan Gencebay. There was Esengül and old folk music. These were always good cassettes and my husband was always buying them"

Nuray, 1st generation

The essential labels reached their clientele via regular advertisements in Turkish newspapers like "Hürriyet" or "Sabah." The distributors used to announce a list of new cassettes available in Germany regularly. Besides, the deliveries of new cassettes to the import/export shops were very frequent, even twice a week.

12.

Another entertainment business very much related to music fed the longing of Turkish migrants in Germany and created a connection with the homeland. In Western Europe, in the 1970s, video cassettes began to be used at homes, creating a home video industry. The Turkish migrants warmly welcomed VHS cassettes and video players on the German market. According to Martin Greve, in 1982 there was a video recorder in every third Turkish house in Germany, while only every twelfth German house had one. This disproportion in numbers reflects a colossal need for Turkish content among the migrant community in Germany. The lack of desirable Turkish programs in television and radio resulted in a boom in the Turkish VHS tape industry. Turkish movies were imported from Turkey and widely distributed. Renting businesses flourished and connected people from Turkey with the popular culture of their homeland like never before.

“My mother was looking for Orhan Gencebay, Ferdi Tayfur movies, but my dad agreed with what we chose. It cost ten marks to rent three video cassettes in a Turkish video shop. My mother was choosing one Arabesk movie, one - Cüneyt Arkın and one - comedy with Kemal Sunal or İlyas Salman”

Ercan, 2nd generation

The selection of the movies always consisted of a recorded concert of favourite Turkish superstars like İbrahim Tatlıses, Ferdi Tayfur, Ajda Pekkan, Zeki Müren, Orhan Gencebay, or the New Year's special program (Yılbaşı Eğlence Programı) with performances of many stars from Türkü, Arabesk, Türk Sanat Müziği and modern pop music. Some concerts were performed and recorded in Germany, like “Almanya Süper Halk Konseri” by İbrahim Tatlıses. The Arabesk and Yesilcam feature movies, which very often presented the migration of people from Turkey to Germany, depicted the misfortunes and hardships of Gastarbeiters. Those movies exploited the romanticized longing and suffering of separation and simultaneously utilized political, economic, and social tensions. Also, the ambitious cinema of Yücel Çakmaklı, Halit Refiğ, and Yılmaz Güney available on VHS cassettes helped to construct the cultural

„There were Turkish movies we used to watch. It cost five marks to rent them. We exchanged with other neighborhoods. Those tapes had a rental duration of 3 days, so we watched seven movies in 3 days, 1.5 hours each. We watched everything. For example, we watched every movie of İbrahim Tatlıses. Gökhan Güney. My husband loved Cüneyt Arkın.“

