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Migration Experiences and Changes of Identity. The Analysis of a Narrative

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Abstract: This paper is based on the analysis of an autobiographical narrative interview with a Turkish woman living in Germany. I analyze the process of identity changes influenced by the narrator's migration experiences. It has at least two aspects. One aspect refers to the cultural roots of the narrator. New experiences have changed her self-image of being a woman. A second aspect is connected with the narrator's life course. The narrative shows how a naive girl has become an adult and independent woman. Being a woman is defined with the help of categories belonging to Western culture. Therefore, the process of migration is related to losing culturally influenced ways of describing the narrator's identity. As a result, she becomes a stranger in her homeland, but she also remains a stranger in the country to which she migrated. I analyze the narrator's work on this problem.

1. Introduction

An autobiographical narrative interview with Hülya—a migrant woman from Turkey—serves as an interesting example of biographical material. It enables us to carry out the analysis of various aspects of one's biography and social processes that an individual can be involved in when migrating. This life story exemplifies general features of the process of individuals' mobility which can be considered one of the characteristic phenomena of modern societies. According to PARK (1950, p.349), contemporary migration has been transmuted from the previous form of invasion—caused, for example, by wars, epidemics,

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revolutions—to the peaceful penetration of migrating individuals. Thus, in modern societies migration does not have to be the consequence of rapid or dramatic changes in social environments when, as the result, one group is displaced by the other. Nevertheless, the process always affects an immigrant-receiving society. It refers to both those who migrate and to the society to which the migration takes place. In each case it is interpreted differently. Emigrants must face problems of adaptation in new social and cultural environments; whereas the immigrant receiving society must solve problems related to new-comers, taking into account not only their economic needs but also social and cultural differences, which may or may not be accepted.

In my country migration is still a new phenomenon if we consider Poland as an immigrant-receiving society. In comparison with Western European countries it is a marginal phenomenon, although the situation has been gradually changing since 1989. On the other hand, the people of my nation are very experienced in migrating. For example, since the beginning of the 19th century we have had numerous huge waves of emigration due to political and economic reasons. The last remarkable wave took place in the early 1980s when communist authorities established marshal law to suppress the Solidarity movement.

No doubt, migration gained its specific symbolic meaning in the Polish tradition because of its political aspect: again and again many outstanding persons had to leave the country. In such cases, mourning the lost homeland was their main experience. This sorrow has been emphatically expressed in Polish literature and poetry. It is enough to mention that the Polish Romantic artistic output was created abroad by the artists for whom longing for the country they left behind was the major theme of many of their masterpieces.

Political reasons for Polish migration were sometimes “overused” by those who aimed to leave the country because for economic reasons, especially during the decade of the 1980s. During that time many people left the country asking for political asylum, when economic needs were the real motives behind their decision to leave. This aspect of migration is still important and it has always been more significant to the majority of those Poles who decided to migrate. In order to improve their fate Poles were leaving for richer European countries, South America (e.g. Brazil), and above all, the United States. The United States has always been identified in the Polish tradition as the country of freedom and welfare. This economic immigration has been called “za chlebem” which can be translated as “looking for bread,” and is treated in Poland as a symbol of fulfilling basic human needs. From this perspective, migration remains an important process in the social history of Poland. These types of Polish emigrants became protagonists of the “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America” by THOMAS & ZNANIECKI (1918-1920) in which the proposal of biographical studies was presented. By focusing on autobiographies of Polish peasant emigrants and their correspondence with their families back home, the authors analyzed the process of social change.

Thus, taking into account the Polish “position” in the migration process, my analysis has focused on the perspective of immigrants, in this case Hülya’s perspective, and not the societies that receive them. Some aspects of Hülya’s life story are not as clear to me as they are to my German colleagues knowing the social and cultural context of Hülya’s experiences as an immigrant in Germany.¹

2. The Analysis of the Narrative

2.1. Introductory remarks

Biographical interview analysis usually begins with expressing general comments related to first impressions after reading the text of the interview.² My remarks refer mostly to the first part of the narrative.

