

Remembering across the border:

Postsocialist nostalgia among Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

"Postsocialist nostalgia" among Turkish immigrant women from Bulgaria is not just strategic performance to negotiate the challenges that face working women in Turkey but is also cross-cultural analysis based on the migrants' experiences of distinct gender regimes on the two sides of the border. I explore why the competition between established residents and newcomers over scarce resources becomes, in this instance, the ground for negotiation over proper gender roles. I also suggest that the migrants' appeal to the communist legacy posits an alternative to either "normalizing" or "Orwellizing" communism and that it offers a more nuanced understanding of the norms and practices of gender and labor under communism, as experienced by this particular group of minority women. [*Turkish migrants from Bulgaria, postsocialist nostalgia, gender, honor, Turkey*]

In 1989, following the 1984–89 assimilation campaign in Bulgaria that targeted the country's Muslim minorities, Emine, along with over 300,000 others, emigrated to Turkey with her husband and two-year-old daughter. She took the first job she found, she told me with no uncertain pride, the very day after their arduous three-day journey across the Bulgarian–Turkish border. "With the dust of travel still on my feet," Emine said, she began to work as a cashier at a bakery. Each morning, an elderly woman whom Emine recognized from the neighborhood would purse her lips as Emine handed her her daily bread. Finally, one day, the customer blurted out, "Well, I congratulate your husband." "Why?" asked Emine, and she was told, "For letting you work among men." "I felt my head boil, when she said that," Emine said to me, her indignation over the encounter undiminished, indeed, presumably nourished, in the 12-year gap between the telling and the told. "I said to her, 'Look here, aunt, I have no problems with you. And I am earning my bread money here, OK? Don't ever say such things to me again.'" That was enough to keep her quiet, Emine recalled, but soon another neighbor, this time a middle-aged man, informed her, "The woman who is loyal to her husband stays at home, and prepares his meals three times a day." Emine told me how absurd such a statement sounded to someone who had just arrived from a country where everyone worked: "Only if you had something wrong with you did you not work in Bulgaria."

In narrating both encounters, Emine, who was granted Turkish citizenship along with other "political" migrants who arrived in Turkey in 1989, stressed the gendered aspects of the discrimination she faced in Turkey.¹ Meanwhile, Sedanur, a 45-year-old migrant who engages in circular migration along with an estimated 200,000 other labor migrants from Bulgaria as a result of that country's flailing economy since the fall of communism, said she resented, above all, the condescension shown by locals toward the kind of work she does: "Here [in Turkey] they treat me like an inferior human being because I do cleaning. In Bulgaria, under *komunizma*, we knew to respect our work, and to be respected for it, no matter what it might be." Indeed, whether they arrived with the 1989 migration and were granted citizenship or whether they are part of the post-1990s economic migration

and remain irregular,² virtually all the Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria I met over the course of three years of fieldwork in 2001–02 and 2007–08 emphasized the intertwined class- and gender-based marginalization they suffered upon their arrival in Turkey, the country that, ironically, figures as their “true” homeland within the Turkish national cosmology. Expressions of marginalization were almost invariably accompanied by reminiscences of the communist ethos, wherein labor was held to constitute a fundamental facet of one’s identity and dignity and gender equality reigned at the workplace and at home.

Such positive recollections of communism, often called “nostalgia” in scholarly and popular discourses, have baffled many, including the more liberal-minded observers of post-1989 developments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. If, as in Hannah Arendt’s (1973) view, the political system completely colonized the lifeworld under totalitarianism, how is it that the very victims of the system do not display pure joy at its demise? More specifically, how can Bulgaria’s Turkish minority remember with fondness the regime that subjected them to various degrees of discrimination, culminating in the assimilationist measures of 1984–89? Infamously called the “rebirth campaign,” the practices of repression directed against the Turkish minority at that time included bans on speaking Turkish in public, wearing what was considered traditional clothing and engaging in Muslim religious rituals, and the forced change of all Turkish names to Bulgarian ones (Amnesty International 1986; Helsinki Watch 1989).

The more simplistic explanations for the increasingly popular and popularized phenomenon called “postcommunist nostalgia” on the part of various postcommunist subjects posit a resistant, indeed, recalcitrant, communist legacy whose heirs lack the capacity to think beyond communism.³ A recent assessment of public perceptions of the contemporary situation in Bulgaria falls squarely within the communism-as-impervious-legacy line of analysis. The economist Georgy Ganev (2005) tries to account for what he calls the “experience gap,” that is, the gap between, on the one hand, the “positive objective experience” (such as higher GDPs; increased industrial output, sales, and productivity; jumps in foreign direct investment; decrease in corruption; etc.) in Bulgaria, and, on the other hand, the “negative changes in perceptions,” that is, the public perception that the situation in Bulgaria is deteriorating. According to Ganev, the gap occurs because, instead of what he calls the “valiant” market price theory of value, people in Bulgaria still subscribe to the Marxist labor theory of value, which “continues to live in people’s minds,” blinding them, as it were, to the empirically improved conditions of the present. A similar perspective that places the emphasis on the gendered aspects of the communist legacy posits that “women in Bulgaria at the close of the twentieth century are trapped in their past through the myths of equality and

emancipation and in their present through the poverty, passivity and lack of awareness of their own specific interests” (Kotzeva 1999:96).⁴

Such views exemplify a predominant tendency in the literature on postsocialism: to depict the communist experience as irredeemably totalitarian and oppressive, regardless of the varieties across geography or the particularities of the subject position of those who subscribe to the discourse of emancipation. Former communist subjects who are nostalgic for full employment, access to education, and social security, and women, in particular, who construct a narrative of autonomy about the pre-1989 era, are often considered to be hopelessly tainted with Marxist ideals to the point of not being able to discern where their true interest lies. Some of the most progressive Western feminists, even those who do not charge formerly communist subjects with false consciousness, are nonetheless often loath to admit that women made real gains under communism in terms of both economic and social independence. Such positive legacies of communism tend to get too swiftly dismissed under the otherwise critical “double burden argument,” which asserts that the rhetoric of gender equality under communism, in fact, masked a double exploitation: The communist state actually secured women’s labor through their incorporation into the workforce while it continued to place the traditional demands on them as mothers and wives.

What is at stake in probing such subtle elisions of any positive recollections of the communist experience? First, the systematic minimization of the substantial gains that women made under communism may be viewed as an enduring symptom of what Katherine Verdery (1996) has called the “cognitive organization of the world” under Cold War ideology. Without denying the intricacies of the communist ideal of the woman-as-worker, I aim to contribute to the still marginal debate on the enabling aspects of the communist experience, offering a perspective that goes against the hegemonic neoliberal discourse of capitalist triumphalism. I try to convey the ambiguities of the experiences of one particular minority group (Turkish) under one particular communist regime (Bulgarian) with the hope of pointing to an alternative to either “normalizing” communism, as official communist ideologies have done, or “Orwellizing” communism,⁵ as Cold War ideologies are still wont to do. Second, and more specifically, I seek such an alternative through an analysis of nostalgia that neither takes fond reminiscences of communism at face value nor reduces them to discursive strategies deployed to ease the difficulties encountered in the present by merely retrojecting dignity onto the communist past.

In their prescient critique of the transitology literature, Michael Burawoy and Verdery (1999) challenge analyses that account for the confusions and shortcomings of the transition process as “socialist legacies.” Instead, they invite analysis of the ways in which the past enters the

present not as legacy but as novel adaptation. In this vein, various scholars have gone on to question the usefulness of viewing nostalgia as being primarily about the past and have opted to view it as a “presentist” act, instead (Berdahl 1999, 2000; Ivy 1995; Özyürek 2006; Rosaldo 1989), that is, not as a reflection on the past but, rather, as a strategy that serves the present. This presentist focus has historicized nostalgia (Litzinger 1998) and has thus paved the way for innovative analyses of nostalgia in postcommunist contexts as adaptation strategies to cope with the difficulties wrought by the transition period (Berdahl 1999, 2000; Grant 1995; Patino 2005). Some have even taken the presentist focus further to question the adequacy of the very designation *nostalgia*: The feeling of wistfulness connoted by the term obscures the pragmatism of practices of remembering (Pilbrow in press); when paired with the adjective *postsocialist*, the term *nostalgia* delegitimizes—at best domesticates—expressions of discontent regarding the injustices of the current situation (Creed 1999); postcommunist nostalgia is not an actually existing phenomenon at all but simply a west German transference onto the east German Other (Boyer 2006).⁶ Finally, in an impressive review that catalogues and differentiates various practices that get subsumed under the umbrella of nostalgia, Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko (2004) challenge the notion of nostalgia as an internally coherent body of cultural practices and drive home the point that the meaning and logic of nostalgic practices can only be deciphered by paying meticulous attention to the specific social contexts in which those practices are embedded as well as the internal variation within those contexts.