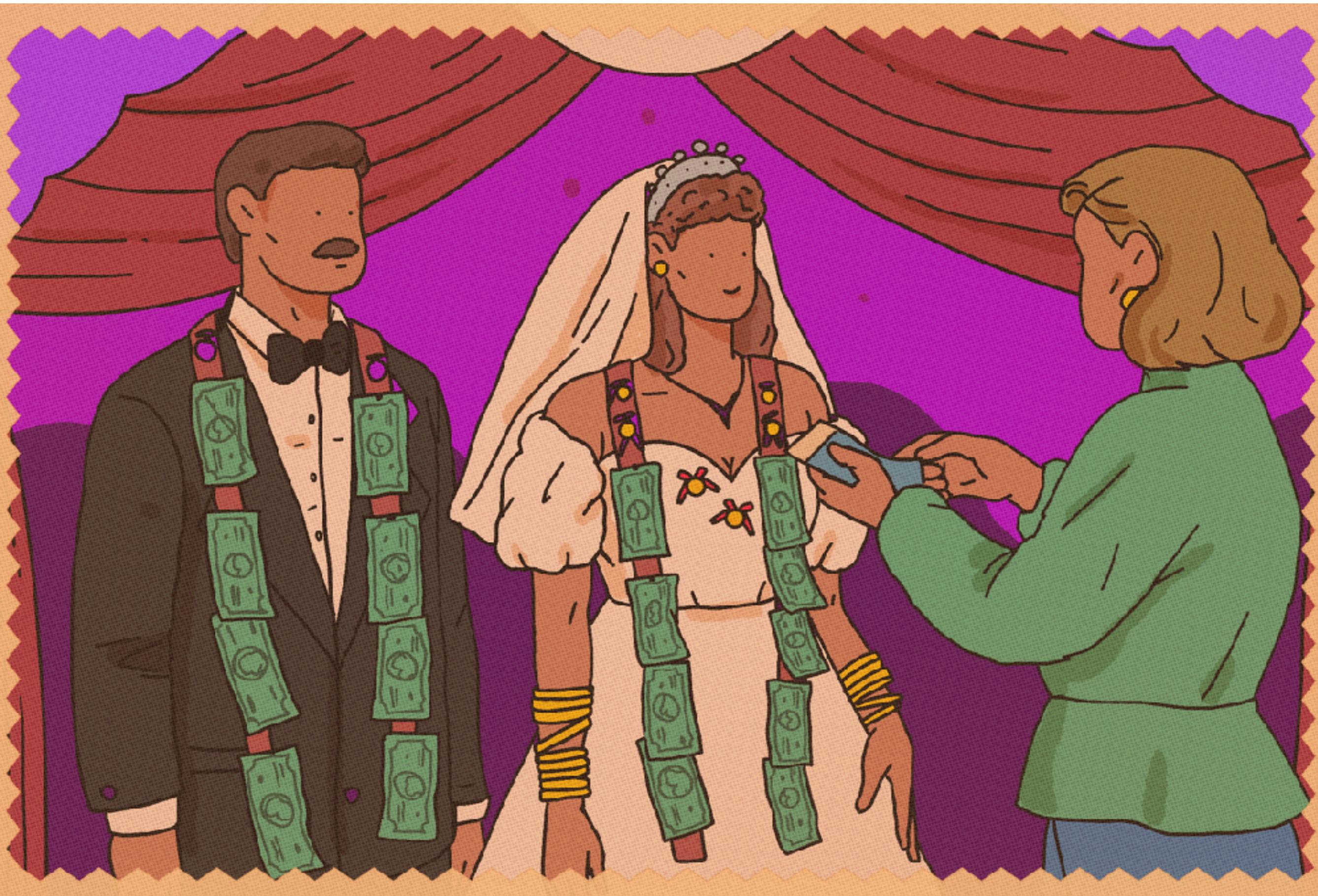
Nuray, 1st generation

VHS movies shaped the mentality, emotions, and sensitivity of Turkish guest workers. Films of internationally acclaimed Turkish directors with talented casts describing important social and political issues like feminism or gender violence broadened horizons and created a more reflective connection with modern Turkey.

"Müjde Ar movies were very interesting for us. My mother was always a feminist and leftist. The movies like "Yol" by Yilmaz Guney or movies with Türkan Şoray, were very critical and progressive. My mother knew Bulent Ersoy personally. We used to have lots of transgender people coming and visiting us in our environment. My mother used to throw lots of parties. Sex workers, transsexuals, LGBTQ+, Turkish, Kurdish writers, and artists were all visiting our house"

İpek, 2nd generation

The liberal houses of some families helped many of 2nd and 3rd generations of Turkish migrants to define themselves as the people of double cultural identity, open-minded and welcoming the "otherness" of themselves and people around them.



13.

The prospect of coming back to Turkey one day became a leitmotif of the Gastarbeiter culture. It structured the lives of individual people and the community. The agreement between the two countries signed in 1961 was based on short-term contracts (a maximum two years). Suitcases ready to pack were a natural part of the home decor in Turkish houses. Guest workers were expected to leave.

Those who decided to return to their original homeland were driven by the unbearable gurbet, finished work opportunities, xenophobia, and racist attacks. Sometimes the reasons were connected to health problems, desired retirement in Turkey, or state policies. On November 28, 1983, the West German government passed the Law for the Promotion of Voluntary Return, granting "return premium" (10,500 D-Mark, plus an additional 1,500 D-Mark per child) to all Turkish immigrants who decided to leave Germany and emigrate to Turkey by a strict deadline of September 30, 1984. Only 15% of the Turkish immigrant population—250,000 men, women, and children—moved back to Turkey with their residence permits rendered invalid at the West German border.

The homecoming was very often flavored with bittersweet emotions. For the Gastarbeiter, time in Germany passed differently than for those who

stayed in Turkey. Temptations of a new reality, including meeting new friends and lovers, made it hard to keep up with wives or husbands and children. One of the most striking examples of the welcoming back song is Zehra Sabah's "Almanya Dönüşü" (Return from Germany). It starts with a whistle of the train coming from Germany to Turkey and tells the story of an unfaithful husband, Ahmed, who comes back home. Finally, his sins are forgiven and the family reunites.

In most cases, the orientation to return to Turkey was the plan of men, who tried to enforce their decisions on their whole families. In reunited families, women and their children were less eager to come back to Turkey. Despite the struggles and difficulties they experienced as migrants, they saw more opportunities for themselves and their children in Germany.

Gülüzar, who joined her husband in 1974, remembers that in the '80s, the husband decided to come back. The family packed all their life into suitcases. It didn't happen due to a family disagreement. She confessed how happy she was. "If it was for me, we would never intend to come back." The exact moment was remembered by her daughter Olcay:

"My mother said: 'You will stay here, you have to study, and you have to learn something to earn your own bread here. We are cleaning hotels, but you will do better.' The idea of finishing university was very important for my mom and her family. Every cousin of mine from my mother's side has a university degree."

Olcay, 2nd generation

Sometimes the plan of final return (*kesin dönüş*), succeeded and the families moved back to the places where they came from decades earlier. The return was difficult and consumed most of the money they had managed to collect during the years in Germany. Re-adaptation to Turkish reality took time and effort. But many Turkish families stayed, or as Fatih Akin says— "forgot to come back." Listening to the stories of the women, we understood that most of them wanted to stay and continue their lives in Germany, where they gained more freedom, independence, opportunities, personal networks, and new skills. If they decided to move back to Turkey when they retired, it was their personal choice. Some of them found an option to live partly in Germany and partly in Turkey, as was most convenient.

"Even I can't believe what I did when I tell you now," says Behiye, who has lived in Germany since 1971. She arrived in Germany as a young bride who suffered from loneliness and longing in the foreign country surrounded by strangers and stayed alone at her house for years. But she managed to learn German during long lonely days, trying to create a new space for herself as a person. Bahiye opened her own tailor shop against her husband's will in 1991 and on September 5, 2021, she celebrated 50 years of her life on her own in Germany.

"Intimacy of Longing" has many scenarios. Those of Aynur, Hatice, Nuray, İpek, Olcay, Gülüzar, Nurhan, Nuray A, Ercan, Emine, Melissa and Behiye are some of them. We were lucky to be there to listen.

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