The first comment is connected with Hülya’s command of the German language.³ According to the translator she speaks German very well; this can also be seen in the English version of the transcription. Hülya does not have problems with describing feelings, emotions, motives, let alone events of her life. Nevertheless, her skill at describing life experiences with the help of specifically selected symbolic categories is amazing. I particularly think of these narrative sequences in which she tells about the official procedures which contract laborers migrating to Germany had to pass through and about the situation of Turkish migrants in Germany. Whenever Hülya introduces this topic she effectively creates the image of more or less passive masses of people who are at the mercy of powerful authorities. For example, she uses expressions (“we were just a number, not personality any more” [219], “he had to /eh/ take a look, a close look /eh/ what is he paying for” [257-258], “no pride was left afterwards” [311]⁴ which seem to perfectly characterize the situation of emigrants. In my opinion, Hülya’s description corresponds with INOWLOCKI’s and LUTZ’s et al. (1998) remarks (presented in their paper in Montreal) about the language used by the German authorities organizing Turkish labor migration. Some terms like “transport,” “epidemic-hygienic reasons” (“seuchen-hygienische Gründe”) had been used by the Nazi-German regime,

¹ This problem is discussed in the paper of GÜLTEKIN, INOWLOCKI and LUTZ presented in this issue.

² I refer to the stage of oral collective work on narrative interviews when each participant of a group analyzing a specific case shares his or her first impressions with the others after reading the text of the interview. Although it is just an introductory step of textual interpretation, it is, in my opinion, very important. It enables the participants to take into account different frames of interpretation that may be represented by each interpreter.

³ The narrator’s language abilities are deeply analyzed by FRANCESCHINI in this issue.

⁴ The numbers in brackets refer to the line numbers of the interview, enclosed in this issue.

and they expressed doubts with regard to the “sufficient capacity” of persons deciding to migrate. This correspondence is more pronounced when Hülya uses categories belonging to the symbolic universe of the country which she had migrated to. For example, she makes the comparison to gas chambers in concentration camps: “We had a shower /eh/ downstairs for the whole house. It looked /eh/ like gas /eh/ chambers in concentration camps, this shower. From above /eh/. All three four /eh/ of us went in there right away because the water always turned cold so fast” (454-457). I wonder whether she fully realizes the meaning of this comparison, especially when it is used as a means of creating a gloomy image of Turkish labor migrants inhumanely exploited in Germany.

A second comment relates to the first one. I have been amazed by the narrator’s self presentation. Hülya seems to be a person who thinks a lot (even if we consider her specific biographical situation at the time of the interview) about her identity problems and her emotional life. In almost every narrative segment she comments on her experiences. The commentaries serve to evaluate the narrator’s past motives from her present perspective, to refer to her past state of mind, but they also serve to “plan” or introduce future events and the narrator’s reactions: for example, “I was *lucky or unlucky*⁵ that I passed after all” (244), “somehow treated in an inhuman way, *already* in Istanbul” (226). These kinds of commentaries in the form of short allusions show that Hülya has developed a distance to her biographical story and that she controls it to some extent. These remarks especially refer to the first part of the narrative, when Hülya tells about her youth, and the first two years of migration. I do not suggest that the narration was planned and that it is not a spontaneously recounted story.⁶ I just want to stress that this style of narration and argumentation is a distinct feature of Hülya’s story. In my previous research experience I very rarely read such narratives. If I did, they usually belonged to highly educated persons who had well-developed language skills and, in general, they were often used to tell stories (for example, teachers).⁷ Thus, Hülya’s narrative serves as very good material for analyzing biographical work on life experiences of an immigrant.

My work on this interview is based on Fritz SCHÜTZE’s procedure for narrative analysis, focusing primarily on its first two steps—the analysis of schemes of communication and structural description.⁸ Nevertheless, I do not

⁵ In italics I mark expressions that allusively refer to future events which the narrator as an actor could not anticipate at that specific time.

⁶ Narration about biographical experiences should not be pre-rehearsed in order to reveal what happened in the social area under study from the point of view of individuals acting in it (SCHÜTZE, unpublished, p.3).

⁷ In my research I mainly interview older people in Poland. I am interested in their war experiences and usually ask them to concentrate on this phase of their lives, with the rest of their lives serving as background. My research interests have focused on problems of national identity, displacement and the collective image of the war.

⁸ The first step aims to identify different schemes of communication which are present in a story in order to analyze how much of the empirical text material is the result of extempore

refer directly to this stage of analytical work, e.g., I do not present detailed structural descriptions of narrative segments. In my opinion, there are at least two ways of presenting the approaches of dealing with the substance of the interview. One refers directly to analytical steps and shows the exact way of proceeding, the other aims to present more general comments on the case which had been studied. Here, I choose the second way of presentation, i.e., I only concentrate on a specific aspect of Hülya's experiences as a labor migrant—her changes of identity.