Yet a different strand of analysis has examined nostalgic recollections in relation to relative subject positions, depicting the ways in which individuals positioned variously in the hierarchies of power were differentially constrained and enabled under communist rule (Bloch 2005). Situating the communist discourses on work and gender within broader discourses of modernity, Lisa Rofel (1999) and Bloch (2005) demonstrate both the disciplinary aspects of interpellating women as workers of the new nation and the ways in which such interpellation offered unprecedented opportunities to them given their prior positions of stigmatization or exclusion. In my own examination of nostalgia among Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria, I draw on the presentist focus in terms of its attention to the situated nature of the teller and the telling, both of which are inevitably motivated by the (adverse) conditions of the present. However, I am reluctant to reduce nostalgic memory to negotiations in and of the present only. To capture the enabling aspects of communism for Turkish women who constituted an ethnic minority in Bulgaria, I turn to the scholarship that has focused on the gendered aspects of postsocialist nostalgia (Bloch 2005; Ghodsee 2004b; Rofel 1999) as well as scholarship that has looked at the intersection of gender and minority sta-

tus (Bloch 2005; Grant 1995). In addition to examining the ways in which gender and minority status bear on the production of nostalgia, I consider the significance of yet another category of difference, namely, migrancy. How does it contribute to an understanding of what is called “post-socialist nostalgia” when one attends to the recollections of Turkish migrant women, who had a distinct experience of communism not only as members of a minority group but also as migrants who remember from the Turkish side of the border, where they confront a very different gender regime? I argue that a consideration of subjectivities constituted at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and migrancy enable one to duly recognize that these immigrant women engage in cross-cultural and comparative historical analysis through their “nostalgic” reminiscences. Their ability to make comparisons on the basis of their experience of two diverse geographies, political ideologies, and gender regimes bequeaths to the emic point of view the added critical perspective of cross-cultural comparison and renders these women more than mere nostalgic narrators reshaping the past as best suits them. Finally, and more generally, the immigrants’ analysis of competing understandings of appropriate labor roles for women in contexts assumed to be approximate reveals gender as the product of varying historical consciousness and changing political economies.⁷

The slippery referent of nostalgia

Back in Bulgaria, if someone did not have a job they would either be scorned for laziness, or pitied for being sick. And it wouldn’t matter if this person was a man or a woman. [Nezihe, a 32-year-old woman pursuing a graduate degree, immigrated in 1989]

I could not believe it when I came here. My neighbors expected me to sit at home. They were astonished when I said I was bored sitting at home, just three days after immigrating. They said, “But you are a woman, why would you have to work?” And I was in turn shocked at their astonishment. I would not know what to do with myself if I sat home like that. And for us, in Bulgaria, not having a job indicated for us either a grave health problem or a flaw of character. [Saniye, 37-year-old state employee, immigrated in 1989]

I had a university diploma but I was cleaning houses when I first got here. Still, I did my job proudly because we learned in Bulgaria that all labor is worthy of respect. [Hatice, 48-year-old woman working as a high school teacher, immigrated in 1989]

My husband would never say to me, “Don’t work.” That is not how things were in Bulgaria. Everyone worked, and this made the relationship between husband and wife more equal. I stand on my own feet, he respects

me for it. We both contribute to the household. We share the duties. Of course I still get to make the coffee and bring it to him. But in most things, we are used to sharing tasks, not like here where the men expect to be served all the time. [Sabriye, 40-year-old domestic worker, has undertaken circular labor migration since 1995]

Coming back from work the other day, the bus was packed as usual. But this guy sitting next to me, he tried to take advantage of the crowd and started to press his leg against mine. So finally I turn to him and say, in a loud voice so everyone can hear, "Mister, it looks like you want to sit on my lap?" He became all red, looked down mumbling something and got up at the next stop. Now, of course, such a man will not let his wife go to work and take the bus every day. [Nurcan, 43-year-old domestic worker, immigrated in 1998]

This neighbor who was just visiting . . . He came to vent off steam because he was furious his wife had gone out without his permission. Poor woman, no chance for her but to be a housewife. [Ahmet, a 38-year-old man working as a domestic helper, immigrated in 1999]

Over the course of 18 months of fieldwork I conducted in Istanbul among Bulgarian Turkish immigrants in 2001 and 2002, with subsequent follow-up fieldwork in 2007–08, I heard assertions concerning the better quality of life back in Bulgaria that pointed to a general wistfulness for the way things were "back there," and, more specifically, wistfulness for the way things were "back then." This juxtaposition, or the collusion, of the "back there" and the "back then" adds to the more temporal notion of postcommunist nostalgia a spatial layer that is constituted by the experience of geographical displacement. My interlocutors were primarily migrants who arrived with the more political (and politicized) migration wave of 1989 as well as those who have traveled back and forth between Bulgaria and Turkey as irregular labor migrants since the late 1990s. Regardless of certain differences that may exist among these two groups in terms of occupational background, future goals, local reception, and, certainly, legal status (Kasli and Parla 2009), I found a widely shared worldview among a particular cohort of women who were above the age of 30 at the time of fieldwork. This worldview is manifest both in general allusions to a more favorable past in Bulgaria and in specific references to gender roles, especially in the realm of work. Norms about working outside of the home are conveyed by the immigrants as embodying the most striking gendered-related differences on the two sides of the border. Virtually all of the immigrants I met expressed amazement at the low level of women's participation in the workforce in Turkey, and they described the communist work ethos as one that made a life without work unthinkable.⁸ Being without work in Bulgaria elicited only scorn or pity,

as Nezihe states above, voicing a normative criticism that is quickly conjoined with another common criticism predicated on personal grounds: "I just would not know what to do with myself if I did not work," in Saniye's words. And many women, like Sabriye, explicitly forge the link between working and (more) gender equality, even as they jokingly point to the persistence of certain gendered practices, such as serving men coffee. A final recurrent theme, illustrated in Nurcan's humorously narrated anecdote concerning harassment on the bus, is part of a larger appraisal of the double standards of local men with regard to how they treat their own wives versus other women. On this score, immigrant men would often join in the discussion, just as Ahmet did, affirming their support for their working wives as equal contributors to the household and making jokes about locals whom they saw as laughably—and tellingly—conservative.

How is one to evaluate recurrent reiterations about more gender equality, the greater freedom work provides to women, and the dignity that accrues to being a worker under and in the aftermath of a communist regime? On the one hand, dismissing these assertions as mere holdovers from the past deprives the speakers of any competence with regard to assessing their own life trajectories. Intentionally or not, such a dismissal also partakes in the logic of Cold War ideology that, a priori, assumes life under capitalism is better than life under communism. This assumption perpetuates what Bloch aptly describes as the "hegemonic discourse regarding socialist and late-socialist societies [which] has turned to a neoliberal narrative of 'liberatory' economic reform" (2005:536). On the other hand, do scholars not run the risk of romanticizing the communist era if we take the expressions of a better past at face value? In doing so, would we not be paying insufficient heed to the "politics of memory" with its selective practices of remembering and forgetting (Olick and Robbins 1998)?⁹ One could wonder, for example, about the existence of restrictive gender codes in Bulgaria, which the immigrant women may have internalized or chosen not to remember and which they, instead, project entirely onto members of the local population, who tend to appear as stereotypes in their accounts.¹⁰

Such selective practices of remembering associated with nostalgia are taken up by various scholars. Indeed, the very term *nostalgia* casts doubt on the past as an actual referent. Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (2001:xiii). Taking this definition, one could argue that the communist past becomes idealized, especially given that the conditions of the present tend to be less favorable if not outright unbearable for many. In the post-Soviet context, for example, Jennifer Patino notes that teachers often recall how they were treated

like tsars in the Soviet Union. This, in fact, was not the case, Patico explains, but

the respect and deference they had been granted as educators and as socializers of Soviet youth contrasted starkly—at least in the minds of some teachers themselves, and particularly in retrospect, in the nostalgic light that has been cast by post-Soviet processes of marketization—with the less attractive notion of “working for a family,” being retained, as it were, as domestic labor. [2005:486]

In her work on East Germany, Daphne Berdahl (1999, 2000) underscores the need to situate practices of *ostalgie*—the term coined to designate the specific manifestation of nostalgia in the German context—within the atmosphere of disillusionment following reunification. Like Boym, Berdahl emphasizes the allusion to and illusion of a lost homeland inherent in nostalgia and suggests that practices of *ostalgie* “can thus be an attempt to reclaim a kind of *heimat* (home or homeland), albeit a romanticized and hazily glorified one” (2000:137). Long ago, Kant pondered whether “homesickness” (*heimweh*)—the term in use before being replaced by the more medical *nostalgia*¹¹—was truly about homesickness or merely about ephemeral time. In that spirit, one may even ask whether postcommunist nostalgia is about communism at all or whether it is simply a Proustian quest for lost youth (Alexander Kiossev, personal communication, June 2006; see also Nadkarni and Shevchenko 2004).

And yet, although I agree with the importance of recognizing the slipperiness of nostalgia’s referent, I argue against the conclusion that it therefore has no referent at all. Memory inevitably filters the past through the lens of the present. However, I am also wary of too hastily leaping from, on the one hand, being cognizant of the gap between the remembering and the remembered to, on the other hand, dismissing the materiality of the remembered altogether. But before I elaborate my argument for taking seriously the nostalgic utterances of immigrant women from Bulgaria, I need to address yet another important caveat against taking positive recollections concerning labor under communism at face value, namely, the double-burden argument that I referred to in the first section of this article.

Unpacking “the double burden”

Perhaps the most influential argument so far in the scholarly literature on socialism and gender, the double-burden argument contends that, under communism, the rhetoric of gender equality, in fact, masked a double exploitation. By seemingly ensuring women’s right to work, the state actually secured women’s labor while continuing to place the traditional demands on them as mothers and wives. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman point out various communist regimes’ contradictory goals in the policies toward women across

Eastern Europe: “They wanted workers as well as mothers, token leaders as well as obedient cadres” (2000:5). Farideh Heyat (2002) demonstrates that women in Azerbaijan had to meet the requirement to participate in the work force and in public life at the same time they were expected to accede to the call of their communities that they adhere to the ideals of modesty and shame.¹² For the Bulgarian context, Sülüş (2007) notes that, although each of her interviewees referred to the existence of gender equality when in Bulgaria, they also admitted to undertaking the majority of the household tasks, whether in Bulgaria or Turkey. On the basis of her research with Moldavian domestic workers in Turkey, Ayse Akalin (2006) even suggests the need for a different term: only *triple burden* would adequately describe the responsibilities shouldered by seasonal female workers, which include a third job undertaken in the country of immigration in addition to the double burden of work outside and inside the home in Moldavia.

A key merit of the double-burden argument lies in its critical distance from the rhetoric of state socialism, especially the claim that state socialism emancipated women by ensuring their participation in the labor force. Instead, its aim is to expose the far more complex and contradictory realities of everyday experience. In their seminal work on the politics of gender during and after socialism, Gal and Kligman (2000) offer a detailed assessment of the ways in which socialism reconfigured the public–private distinction and the extent to which gender roles were transformed in the process. They acknowledge as a positive consequence women’s reduced dependence on husbands and fathers, because wage work established a direct relation to the state not mediated through men. This led to a more autonomous sense of self-worth for women, Gal and Kligman state, and “despite discriminatory wages and excess of hours of labor, many came to take seriously the communist ideal of equality between men and women” (2000:53), sentiments that were repeatedly articulated by my interlocutors.

Despite such positive aspects, however, Gal and Kligman go on to note the various setbacks that undermined this ideal, in addition to the problem of the double burden already elaborated. Perhaps most importantly, the strategic deployment of gender equality as an official discourse in the public realm masked the less visible forms of inequality that were reproduced in the private one.¹³ They also note that, despite the ideal of equality, “the conditions of work, low wages, and the magnitude of demands on [women] produced a sense of victimization and perennial guilt at their never being able to do enough of anything, especially mothering” (Gal and Kligman 2000:53). Furthermore, they point out that the image of competent mother and worker presented by magazines went hand in hand with the omission of sexualized beauty in the pursuit of femininity (Gal and Kligman 2000:54). They suggest that even some of those aspects hailed as positive had, in fact, negative consequences:

the generous child-care payments and maternity leaves, for example, reinforced women's subordinate position in the labor force, feeding their image as less reliable workers than men (Gal and Kligman 2000:49). Likewise, the legal measures that rendered women more autonomous, such as the relative ease of divorce and the guarantee of state support for single women and children, reinforced the "extreme fragility" of marital ties (Gal and Kligman 2000:54).¹⁴

Although a balanced assessment of the communist experience is indispensable, one also needs to be vigilant, I believe, with regard to what I identified at the outset of this article as the subtle elisions of the substantial gains women made under communism. Before discussing how generous maternity leaves and child-care payments gave women the image of unreliable workers and thus reinforced their subordinate role, I find it important to delve more deeply into the actual substance of these legal rights. In communist Bulgaria, women had guaranteed maternity leave, which began 45 days before the expected delivery date and could be extended until the child was three years old, the first two years being paid leave and the third year unpaid but with the guarantee that the woman's job would be held for her. Returning to work before two years entitled a woman to her prematernity wage and to 50 percent of the national minimum wage for that portion of leave not used. In addition, if the mother chose to return to work early, the father or one of the grandparents could be appointed caregiver and receive the unused portion of the maternity leave.¹⁵

I emphasize legal rights concerning maternity leave and child support under communism in Bulgaria not only because they exceeded the feminist achievements of some of the most progressive Western capitalist societies but also because of the stark contrast between the past experiences and the current predicament of the particular group of migrant women in question. Hatice, the high school teacher who had defiantly insisted on the respect that should be paid to all work, regardless of its nature, remembers the sense of security that came from maternity leave and the sense of freedom provided by subsequent free child care. Nurgül, a mother of two, has worked as a nanny in Turkey since 2001 and "feel[s] her heart go stiff with sadness" each time she lets herself think about not getting to see her younger child grow up—he was only ten when she left him behind in Bulgaria. Unlike Hatice, who immigrated in 1989 with her family, Nurgül engages in circular labor migration, along with thousands of others from Bulgaria who have become labor migrants because of the scarcity of jobs in that country. Like Nurgül, most of these post-1990s migrants leave their children, sometimes as young as two years old, to be tended by kin. In Turkey, they take care of the children of middle-class or upper-middle-class women, who, in turn, rely on the migrant women to enable them to keep up with their own careers, given that the current maternity leave in Turkey is four months.

Similarly, despite its merits, particularly with regard to calling attention to the invisible ways in which asymmetries in the division of labor were reproduced, I find that the double-burden argument itself has to be sufficiently qualified to avoid replicating, even if in a feminist inflection, the assumption of the superiority of the capitalist first world over the communist second world. Kristen Ghodsee (2004a, 2004b, 2005), for example, both meticulously depicts the institutionalized benefits and advantages the communist regime provided for women in Bulgaria and offers a timely critique of the unqualified importation of cultural feminism to postsocialist contexts. She argues that a focus exclusively on gender at the expense of class fails to address the local histories, debates, and understandings of the "woman question" in formerly communist societies. With the alleged intention of "saving women"—to borrow from Lila Abu-Lughod's (2002) trenchant critique of a parallel discourse deployed by U.S. liberal feminism about Afghan women—such imported feminism hardly acknowledges any legacies of socialism, or it does so only in negative ways:

Even the local NGOs funded primarily by western cash sources assume that Bulgarian women are willing to borrow or work to pay for basic needs that were once provided by the socialist state. Under socialism these needs once existed as the basic rights and entitlements of the communist citizen. Indeed, one of the most lauded achievements of the communist countries was the high level of human development that they achieved. This was particularly true for women. In Bulgaria, women greatly benefited from generous maternity leaves, free education, free health care, free subsidized child care, communal kitchens and canteens, communal laundries, subsidized food and transport, subsidized holidays on the Black Sea. [Ghodsee 2004a:747]