2.2. The process of identity changes

According to Anselm STRAUSS (1969) identity is subjected to constant processes of change. Although an individual tends to minimize this process and establishes strategies for gaining a sense of personal continuity, transformations of identity are an immanent part of each biography. Nevertheless, the change is usually processual. Following experiences gradually make an individual change his or her self-definitions. Changes can be marked by turning points constituted by critical incidents. These moments in a biography enable an individual to see the change and make him or her explore and validate new aspects of self (STRAUSS 1969, p.93). The biographical situation of an immigrant generates many critical incidents which reflect the impact of this experience on one's identity.

A striking example of the 'milestone' is found in the autobiographies of many immigrants to America who later visited their native lands, only then realizing how little affinity they had retained, how identified they had become with America and Americans. Any return home, insofar as you have really left it, will signalize some sort of movement in identity (STRAUSS 1969, p.93-94).

Hence, past changes can usually be clearly defined and evaluated from the perspective of the present. In the case of the analyzed narrative, subsequent visits to their home country play a crucial role in the process of reflective awareness of an individual's identity changes.

The deeper the change, the more elaborated the biographical work that has to be done in order to integrate one's experiences into more or less coherent wholeness. Therefore, coming to terms with fragile aspects of one's identity can be a complicated and long-time process (STRAUSS, CORBIN, GLASER, & MAINES, 1984). Such situations particularly refer to unexpected experiences that can force an individual to face totally new challenges, e.g., illness and physical disability. Biographical narrative interviews are very rich data for analyzing this process of identity change and a narrator's biographical work on it because in his or her story the narrator reconstructs the processual logic of

narration of individual experiences. Structural description attempts to depict the social and biographical processes rendered by the narrative (SCHÜTZE unpublished, p.3).

events (HERMANNNS, 1987, p.50). In the case that we are dealing with here, the narrator has serious problems with her poor health that surely influence her self image, as can be seen in various segments of her interview.

I am going to reconstruct the experiences of Hülya's biography which initiated the process of identity change, and present her biographical work on it. However, I do not concentrate on Hülya's experience with illness; I will only refer to those dimensions of her biography that are related to the collective aspect of her experiences connected with the process of migration. In this context, identity changes can be commented on from two perspectives. The first is related to Hülya's life course when the naive girl (which appears from the first pages of the narrative) changes into the mature woman. The second is related to the narrator's cultural background. Social and cultural differences between Turkey and Germany refer to (among others) differently defined roles of women in each society. In Hülya's biography these two perspectives are closely related to each other. Her redefinition of her identity can be understood against this background.

I refer to the following stages of her biography: Hülya as a young girl, the first and the second year of her stay in Germany, and the next four years of her migration.

2.3. Hülya as a young girl

At the beginning of the interview Hülya remembers her childhood and she presents herself as a teenage girl living in a typical rural Turkish family. She seems to be a sensitive and intelligent girl. The relatively good life of her family and her happy childhood are disturbed by her father's illness and his inability to work. Since that moment, poverty becomes the dominant experience of her family life. Hülya, the girl, analyzes its consequences: no future for her and her siblings and a miserable position for her mother in the family. She realizes that her mother will be permanently dependent on male members of the family. The girl also discovers what is going on "outside" of her life: She discovers that those Turks living in Germany are well off.

The poverty of her family is the first important experience of Hülya as the young girl. This stage of her biography has distinct features of trajectory⁹ initiated by the unexpected illness of her father. The memory of a relatively good childhood is replaced by the experience of poverty. She gradually realizes that there is no future for her and her family: "it was ... a calamity" (161). Hülya's dream about Germany has become the only positive project for the future. The teenage girl creates the image of her life: her temporary stay in Germany will

⁹ Biographical "trajectory" is used here in the sense of one of structural processes of the life course that represents the principle of being overwhelmed by outer events of the life course which cannot be controlled by the biography incumbent. Suffering is the basic experiential mode of biographical trajectory (RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE, 1992).

change the economic status of the family. This thought has become a base of her biographical action scheme.¹⁰ Such a project appears to be typical at this stage of the migration process when a person creates positive plans for the future. The plans are “located” in the immigrant-receiving society (RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE, 1992). In Hülya’s case a biographical action scheme appears very early, when the girl cannot realize it yet because she is too young. At the beginning it is just a dream and as long as the project is a dream Hülya’s experiences are related to intentional, planned social action regarding her future life. To some extent, her plan resembles a fairy tale—the teenage girl wants to become a fairy and change her family life. The more real the project becomes the less it remains a dream.