Similarly, Bloch identifies the "discourse of oppressive state power and the assumption of popular resistance to it" (2005:536) in much of the scholarship on the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Indeed, the assumptions of total oppression on the part of the communist state and either thorough indoctrination of or resistance by its subjects are also central to the representation of Turkish women in Bulgaria by Turkish nationalist historiography, which regards the communist period in Bulgaria as the most sinister phase in that country's oppression of the Turkish minority, especially women. According to nationalist historiography, one of the particularly insidious ways in which communism sought to destroy what is seen as an essential and invincible "Turkishness" was through the indoctrination of children. Hapless children were left at the mercy of the communist state because their mothers were forced to work:

In the day care centers and kindergartens that surrounded Bulgaria like a spider's web, history was taught to babies in distorted ways, and hatred of Turks was injected into children in a systematic way. Turks were made to follow the same mandate as Bulgarians and send their children to these crèches and kindergartens so that Turkish children would be prevented from learning their own language, religion, customs and mores. [Konukman 1990:54, translation mine]

Another author bemoans the inability of the family, the fortress of ethnic preservation, to withstand the attacks by communists:

He [the Bulgarian], *under the guise of ensuring mothers' work*, meticulously began to subject the Turkish population to the regulation that children were to be given to crèches and kindergartens. It has been observed that their goal was to minimize the children's contact with their families and that by and large they succeeded. Thus, we saw during those days [of the 1989 immigration] that little children who arrived in Turkey could barely speak Turkish. [Togrol 1991:69, translation mine, italics added]

The indexical relationship between the loss of language and the loss of authentic culture and ethnicity is another topic worthy of inquiry. The questions I pose here, however, are of a different sort. When my interlocutors refer to the equality of men and women in the workplace and at home, are they merely continuing to mouth party propaganda? Or when they view having access to free child care as allowing them a certain freedom, are they still so entrenched in a distorted vision of the past that they are unable to assess how the state conspired against them? In what ways can one go beyond the view of communist indoctrination to further probe the admittedly nebulous boundary between the lived and the remembered?

I aim to challenge the stated certainties of both Turkish nationalist historiography and the double-burden argument, and, following in Bloch's (2005) footsteps, attempt instead to capture some of the "ambiguities of lived lives under socialism." In doing so, I am heeding the prescient call by Maria Todorova (2002) to find alternatives to the discourse of official state socialism, on the one hand, and the "no less inadequate but still surviving cold-war models and assessments," on the other hand, as well as the importance of pluralizing what has often been depicted as a monolithic experience in most Cold War literature. I thus try to move beyond the view that the communist imperative to work was experienced as just another burden and the view that it meant total emancipation. Instead, I try to point to the multifaceted nature of socialism as experienced by a particular group and cohort of minority women. By highlighting their narratives, I also stress the impact of minor-

ity status, gender, and age on how communism might have been differently perceived and experienced by different social groups.

Historicizing nostalgia

Selective practices of remembering, exacerbated by the biases of the historiography on the Turkish minority, render difficult a thorough assessment of that minority's situation in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian nationalist view of history, as Daniel Bates points out, posits "collective, unmitigated oppression during centuries of foreign tyranny, the so-called Turkish yoke" (1994:204). "The Turkish yoke" refers to the period prior to 1878, when what is Bulgarian territory today was under the reign of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶ Bulgarian nationalism may also be characterized by a refusal to entertain the question of ethnicity as relevant for the period after the founding of the Bulgarian nation in 1878, and during the "rebirth campaign," from 1884 to 1889, this refusal was accompanied by the claim that members of the Turkish minority were, in fact, forcibly converted Bulgarians (Ekici 2004; Eminov 1997; Poulton 1997). In turn, Turkish nationalist historiography puts forward the suffering of the Turkish minority and their persecution by the Bulgarians from 1878 onward, a pattern that peaked once communists came to power. This latter interpretation fits snugly with the pervasive legacy of Cold-War rhetoric in Turkey that has presented communism as the archenemy of Turkish national and political culture for decades. Further, Turkish national historiography assumes a homogeneous minority population that was always oriented toward and yearned for the Turkish homeland, resisted integration, and preserved its ethnic distinctiveness at all costs (Konukman 1990; Simsir 1986; Togrol 1991). The task of reconstructing the history of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria is made more difficult by variation in official policy toward the Turkish minority during different periods. Moreover, the subjective experience of the minority population varied as well, depending on whether one lived in the southern or northern part of the country, whether one lived in exclusively Turkish or mixed villages, and whether one became a party member.¹⁷ Given this complexity, I attempt below an admittedly partial historical overview, gathered from sources that seek to evade the biases of the two opposing views and that focus in particular on the predicament of minority women.

The Ottoman conquest of the region now known as Bulgaria was complete by the end of the 14th century (Inalcik 1993). Because of the policy of settling Muslim Turkish-speaking populations from Anatolia in the newly conquered territories, the Muslim population in the southern part of that area grew to equal the Christian population in the north, at least according to one diplomatic source (see Simsir 1986:3). The demographics changed quite dramatically, however, when large numbers of Muslims fled

the territories gradually lost by the Ottoman Empire, first, following the Russian–Ottoman Wars of 1877–88 and the founding of the modern Bulgarian state in 1878 and, then, following the Balkan Wars of 1912 (see Höpken 1997 for various estimates of the numbers involved). In addition to those fleeing the wars, many Muslim elites and administrators also emigrated when they lost their titles (Bates 1994). There was thus a “marked decline in numbers of Turkish speakers within the first two decades of independence, such that the Turkish element ceased to predominate in most urban centers, leaving the bulk of the remaining Moslem population both relatively poor and rural” (Bates 1994:205).

The presence of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria was further reduced as land and property that belonged to Muslims were confiscated. Ottoman buildings were destroyed or taken over, mosques were demolished, and various place names were changed, either replaced by their previous Bulgarian ones or given new ones altogether (Crampton 1990). Furthermore,

minority schools were not completely integrated into the national school system until the Socialist era, funding was limited and dependent on local charitable trusts, and most of the schools were supervised by a fairly conservative religious hierarchy. As a consequence, the non-Slavic populations were further marginalized, *female education was severely restricted, and the attendant cultural and educational gulf greatly limited minority group participation in the national economy except as farmers or laborers.* [Bates 1994:205, italics added]

Wolfgang Höpken draws a similar portrait of the isolation of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria in the post-Balkan and pre-WWII years: “Up to the Second World War, the Turkish community lived as a closed ethnic and religious group, mainly agrarian with only about 15 per cent living in urban centers. By all social criteria the community was under-developed: illiteracy was almost the norm, reaching in the 1930s 81 percent among men and 91 percent among women” (1997:56). State policy, which, according to Höpken, was characterized by a general principle of noninterference in religious and ethnic matters until the 1930s, changed after the fascist coup d’etat of 1934, and more aggressive, interventionist measures were implemented. Under the new regime, Turkish newspapers and schools declined even further, and Turkish parliamentarians were altogether eliminated and mayors taken out of office (Höpken 1997:63).

The communist government that came to power in 1944 initially reversed the discriminatory practices of the previous fascist government (Bates 1994:206). The new government also undertook various initiatives to promote cultural minority rights and development. For the Turkish minority, these included a nationwide literacy campaign and

educational incentives, among them the establishment of Turkish institutes for training teachers and libraries for the Turkish public, the publication of daily newspapers in Turkish, radio broadcasts in Turkish, and the establishment of Turkish theater groups and folklore ensembles (Bates 1994:206–207). Thus, “for the first time since independence, Bulgaria’s minorities came to have nationally visible intellectual leaders outside of the religious establishment” (Bates 1994:207).¹⁸

In addition to the educational incentives and incentives for literary and artistic output, the early years of communism were marked by the collectivization of the land. This meant the elimination of family farms and private enterprises and the resulting integration of Turks with Bulgarians in industry, service jobs, and agricultural collectives. There was much resistance to collectivization in Turkish-dominated areas, which seems to have played a major role in the mass migration of around 150,000 people to Turkey in 1950–51 (Eminov 1997). But, for those who did end up staying, the socialist policies of integration, and particularly collectivization, resulted in unprecedented intergroup socializing and de facto acculturation: “By 1970, most adult urban or town-dwelling women worked in large labor battalions; most non-rural housing was intentionally integrated and large numbers of Muslim men and women had been recruited to the BCP [Bulgarian Communist Party] and its subsidiaries” (Bates 1994:210).