Hülya’s plan is contrasted with her parents’ project for her life: “No, you won’t go to Germany, you will stay here and one day you will get married and/and your husband /eh/ to take care of you” (157-158). But soon her parents change their minds and start supporting their daughter in her project, which also becomes their plan to solve the difficult situation of the family. Slowly, Hülya loses the ability of acting intentionally. Her parents and her brother start working on her project instead of her. The girl’s biographical action scheme is stopped at the stage of a great dream, whereas she starts to be gradually pushed into a sequence of events that overwhelm her biography.

But from the present perspective Hülya also attributes another meaning to these experiences. The father’s quoted words, when analyzed from the present perspective of her biography, can be treated as a symbol of Hülya’s image of life in Turkish society. She was expected to become an obedient woman who would depend and rely on her future husband. Here, we can find one of the most important motives for her migration. As the teenage girl, Hülya wants to improve the financial status of her family, but after some time it appears that she wants something more for herself—she wants to become more “independent” from socially and culturally defined roles of a woman reflected in Turkish culture. She also does not want to be manipulated as she was when her family worked on her leaving for Germany. This project becomes clear from the perspective of further life experiences, but the process of its crystallization begins at this moment. “... I wanted to be independent somehow, but I didn’t know: how, you know, but I also didn’t think about what would await me in Germany or so” (159-161).

¹⁰ I use quotation marks in order to stress that, in fact, Hülya’s departure for Germany was not a realization of the dream that she had as the young girl.

2.4. The first year in Germany

The “dream”¹¹ comes true. Leaving the family is very difficult. The seventeen year old girl enters the unknown world. The clash of her naive expectations with the reality which she encounters is very tragic. This experience is typical for a migrant biography when an individual having positive plans looks for a better future and gets disappointed by the circumstances and difficulties met at the place of migration. Instead of developing biographical action schemes an individual may enter a trajectory (RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE, 1992). In the case of Hülya these experiences are intensified by the girl’s vulnerability due to her young age. Although Hülya had been pushed by her family to migrate, she still has in mind her plan of improving the economic situation of the family.¹² As a result, she is subjected to very harmful experiences related to both collective (all other Turkish workers are treated the same) and individual (Hülya’s accidents) suffering. Thus, Hülya loses her ability to act intentionally. Work appears to be very difficult. She is forced to work in terrible conditions, but, at the same time, she cannot return home:

Well, I already wanted to give up in the beginning, to run away. I said, ‘I don’t care if I have money or not. I don’t want to stay here.’ But I /eh/ also didn’t have money. When I came to Germany we had to take money from other people. First, I had debts, that was an affair of honour, I had to pay this back. And, second, I always thought, no one will believe me when I tell them what /ehm/ has happened in Germany. And they will think that I might have stolen something. Or... and therefore the police has sent me home and so on. I say, ‘No’ and: I was also too proud to return again. To stay here was also /eh/ hell somehow (322-329).

In the quoted segment, Hülya analyzes her situation and gives the arguments preventing her from going home. All the reasons are related to collective expectations and evaluations of her behavior. First, she had to pay back the debts that were a matter of honor to her family. Hülya says “I had to pay this back” but I suppose that it was her father who had borrowed the money. Nevertheless, she felt responsible for delivering it. Second, Hülya felt that describing what she had gone through would be doubted because of the prevalent collective image of Germany as a welfare state. She suspected that this image was too strong to be shaken and she was afraid of being accused of not being equal to the task she had taken on. Thus, Hülya is in a tragic situation, because although

¹¹ A biographical action scheme is one of the structural processes of the life course representing intentional and long range planned social action regarding one’s own life (SCHÜTZE, 1981).

¹² We can assume that if the circumstances of work in Germany had not been inhumane, perhaps she would have been able to develop (or rather come back to) a biographical action scheme even though she had experienced difficulties at the first stage of migration (new environment, longing for her family, etc.).

she would like to return home, she cannot do so. There is no way out and each solution must cause suffering. The experience of trajectory is developing and it is strengthened by Hülya's accidents which make her suffer (physically) more than others.