This is not to say that what is dubbed the “Golden Age” of communism—lasting about two decades from the 1940s to the mid-1960s—had a benign face only. In addition to the mass migration—often called “expulsion” by Turks—of around 150,000 Turks who resisted the collectivization of land, there is evidence of discrimination against minorities. In 1958, for example, a plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party “restricted the use of Turkish language, prohibited Pomaks, gypsies and Tatars from studying Turkish; and ordered that children of Bulgarian-Turkish mixed marriages be registered as ‘Bulgarian’” (Bates 1994:207). More generally, the seemingly positive developments of the “Golden Age” have been interpreted by some as disguises for the sinister ones to follow; for example, the state’s provision of cultural institutions for the Turks was accompanied by the liquidation of autonomous ones (Neuburger 1997).

Whether they were erratic decisions or symptoms of a grander scheme of homogenization, the repression of autonomous ethnic expression became systematic after the 1960s. All instruction and publications in Turkish were eliminated. The repressive measures culminated in the infamous assimilation campaign of 1984–89, officially labeled the “rebirth” or “revival” process (*vazroditelen protses*).¹⁹ The campaign included the prohibition of Turkish language in public spaces, with accompanying fines for those who violated the law; bans on Islamic rituals and practices such

as burial rituals, fasting during Ramadan (Eminov 1997:59), and circumcision (Poulton 1997:14); outlawing of traditional clothes, such as the *şalvar* worn by women (Eminov 1997:41); and forcible name changes, by which Turks were coerced to sign petitions asking that their names be converted from Turkish to Bulgarian ones (Elchinova 2005; see also the report by Amnesty International 1986). These measures were supported by racist theories proclaiming that all residents of Bulgaria were of one common racial stock and that the Muslim minorities who had “reverted” to their Bulgarian identities had been Bulgarians all along but had been forced to convert to Islam by the Ottomans. As Minister of Internal Affairs Dimitur Stojanov infamously declared in 1985, “There are no Turks in Bulgaria” (Eminov 1990:209).

Some hold that the assimilation campaign was the logical culmination of the communist party’s systematic, already existing plan to ultimately eradicate Turkish identity altogether and create a homogeneous nation-state. Others view the events of 1984–89 as symptomatic of a new “ethnized” turn in the history of Bulgarian nationalism, and even as an aberration, the result of corruption among certain party officials and not reflective of either the sentiment of the Bulgarian population at large or of the communist party in general. Bates writes that his interviews with Turkish political leaders, teachers, artists, and journalists in Bulgaria in the early 1990s

almost inevitably elicited expressions of pride at how Turkish literature, journalism, and performing arts had flourished from 1952 until 1965. . . . Even journalists apparently found the overall dominance of the Party an acceptable price to pay for the right to publish in Turkish in a national forum. Today, most Turkish teachers in Bulgaria who are trained in language and literature received their education in Party-run institutions during this period. This shared experience, however doctrinaire in substance, was undoubtedly instrumental in strengthening a sense of shared community. [Bates 1994:207]²⁰

I stress the views presented above both because I too encountered similar sentiments, even among those who had chosen to migrate to Turkey in 1989, and because they go against the grain of the standard Turkish nationalist narrative. The latter assumes that communism was perceived and experienced only as a malicious force, which unveiled its “true” face during the assimilation campaign of 1984–89. To point to alternative perceptions is not to whitewash the communist regime or to suggest that the Turkish minority partakes in its idealization. Rather, in the spirit of Todorova, it is to insist on a more nuanced understanding of the ambiguities of the communist period as experienced and perceived by various groups positioned in different hierarchies of power within the social rubric.

To gain this understanding requires historical contextualization. Ethnic discrimination against the Turkish minority in Bulgaria had already begun following the founding of the Bulgarian nation-state in 1878. In fact, the repression during the fascist regime right before the advent of communism had become so severe that the initial policies, at least, of communism offered a respite. Furthermore, the experience of communism for members of the Turkish minority also included opportunities extended to them in the name of education, health, and welfare, following a period of severe isolation and deprivation. For women especially, educational opportunities and the requirement to work marked a radical break with the past, when the norm had been virtually no education and no prospects of a career besides work in the fields. Among the immigrant women I met, those who were between the ages of 30 and 50 emphasized two points of contrast between themselves and their mothers. First, although coming from rural backgrounds, they had had access to at least eight years of schooling in the standardized communist system, whereas their mothers had had only a few years at the Turkish religious schools and often could not read. Second, unlike their mothers, who had primarily taken care of children and also made unpaid contributions to the family agricultural work, many daughters were enabled by the standardized system to go on to pursue higher degrees and, therefore, get jobs in health care and education. The latter are often dismissed by the double-burden argument as lower-pay and lower-prestige jobs, but they are held by these women and their communities in high esteem. The day care centers and kindergartens, figuring as the hotbeds of pernicious communist propaganda in the accounts of Turkish nationalists, were seen by many women as resources that afforded them some autonomy.

“Why should I lie?” Emine felt she could confide in me, several encounters after she told me about the disapproval she had been subjected to at the bakery. “We really had it good under *komunizma*. Yes there was always a certain amount of discrimination against us, but we never worried about a roof to stay under or our stomachs going hungry or our children’s schools. Not to mention the quality of education.” The preemptive preamble “why should I lie” reflects anxiety over a source of social disapproval other than the one related to being a working woman: that of saying something positive about communism. Saniye, who was bewildered at the expectation that she would stay at home, prides herself on the exceptional education she received growing up in a village near Razgrad. But, she said, she soon learned that her positive evaluations of the communist system were best left unexpressed. “If it was so good over there, why did you bother to come?” she was asked by a neighbor, who would rather have listened to narratives of deprivation and suffering of ethnic kin “welcomed generously by the motherland,” as official rhetoric has it (see Konukman 1990). One tacit prerequisite to social acceptance is to acquiesce to the

image of the persecuted “ethnic kin,” or *soydaş*, and neither the working woman nor the immigrant who speaks favorably of communism tallies well with that image. The terms of national belonging for immigrant women, then, become particularly precarious, for these women not only defy local norms by insisting on working outside of the home at all costs but they also legitimize their insistence in terms of the legacy of their communist past.

The constitution of subjects

In her seminal study of gender, work, and communism in China, Lisa Rofel (1999) urges scholars to take seriously the claims of a particular cohort of women who insisted they had been liberated by Mao’s communist regime. The generation of women she describes entered factory work at a time when labor outside the home was seen as a stain on the honor of the woman and her family, and when women who worked in the few factories in existence were considered to be “broken shoes,” “a term for prostitutes and other shameless women who appeared openly on the streets” (Rofel 1993:37). The new Marxist discourse on work, however, suddenly enabled these women to transform themselves from “broken shoes” into “revolutionary, ‘liberated’ women who would be the vanguard of a progressive urban class” (Rofel 1999:74). By embracing the new subject positions presented to them by the Marxist discourse, these women could thus switch the terms of pride and shame to their advantage.

Similarly, in her analysis of Evenk women’s nostalgia for residential schools in central Siberia under Soviet rule, Bloch insists on the need to challenge the dichotomy of state as oppressor and indigenous communities as oppressed. Although the prevailing view tends to paint mandatory residential schooling as an attack on indigenous Siberian systems of knowledge, Bloch also acknowledges the ways in which the Soviet system presented Evenk women with an alternative to living in herding groups and access to basic education and extensive social mobility, including the opportunity to thrive in academic and professional settings, as well as a sense of pride in being positioned as “agents of historical transformation who were in the vanguard striving towards a new and modern society” (2005:556).

Neither Rofel’s nor Bloch’s intention is to romanticize the life experiences of women under communism. Rather, they situate the communist discourses on work and gender within the broader historical framework of the prevalent discourses of modernity and ideas about women’s place in the new modern nation. Raising the status of women and strengthening the nation were seen as inseparable projects, and “in a Marxist framework, this meant constructing a sense of womanhood in relation to a category called ‘work,’ where household workshops were devalued as petit bourgeois labor, privatized and opposed to the state, and factory

work, which produced surplus value for the state, came to be valorized” (Rofel 1999:236).