The first year in Germany may be described in the context of the entire life story as "a hard school of life." The seventeen year old girl has to face unexpected experiences, do things she would never do in her country: endure pain and physical disability. Some of these experiences (like her poor health) will accompany further phases of Hülya's biography. Nevertheless, the first year remains the outstanding phase of suddenly passing from the naiveté of teenage life to the maturity of young adulthood. However, these changes are still not supported by changes in Hülya's image of belonging to Turkish culture. She continues to act according to culturally defined patterns. It can be seen in the above presented argument in which she relates her decisions to the expectations of her family.

Thus, Hülya continues at this stage of her biography to define herself with the help of well known categories from her (Turkish) community. She accepts her situation of depending on the expectations of others, including German employers, because she does not have the means, both in a symbolic and material sense, to act on her own—Hülya can neither speak German nor live on her own. In this context the symbolic event representing Hülya's first year in Germany is referred to in the story by the account of receiving a permit of residence for the next year of her stay (418-448). She, as well as other Turkish girls, did not have an idea of "What's that supposed to be?" (429-430), how to arrange it and what might have been the consequences of not having the permit of residence. Hülya and the other girls were helped by the brother of a friend in the dormitory: "we were glad ((she laughs)) and happy that (eh) someone had done it for us" (447-448).

The story about the permit of residence points out a few aspects of Hülya's biographical experiences of that time. I have mentioned the first aspect: another biographical experience is related to Hülya's specific vulnerability due to her young age. The second aspect refers to the situation of her migrant group (I presume, Turkish migrant workers in general). The migrants are treated as passive parts of a working machine and they seem to comply with these circumstances: "... we didn't carry this through ourselves, the firm did everything" (420-421). They have no idea what their rights as workers are. Hence, they can be easily abused by the firm. Therefore, Hülya expresses in her story the feeling of injustice. But the migrant workers also do not know enough about legal requirements which they have to meet as foreign citizens. Therefore, Hülya has no chance to act intentionally and she also does not feel the need to build her independence.

2.5. The second year of Hülya's stay in Germany

During her first year in Germany Hülya lives as if in two worlds. One world is her work, the second world is the community of girls in the dormitory. All of them are in the same situation. In the second year Hülya loses her peer group which has been, aside from her family, her only reference group. For the first time she feels totally alone. She characterizes the second year as “a hard blow.” The first year of her stay in Germany includes the experience of hard physical work and physical suffering. In the second year she learns how to cope with the feeling of loneliness, and it appears to be even more difficult.

Hülya starts living with Turks who have been in Germany much longer than she has. As she recalls:

I was ./eh/ totally different /eh/ from how I am today. I am still sentimental, sensible today and I tend to act emotionally. I am not able to not look straight at someone sitting across from me /eh/ .. Neither do I—I also don't like superficial people. I don't like them either. But in former days I was even ..even more sensible/ I have (it) from home. Human things and and love and comfort were important for us and only machines were important here. The humans were not important. And then we were just /eh/ ... people practically who did the work, we didn't count as something else. But that made me so sad because our people had also become like that. Those had already been here for a couple of years, just money, nothing else, you know. They just wanted to have money (518-527).

In the quoted segment of the commentary Hülya refers to her experience of loneliness and suffering caused by longing for her family. These feelings are intensified by the comparison to the first year of her stay in Germany, when they could be soothed, at least to some extent, by her belonging to the peer group. Now Hülya has to cope with new experiences that create feelings of being different that are expressed at the beginning of the quoted segment. Then the narrator presents arguments to justify this feeling. Although she had already mentioned the lack of interest of other Turks when she arrived in Germany, it is, in my opinion, the first time she really feels that she distances herself from other fellow Turks. There is a generation gap between her as a teenage girl and her adult co-tenants. Hülya strongly experiences the clash of worlds. She defines it not only in categories of age differences but also as a discrepancy between her own world full of positive feelings and based on family life (perhaps a little idealized) and the world of Turkish (adult) immigrants to whom money seems to be the most important value. Hülya builds a contrast between herself, representing human values brought from her home, and Turkish migrants representing, in fact, a German style of life. This contrast is very important because for the first time she does not define herself as a member of the community that she formally joins, and she feels like an outsider in the group of her fellow country women and men. I regard this moment as one of the crucial

turning points in the process of Hülya's identity changes. Since that time the experience of being different has become the basic means to describe the narrator's identity.

In the analyzed fragment the difference is expressed by the reference to other Turkish labor migrants and to her own image when the narrator tries to evaluate her changes of identity from the perspective of the present. Now she regards herself as a person who, in the course of life, lost at least some part of her sensibility and who had to redefine her identity. The statement: "I was.../eh totally different from how I am today" (518-519) can be fully understood in the context of the next phases of her biography.

Being different is variously experienced during Hülya's life course. Though the process of identity change is continuously developing, Hülya is still not conscious of its character (this can be determined from the present perspective) and intensity. Nevertheless, at this phase of her biography, the experience of being different becomes a "key experience" which step by step results in distancing herself from her family and values offered by Turkish society.

2.6. The next four years

There are two main lines at this stage of Hülya's biography: her marriage and phases of serious illness. This part of the narrative is not as clear as the story about the narrator's first two years in Germany. But while the ambiguity of her illness as it appears in her narrative is the result of doctors' silence, the vagueness of Hülya's story about her marriage shows that she tries to block from awareness certain aspects of her biography and that coming to terms with the transformation of her identity is still in process.

In 1976 (four years after leaving home) Hülya gets married in Turkey. During these years she has been thinking about returning home: "I didn't want to return to Germany. I wanted to go back to Turkey. I could not imagine that I /eh/ would endure this here for fourteen years" (546-548). There are a few reasons that make her treat her stay in Germany as a short episode in her biography. First, she has always planned a temporary stay in Germany; second, the first years in Germany were connected with experiences of suffering; third, she is strongly attached to her family, especially to her mother (from another part of the narrative we can learn that she has always had a close relationship with her mother); and fourth, Germany is still a distant country—she does not speak German and she has no relationships with German people. All these reasons support her decision to get married.

Hülya describes her marriage in two parts of the narrative (546-573 and 671-731) which are divided by the long story about the health problems she experienced when she went back to Germany for a year as a newly married woman. I do not always refer to both segments chronologically when looking for reasons for Hülya's decisions concerning and explanations of her failure.

There are two significant dimensions of the narrator's experiences: one is Hülya's attitude to her marriage, the other is the role of her mother in arranging the marriage.

Hülya's attitude towards her marriage is shaped by the process of a gradual change in her identity. The experiences that she reported earlier played a crucial role in the process of redefining her identity. But Hülya can recognize their meaning from the more distant time perspective—her marriage begins the process of conscious reflection on her identity. Hülya has spent four years in Germany but in deciding to get married she negates experiences she has gained during this time. She acts according to well known patterns which are traditionally grounded in Turkish society—"One day you will get married and/and your husband has /eh/ to take care of you" (157-158). So she gets married. But soon she feels uncomfortable in the new situation because she cannot adjust, or, rather, come back to the role of the Turkish woman. Hülya gradually begins identifying herself as a person who no longer can act according to the expectations of her traditional environment. Experiences of her stay in Germany acquire a new meaning in the process of her interpretation of her biographical situation.

Hülya tries to explain why she decides to get married. She does not love her future husband and she also does not have a chance to get familiar with him and develop emotional attachments. She spent this phase of her life course working very hard in Germany. In this description Hülya presents two scenarios of the young girl. The first one is the preplanned marriage of convenience which is supported by both families. The second one is getting to know somebody as the result of being a member of a peer group. As she sees it, one of the scenarios is part of traditional Turkish culture, the other, of Western culture. Although Hülya does not miss the Western teenage life style and she subordinates herself to her family, it is important that she has already learned that there exists another possibility for a girl/woman to plan her biography. Perhaps as the result of this knowledge, she makes her husband accept a one year leave for Germany in order to keep at least some independence in her future marriage.

The situation when a newly married woman is leaving her husband and negotiating as long a leave as possible (Hülya prefers two years) appears rather bizarre if looking at it from the outside. A question arises: Why does she distance herself from family life which she treats as the most important value? The answer is related to her identity changes. Hülya does not neglect family ties as such, but she cannot accept herself in the role of a traditional Turkish wife. Thus, the process of the destruction of Hülya's marriage starts from its very beginning. The only motives to get married are identification with the Turkish culture and expectations of others (mother and father) and these motives gradually weaken.

It is interesting to compare Hülya's way of argumentation with the previously quoted commentary. Now she says:

I said 'I have nothing, no money, didn't buy anything either' I say. At any rate I had been in Germany for four, five years.. /Eh/ 'When I have children later and so that I ... can tell (them) at least that I had been to Germany and that I had bought this or that and so on, memories and some electric things and household goods and so on' (566-570).

Here Hülya uses arguments that she previously neglected when accusing "experienced" Turkish immigrants of appreciating money as the most important value. Now she acts in a similar way. On the other hand, she wants to go back to Germany in order to make sense of the hard work she experienced there from the very beginning. Hülya devoted four years of her life to support her family, now she wants to turn these hard experiences to her advantage.