The communist party’s initiatives in Bulgaria were thus part of a project of modernization to “remake women,” borrowing Abu-Lughod’s (1998) framing of women’s iconic role within the modern nation-state in Middle Eastern contexts. In particular, as Höpken notes, “the integration of women into work brigades was seriously at odds with their traditional role. In fact it was deliberately used to shake up conservative behavior within the Turkish community” (1997:66). The mass unveiling of women too went hand in hand with a “campaign of ridicule”: On the basis of reports in the newspaper *Yeni Işık*, the party newspaper published by the Turkish minority, Neuberger writes that “large-scale Communist Party projects deployed ‘commissions on lifestyle’ into the Turkish populated areas to ‘overcome religious fanaticism and family conservatism,’ offering night classes to teach Turkish women about the ‘culture and behavior of the modern person’” (1997:5). However, to acknowledge the party projects as yet another instance of modernization, and to concede the paternalistic contours of this project, does not unequivocally yield the conclusion that communism was experienced solely as an imposition or a (double) burden by minority women. As it did for the factory workers in China and the residential school students in Siberia, I would argue, the communist regime’s interpellation of minority Turkish women in Bulgaria as agents of modernity opened up unprecedented opportunities for them within that system as citizens and workers of the socialist state. Such opportunities must have been all the more welcome given that minority women previously had scarce access to education let alone careers, notwithstanding Abu-Lughod’s caveat that “becoming a citizen or worker is itself making oneself subject in new ways—not just to family and community but also to the state and economy. . . . To attend modern educational institutions is to be interpellated into new discourses about the training of minds and characters and new practices of disciplining bodies” (1998:13).

Gendered subjectivities in communism are an axis of difference shared by Turkish women in Bulgaria and the Chinese factory workers; and gendered and ethnic subjectivities are axes of difference shared by the Turkish women in Bulgaria and the Evenk women in Russia. There is yet a third, different dimension to the experience of the women who people this article. Unlike the narratives of former factory workers in China or elderly Evenk women in Siberia, the narratives of the Turkish women I spoke to are marked not just by a temporal but also by a spatial disjuncture. In the next section, I examine how the added experience of migration and the experiences of different gender regimes on the two sides of the border affect practices of remembering. I argue that the cross-cultural perspective afforded by migration enables my interlocutors to critically assess the

differences between the two regimes in terms of appropriate labor roles for women and, more generally, in terms of restrictive gender codes.²¹

Honor, shame, and unruly migrants

Aygül immigrated in 1989 with her husband and her then three-year-old daughter. Her first job was as a cashier at a small grocery store. In addition to her usual tasks, she also regularly gave the floors a good cleaning. This was not a part of her job description, she emphasized—replicating the trope of cleanliness prevalent among the immigrants as a marker of distinction—but she felt compelled to do it to keep the place presentable. She would take off her socks, fold her trousers up to her knees, put on a pair of slippers, and mop. Until, that is, her boss had his sister caution Aygül that exposing bare feet to the customers was shameful. Aygül told me that she quit that very day and would not agree to return, despite her boss's pleas and offer of a raise. "Not everything can be bought," were her departing words. Another story of bold exit was narrated by Melike, who arrived in Turkey in 1989 with her husband and two daughters: "One day, the boss at the factory my daughter and I worked for approached me and said my daughter should wear longer shirts because you could see her back when she bent over. We quit."

The anxieties provoked by the exposure of bare flesh and the spirit of defiance on the part of the migrants that results in immediate action offer glimpses into the differences between the kinds of acts and strategies generated and tolerated by the gender regimes on the two sides of the border. Indeed, the Bulgarian Turkish immigrant men I have spoken to also commented on the difference in attitudes: "They say of us, 'They even let their women work,'" said Seyhan, who has worked at a restaurant and then at a gas station since the start of his circular migration in 1997, from which he earns less than a fifth of what his wife is able to make working as a live-in nanny. Immigrants counter the insinuation that their zeal for work results from greed by positing work as an indispensable aspect of identity. Recall how Saniye, who had graduated from university at the time of her arrival, and who went on to pursue an M.A. degree, marveled at her new neighbors' lack of comprehension of her eagerness to find work: "Not having a job indicated for us either a grave health problem or a flaw of character." Another common response, one that was more confrontational than the espousal of the socialist notion of the virtue of work in the face of allegations of gender impropriety, can be seen in Emine's taunt: "So, they [the local neighbors] complain that they still live on rent. If the women did not sit around all day and worked like we do, they, too, could afford to buy their own houses."

Emine's remarks are important in addressing another central question: whether the perceived greed of immi-

grants, in fact, stems from their actual higher standard of living. First, one needs to take into account the distinction between the 1989 migrants and the post-1990s labor migrants, which I allude to in the first section of this article. Whereas the former were granted citizenship as "ethnic kin" fleeing communist repression, the post-1990s migrants, perceived as a source of cheap labor and subjected to changing visa regimes, engage in irregular labor migration, and reside or work in Turkey with or without permits and, for the most part, without citizenship (see Kaslı and Parla 2009). Furthermore, the 1989 immigrants have settled in Turkey, whereas most of the post-1990s circular migrants see Turkey as a temporary place of residence, where they earn money to secure a better future back in Bulgaria.²² Already, the differences in legal status as well as in settlement plans point to lower standards of living among the post-1990s migrants, who may be said to constitute part of the global cheap labor force. Mostly employed in domestic work, they earn salaries that range from \$500 to \$1,000 a month, work without any job security or health or retirement plan, and send remittances to Bulgaria. Just as there are differences between the 1989 and the post-1990s immigrants, there are also differences among the settled 1989 immigrants. Among them, some have excelled in white collar professions, such as medicine or law, whereas others continue to reside in the decrepit migrant settlements that had been commissioned by the government upon their arrival in 1989. As the board member of the most established migrant association in Istanbul states, the immigrants from Bulgaria are not, on the whole, part of the wealthy elite.²³ They tend to occupy the middle or lower-middle rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, with some individuals accumulating further symbolic capital through their professions as lawyers, doctors, or academics.

Despite this relative heterogeneity in terms of the various forms of capital possessed by the immigrants from Bulgaria, however, the following two points are of special relevance in terms of the dynamics between locals and immigrants. First, regardless of economic status, virtually all of the 1989 migrants are homeowners, something that all Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria perceive as a fundamental requirement for a decent existence. Immigrants thus stand out from locals as people who own property, a distinction that they, in turn, attribute to their hard work and perseverance. Second, this much noted difference of property ownership between locals and immigrants is highlighted by both parties through reference to working women: Whereas the locals articulate women's employment as the consequence of ambition and greed, the immigrants invert it as a source of pride that they relate back to their socialist legacy.

In their study of the impact of modern management practices on factory workers in Bursa, a major industrial center in Turkey, Theo Nichols and Nadi Sugur found that the key difference that distinguishes immigrants and

long-time residents is whether wives work: "In just under half of the households of Turkish workers who have one other earner the person concerned is a spouse. In the case of the *muhacir* (immigrants), this rises to over two-thirds" (2004:50).²⁴ In squatter settlements (*gecekondu*) in Istanbul, the foremost reason for a woman not working outside of the home has been identified as the husband's withholding of permission (Kumbetoglu 2001; see also Çınar 1991). A detailed study of domestic workers in the capital, Ankara, demonstrates the difficulty of obtaining permission from husbands and the perils of even asking for permission, an act that, by itself, can trigger physical violence (Ozyegin 2001).

It is important to note that the scholarship that I refer to here in reviewing norms of work outside of the family in Turkey primarily focuses, sometimes implicitly, on lower- and lower-middle-class women. The justification for sustaining this focus here is twofold: First, the relatively unfettered pursuit of individual careers on the part of women remains the preserve of the economically and socially privileged, enabled for the most part through the paid labor of other women (Kandiyoti 1988a; Toktas and Cindoglu 2006). Second, virtually all of the immigrant women I discuss come from rural villages in Bulgaria and have settled in lower- to lower-middle-class neighborhoods in Turkey, so my focus on local working-class women reasonably corresponds both to the migrant women's backgrounds in terms of social position and to their own point of comparison.

When women with little social and economic capital engage in paid work, and they often do so out of material necessity, they delicately find their way amidst a complex web of social restrictions and seek the least compromising alternatives. Some forms of paid work that do not expose women to the public gaze are considered more acceptable, such as garment work performed in the home (Kumbetoglu 1994; White 2004), cleaning the apartments in the same building one lives in as a doorkeeper (Ozyegin 2001), or working as a domestic in a private space (Bora 2005; Ozyegin 2001). In fact, the patriarchal control over the labor of local women structures the domestic labor market in a particular way, such that Turkish domestic workers predominantly choose to live in their own homes, and live-in caretaker positions, which necessitate more intimate relations with employer family members and more flexible hours, are left to the international migrants (Akalın 2007).

Even if a great number of women engage in profit-making activities at home or work inside the private spaces of others, it is also the case that 31 percent of formally recorded employees in the textile industry in 2000 were women (Nichols and Sugur 2004:46), and 51 percent of women textile workers in Bursa, for example, earned as much or more than their husbands (Ecevit 1991). If a woman must work at a factory, she can still find ways to minimize her public visibility. Work in all-women's depart-

ments in large, anonymous companies is preferred, for example, to work in small companies and helps one avoid the "company girl" image, which implies promiscuity (Ecevit 1991). The day shift is preferable to the night shift, and if one must work the night shift, then being escorted to and from work by a husband or a male relative is critical to ward off gossip (Nichols and Sugur 2004).

The Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria fit uneasily into this moral economy of gender and labor for various reasons. First, they explicitly defy the local norm about gender and work and uphold a different one. Like Emine in the opening vignette, who underscored the speed with which she began work by seizing the first opportunity that came her way, all of my other interlocutors recalled their desire to find work as soon as possible after their arrival. Their hurry was prompted by monetary need. Nonetheless, once again, financial motives should be thought of in conjunction with the "durable dispositions" of these women that render life without work unthinkable. Emine also noted proudly the number of jobs she managed to juggle, especially during the first few years after her family's immigration. In addition to working at the local bakery during the day, Emine was soon cleaning an office in the evenings and catering for an art gallery several times a month.

The immigrant women I met paid little heed to the kinds of negotiations in which their working neighbors so carefully seemed to traffic. Many made it a point of pride to take jobs considered unsuitable for women, such as 28-year-old Saniye, who proudly told me she had worked at a gas station when she was barely 20 and that she had also enrolled at the university. Nurcan, who was 20 at the time of her arrival, was bothered by the inquisitive looks and the harassment she was subjected to walking back home from the bus station after working late hours, but she never thought to enlist male company because she found such dependence absurd. And, of course, in the case of the post-1990s labor migrants, who are often women on their own, such escort is unlikely to be available anyway. Finally, few of the immigrant women felt the need to affirm their modesty through what Terence Turner has called the "social skin." Sixteen-year-old Ipek's fashion choices, consisting primarily of form-fitting blouses and short skirts, were enthusiastically supported by her family, who lived in a working-class neighborhood in Sultanbeyli, located on the outskirts of Istanbul.

Within the hegemonic moral economy of gender and work in Turkey, as men "who even let their women work," immigrant men fall short of the masculine ideal. Recall the words of 38-year-old Ahmet, who arrived in Istanbul in 1999 and, in a much coveted arrangement, found a position together with his wife in a villa: "This neighbor who was just visiting . . . He came to vent off steam because he was furious his wife had gone out without his permission. Poor woman, no chance for her but to be a housewife."

Twenty-eight-year-old Seyhan said, "I am good friends with the guys at work. So they can take it when I tease them. I tell them, 'You don't let your wives work because you are jealous. You don't trust them. I don't mind my wife going to work, even overnight, because I trust her.'" Besides revealing differences in attitude toward women's work, these remarks are significant in terms of the immigrants' ways of coping with the local construction of hegemonic masculinity. The emphasis on trust and lack of jealousy may also be a way of negotiating the perceived challenges to their honor, potentially compromised by having working wives whose chastity may be suspect.

Indeed, the "honor–shame" model, which posits sexual honor (*namus*) as an index of personal and group prestige and men's honor as proportionally linked to women's chastity, dominated academic understandings of social and sexual relations in the Middle East and the Mediterranean for decades (Peristiany 1966). Various excellent critiques have considered the ways in which the honor–shame model obscured other relevant factors in the construction of honor beyond sexual propriety (Herzfeld 1987; Wikan 1984); the model's assignment of honor exclusively to the realm of men, when, in fact, women strive for honor as well (Abu-Lughod 1986); and the more fundamental problem of accepting a trope such as honor as iconic of a region (Abu-Lughod 1989; Herzfeld 1984). When I suggest, therefore, that dominant notions of honor and modesty in Turkey posit a different ideal of womanhood than the one posited by the socialist ideal of the woman worker–citizen in Bulgaria, I am referring neither to a cultural or religious essence nor to that catch-all word *tradition*. Rather, I am referring to honor as the complex array of institutional structures that include the various "ideological state apparatuses," such as the law, medicine, education, and the family, and their discursive practices, which often and conveniently get labeled "tradition" and thus naturalize relations of power as well as occlude, in Dicle Kogacioglu's words, "the ways in which an institution's own acts may be participating in the perpetuation of this allegedly timeless 'tradition'" (2004:121).

Indeed, as the first wave of critical feminist analysis in Turkey has argued, the concern with women's honor was reproduced by the Turkish modernizing project itself. The Turkish modernizing elite, who took it on themselves to emancipate Turkish women, granted women legal rights and fashioned the image of the public, modern woman, while simultaneously reaffirming the importance of women's virtue and chastity. Women who entered the public sphere thus had to either downplay their female sexuality to the point of invisibility or contain it within the boundaries dictated by men (Arat 1997; Durakbasa 1998; Kandiyoti 1988b; Sirman 2000). The post-1980s second-wave feminist movement in Turkey, through its insistence on politicizing the personal, publicly artic-

ulated and protested for the first time the preoccupation with virginity and the chaste–unchaste distinction that permeated cultural attitudes toward women's bodies and sexuality and was reflected well in the Turkish Penal Code (see Altınay 2002; Savran 2004).²⁵ Building on this body of work, recent critical scholarship on gender and honor has been especially careful not to reproduce the dichotomies of the traditional–modern and has variously depicted the ways in which the concern with honor is perpetuated by the "modern" institutions and neoliberal policies of the nation-state. Examples include the state's routine intrusions into women's bodies via virginity examinations (Parla 2001),²⁶ the reproduction of the concern with women's honor by judicial authorities who simultaneously decry the honor crime as an obsolete and barbaric tradition (Belge 2008; Kogacioglu 2004), Islamist and secularist renditions of female modesty that define and delimit an acceptable gendered presence in post-1990s Istanbul marked by market-driven gentrification (Potuoglu-Cook 2006), and the manufacturing of women's sexuality as an issue of public concern precisely through the republican and liberal expansion of women's rights (Miller 2007). This literature is also careful not to attribute the persistence of the honor construct to "incomplete modernization" and, instead, documents the ways in which it is precisely the increasing pervasiveness and solidification of neoliberal discourses and practices that incorporate the concern with honor into the personal and political realms, even if in modified ways.²⁷ Certain acts pertaining to honor are singled out as breaches of human and women's rights, whereas others that permeate the fabric of everyday life are glossed over. Hence, the insistence of Ceren Belge (2008) on viewing the infamous honor killings, for example, as an extreme point in the continuum of naturalized patriarchal practices rather than as examples of barbaric and obsolete tradition. Furthermore, as Öykü Potuoglu-Cook's (2006) eloquent articulation of the neoliberal gentrification of belly dancing reveals, questions of sexual honor can be bracketed by the privilege of class: The wealthy elite and the upwardly mobile professional youth indulge in belly dancing for leisure although the sexuality of the professional working belly dancer continues to be suspect in the public eye and closely monitored by the state.

Conclusion

Studies of ethnicity, gender, and nationalism have noted how women are seen as the bearers and carriers of tradition and authenticity (Alonso 1994; Yuval-Davies and Anthias 1989). Not surprisingly, then, immigrant difference too becomes particularly marked in terms of the perceived and actual behavior of immigrant women. The perceived failure of immigrants to live up to the nationalist designation *soydaş*,

which suggests sameness, becomes articulated through the difference of their women. Unlike many of their local counterparts, Bulgarian Turkish immigrant women contribute as much income to the household as men, and in the case of the post-1990s migrants, are often the primary breadwinners because of the composition of the domestic-work sector. This demographic difference, the result of the feminization of migration in the 1990s as well as the immigrants' attitudes toward work, gives rise to and becomes the ground for struggles over proper gender roles, often waged over competing interpretations and appropriations of the immigrants' communist past. A common local explanation for the immigrants' zeal for work is their greed, as expressed in the phrase, "They even let their women work." What is significant for the purposes of this discussion is that a more universal response on the part of older residents, who begrudge the competition posed by newcomers for scarce resources, acquires specificity as a denunciation expressed in terms of an appeal to gender propriety.