After a year Hülya returns from Germany with serious health problems. She expects that her husband and his family will also experience her suffering as their (family) problem. But to the contrary, Hülya's duties as a wife are considered by them far more important than the state of her health. As a result, physical suffering caused by a series of illnesses "helps" the narrator to concentrate on her personal experiences. Hülya starts to crystallize her attitude towards the social environment and she slowly refuses to be a part of a marriage of cultural need. She defines it as a cultural pattern that has become empty for her. Thus, Hülya does not describe the failure of her marriage in terms of a personal experience (as she does in the case of her illness), such as lost feelings, missed hopes, unhappiness, but she does it in terms of belonging to two completely different worlds. She is no longer part of the Turkish society as she had known it before.

Another important aspect influencing Hülya's experiences is her mother's role in organizing the marriage. Although the marriage was preplanned by both families, Hülya's mother played a major role in this process. It is not clear to me to what extent the narrator's mother was the one who supported her daughter's migration to Germany. Perhaps she was supporting her husband's decisions. When Hülya left, her mother suffered from loneliness; she also saw her daughter's miserable state of health. When Hülya got married her mother suffered by seeing her unhappy, but at the same time she could not accept that her daughter would try to reorganize her life (for example, Hülya's mother did not accept the divorce). Thus, the role of the narrator's mother in her biography is ambivalent. On the one hand, there was a very strong positive emotional relationship between the mother and daughter but on the other hand it was, in fact, her mother who made Hülya accept the marriage which appeared to be a great misunderstanding. Nevertheless, Hülya tries to remain loyal to her mother and she uses various strategies in order not to blame her openly. For example, through the entire interview Hülya presents her mother as her most important significant other; she also stresses her mother's suffering caused by her longing for her and then by problems in her (Hülya's) marriage; moreover, when Hülya says that her mother's expectations forced her to accept, and then continue, the

marriage for some time, she usually weakens the importance of this fact by pointing to others representing the same position, for example: “only my mother and my parents/ well, actually I was a victim (Hadn’t been constrained) but my mother and my parents/ well actually I was a victim” (729-730). After saying “my mother” she immediately adds “my parents” or she says, “our mothers, my mother and my mother-in-law have experienced life quite differently. They only accept one reason for divorce, my mother or /eh/ Turkish women” (718-719). From this perspective her mother represents collective expectations and she is not the only person to be blamed.

Hülya decides to leave her husband in 1978, and gets divorced in 1980. From field notes we learn that 1980 was also the year of her mother’s death, which she witnessed. The narrator does not speak about this in her story. I find two possible explanations of this fact. First, she does not want to reveal this traumatic experience in the interview situation and suppresses her mourning. Second, she does not mention her mother’s death because of the constraints of story telling¹³, she should explain the coincidence of the date of her divorce with her mother’s death and this could cause the need for descriptions of mutual relationships and her mother’s role in the unsuccessful design of Hülya’s biography. This would be true especially since the narrator identifies herself as the victim of this design: “I always sacrificed myself for other people” (731).

Although Hülya cannot see any single advantage of her marriage (the only consequence was getting the status of a “divorced woman”), it is one of the most important turning points in her identity change. She becomes aware of her independence and responsibility for her project of life. The history of Hülya’s marriage has become the first clear sign of her identity change. She starts it as a traditional Turkish woman—the daughter fulfilling expectations of her parents—but she quickly realizes that she is no longer the same person. The marriage has become a misunderstanding because her project of life no longer corresponds with the stereotypical image of a Turkish woman. Thus, the year 1980 is a symbolic cutting of the umbilical cord in the sense of the closest family ties (that is her mother’s death) as well as social and cultural relationships with her home country—Hülya attains the status of a divorced woman which stigmatizes her in Turkish society. I think that from this moment on she stops considering Turkey as the country to which she would like to return.¹⁴ This supposition can be supported by the “German” line of Hülya’s biography.

In 1978 the narrator applies for compensation.¹⁵ For the first time she decides to act in her own behalf in Germany. “I had to learn how to go the way,

¹³ According to SCHÜTZE there are three constraints to story telling: the constraint to close the form, to condense, and to go into details (cf. HERMANNNS, 1987).

¹⁴ Although in different parts of the narrative Hülya declares her readiness to go back one day, she also mentions frequently the reasons why she does not feel like returning.