In response, immigrant women defend their practices by their own norms about work through an appeal to the communist ethos in Bulgaria, which stands in contrast to the hegemonic construct of honor in Turkey. Thus, the nostalgic utterances by immigrant women capture something of the difference in the pervasive attitudes toward women, honor, and work in the two societies. Admittedly, women do tend to idealize the communist commitment to gender equality in Bulgaria and to stereotype gender inequality in Turkey. If language is not an exclusively referential tool but is social activity performed in relation to an audience (Garfinkel 1987; Goffman 1959), and if particular utterances become meaningful to the extent that they are construed as social action (Schieffelin et al. 1998), then the discourse of work as a fundamental fact of one's identity and dignity is a resource of communism that immigrant women draw on to manage their uneasy reception in Turkey. As such, it is a product of the contestations between locals and immigrants over proper gender roles.

However, I have argued against reducing such statements to mere strategy. Instead, I have tried to point to the ways in which immigrants, who hold a privileged standpoint for cross-cultural comparisons, actually analyze the distinctiveness of the gender regimes on the two sides of the border. In doing so, I have tried to tread the fine line between, on the one hand, uncovering immigrants' coping strategies in the face of present difficulties through recourse to the past and, on the other hand, avoiding the reduction of positive recollections only to strategic distortions of memory. I argue that immigrant women's "nostalgic" reminiscences convey both their negotiation with the different gender norms encountered in Turkey and their comparatively positive experiences under socialism in Bulgaria.

Notes

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1. According to the Settlement Law of 1934, which, with some revisions, is still in effect, those immigrants deemed to be "of Turkish stock" are automatically granted citizenship. However, the unconditional acceptance of the 1989 migrants into Turkey was predicated not just on their *soydaş* (ethnic kin) status but also on their flight from state—and, significantly, communist—persecution. Hence, the designation "political" that is often used to refer to them. Post-1990s migrants from Bulgaria, meanwhile, are not automatically granted citizenship although they too qualify as *soydaş*. See Danis and Parla 2009 for an analysis of how the Turkish state's privileging of migrants "of Turkish stock" has not been consistent but, rather, contingent on particular sociohistorical conjunctures as well as the needs of the labor market.

2. See Parla 2007 and Danis and Parla 2009 for the ways in which the seemingly neat analytic distinction between political migrant and economic migrant is more complex in terms of the actual experiences of the Turkish migrants from Bulgaria.

3. Alternatively, as Alexia Bloch (2005) demonstrates, neoliberal or conservative perspectives view postcommunist nostalgia as a form of "internal colonization," in which the privileges that were extended to a certain few under communism resulted in their ability or willingness to "forget" the oppression and humiliation that they themselves had had to endure.

4. For a similar, if sharper, expression of the same view, see Daskalova 2001, which glosses emancipation as "manipulated emancipation."

5. I owe this phrase to Alexander Kiossev.

6. Some scholars are also critical of the term *postsocialism*. For an incisive criticism of the ways in which the term obscures wider processes of globalization in the Eastern European region, see Leyla Keough's (2006) analysis of the transnational labor experiences of Moldovan women.

7. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for articulating this fundamental point.

8. Such convictions were not limited to migrants who settled in Istanbul, the most expensive city in Turkey, and therefore presumably the one that exerted the most pressure on the entire family to work. In Edirne, a city close to the Bulgarian border that has a significant population of Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria, Ayse

Nur Sülüş (2007) recorded similar sentiments regarding the role of work in women's lives. The 15 immigrant women she interviewed repeatedly underscored the significance of work, both for providing them financial security and independence and as an indispensable aspect of their identity. They also compared the situations of women in Turkey and in Bulgaria, and the latter invariably fared better in their assessments of career prospects and gender relations.

9. As work on memory and narrative in general has variously shown, there is an inevitable disjuncture between the lived and the remembered, or between the telling and the told. For the Turkish context, in particular, Leyla Neyzi has been systematically and compellingly exploring this disjuncture through her work with oral histories that go against the grain of official nationalist historiography; see, for example, Neyzi 2002 and 2004.

10. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for highlighting how immigrants may stereotype locals and Ayfer Bartu Candan for alerting me to the danger of reproducing that particular emic perspective in my own analysis.

11. See Boym 2001 and Boyer 2006 for the interesting genealogy of the term.

12. Heyat (2002) suggests that women's return to traditional roles since the breakdown of communist rule is in part a reaction to what the community perceived as the defeminization of women by the Soviet system (see also Tohidı 2000).

13. An assertion whose legacy can be traced, of course, to second-wave feminism's insistence on politicizing the personal.

14. Less immediately relevant for this specific argument but certainly important in terms of the political implications of nostalgic practice, Gal and Kligman also caution that "the assertion of women's advantageous position in communism continues as an aspect of public discourse, one that—we argue—serves to delegitimize women's political activity in postcommunism" (2000:8).

15. See Ghodsee 2005 for a detailed account of state-provided benefits for women under communism in Bulgaria.

16. Mary Neuburger, however, claims there were also alternative representations in this same period reflecting level of local culture and coexistence–interaction: "common views of Bulgarian nationalism since 1878 as 'virtually equated with anti-Turkish sentiment,' belie the complexity of both the elite project of cultural construction of the Bulgarian nation and inter-ethnic relations at the local level" (1997:2).

17. For two minority-member life narratives that are diametrically opposed in terms of the individuals' identification with Bulgaria and with communism, see Parla 2006.

18. These efforts were intended, in Höpken's view, "to hasten the emergence of a socialist Turkish intellectual elite" (1997:64).

19. See Elchinova 2005 for a detailed account of the significance of the term *revival*.

20. Bates even posits that, "to a great extent, the Moslem population had accepted socialist ideology and goals, but now the government and Party lost their legitimacy. Even today, few other than intellectuals and those active in the UDF [Union of Democratic Forces] or its successor opposition parties criticize communist social policy; they reject it as a moral authority because of its corruption of an ideal" (1994:211).

21. I owe my inspiration here to Lynne Haney (1999), who has argued that the protests of mothers to the proposed liberal restructuring of the welfare system in Hungary were not mere expressions of dissent but were actually a comparative analysis of different historical regimes in Hungary.

22. Members of both groups can vote in Bulgaria because they all hold Bulgarian passports, with the 1989 immigrants having dual citizenship and the post-1990s migrants having only Bulgarian citizenship. In fact, various migrant organizations in Turkey organize

bus transport free of charge to facilitate voting. Furthermore, the Turkish state also encourages voting by granting the irregular migrants free but temporary residency permits in return for voting in the Bulgarian elections, thus instrumentalizing migrant irregularity to extend its own transnational political power (Kaslı and Parla 2009). In addition to voting practices, the differences between the two groups of migrants in terms of legal status and settlement strategies are important with regard to the question of whether nostalgia for communism is part of a desire to return "home." The post-1990s migrants who engage in circular migration have not really left Bulgaria permanently. As for the 1989 immigrants who have settled in Turkey, physical "returns" did happen among the elderly after retirement. It remains to be seen whether Bulgaria's EU membership will have an impact on people's future plans for return, although so far it has not seemed to affect the generation of women I refer to here.

23. Interview with A.G., Cemberlitas Balkan Turks Solidarity Association, February 2008.

24. Nichols and Sugur also asked men what they think about their wives working. Typical responses included "Women shouldn't work. If women work, there will be no peace in the house" and "Women's place is in the home. A woman's main duty is to look after the children, do the washing and serve her husband" (Nichols and Sugur 2004:50–51).

25. Until 1990, for example, the penal code stipulated reduction of sentence against a man convicted of rape if the raped woman was a sex worker.

26. As late as 1999, such tests were routinely performed by state-appointed doctors on women who infringed on "public morality and rules of modesty." In particular, the tests were done on political detainees, women suspected of prostitution, and girls in state orphanages, dormitories, and high schools. The practice continued sporadically even after 1999.

27. Kogacıoglu writes.

We all know that if we don't act "properly" with regard to honor, something might happen. No matter how we might trivialize the significance honor has in our lives, we still adjust our behavior accordingly. Despite all the differences and inequalities between us, honor plays a major role in many of the choices we make, from how we sit and stand to which parts of the city we travel, to which mode of transportation we choose, to when we make love. We live in Turkey under a regime where women's bodies are disciplined through the construct of honor and where women discipline themselves through this construct. [2007, translation mine].

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