¹⁵ It is also the year when she definitely decides to leave her husband and she tells about compensation in the next segment of the narrative (just after the story about her marriage).

how to go to a labor court, how you (get) a lawyer /eh/ I said ‘I have to do all of this by myself. I have to get my experiences’ (741-742). We may compare this decision with her statement referring to the end of the first year in Germany: “Well, everyone of us got a permit of residence for three months, we were glad ((she laughs)) and happy that /eh/ someone had done this for us” (447-448). Learning to be independent is not an easy task. She receives compensation but she does not achieve full success because, as she learns later, she has chosen the wrong lawyer. Nevertheless, thanks to compensation she can start living on her own.

At the same time Hülya loses her job and, in order to earn her living, she has to accept a job in gastronomy, treating it as a temporary situation. This work is “A kind of work which I had never ((she laughs)) liked: In the gastronomy, in the kitchen. At that time I didn’t want to be out of work any /eh/ longer. I said ‘If you want to, you can do everything’. And later on when I find something better I’d get another job” (792-793). Therefore, Hülya starts looking for a job she could and would like to do. The comparison of this attitude with the first year of Hülya’s stay in Germany shows that now she gains the ability to act intentionally and plan her life, even if she is aware of constraints on her situation.

In 1980 Hülya starts learning German. She decides to do it after eight years of being in Germany. This is another step of being independent and not at another’s mercy, such as in the first year of her stay when she could not communicate with German superiors. Hülya gradually learns how to be independent and what it means to be independent. She organizes her life and changes from a passive to an active person. This change refers to both the “Turkish” and the “German” line of her biography. Turkey remains her homeland, whereas she begins to treat Germany as the country where she prefers to live right now. The fact that she started learning German in 1980 is further proof that this year was a turning point in her biography. Hülya definitely changed her status in Turkey. We do not know if she decided at the same time to choose Germany as her country of residence. The idea of learning the language may support this supposition. Nevertheless, the knowledge of language enables her to change her status in Germany. She can no longer be considered a “working machine,” having no rights and being treated as “half human” because of limited possibilities of communication.¹⁶

3. Conclusions

Hülya’s first eight years of migration are a time of fundamental changes in her identity. As I intended to present, they are related to specific sequences of the

¹⁶ She presents such an image describing her first year in Germany.

narrator's experiences as a migrant laborer. The first two years present a great shock for her, especially given her vulnerability as a seventeen year old girl. Events of this time have made her more mature and experienced. Thus, during the next years the process of identity changes refers to her image of being an adult person (woman). These changes began at the time of her migration, but Hülya gradually realizes that she is no longer the same person because she cannot act in accordance with the earlier concept of her identity. She verifies this conviction in the course of visits or vacations, her marriage, and her mother's death. All of these experiences make her realize that she has become increasingly different from the expected model of a Turkish woman: "I am not this ... good ... little mother of the family daughter of the family who has been influenced from infancy" (927-928). While living in Germany she learns how to cope with problems on her own. She tastes independence: "I know more about the world" (927).

As I suggested, the experience of being different plays a crucial role in this process. Hülya starts identifying herself as somebody who is different, at first in her peer group, then in her Turkish environment, then in Turkish society, and finally in German society. I have already discussed the first two aspects of this experience. Let me now turn to her attitude towards Turkish and German societies.

The quoted self-commentary and other statements show that changes in her identity are related to different images of women in Turkish and German societies. According to Hülya, such values as being financially and morally independent and having your own life project are not accepted in the cultural pattern of being a woman in Turkish society. Therefore, Hülya describes changes in her identity using categories referring to men's and women's roles in both societies, and that is the main reason for feeling like an outsider in her country of origin. Fourteen years after her migration she neither identifies with Turkey as a country nor with the lifestyle of Turkish society. Hülya's image of a woman is what motivates her own choices, especially her decision to live in Germany. Hülya concentrates on stressing contrasts to give a reasonable background to the interpretation of her choices.

The narrator has passed through all the stages of a migration process: great plans for a better life (biographical action scheme), great disappointments when dreams clash with reality (trajectory—in her case intensified by illness), a stabilization of biography (RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE, 1992). She has achieved her aim after many difficulties. But in her post-coda commentary Hülya characterizes herself as an "empty" person. Why is she not satisfied? What is the price for her independence? For sure, her chronic illness is one of the important experiences influencing her feelings. But first of all, the "emptiness" is connected with the feeling of being a stranger both in Turkey and in Germany. She identifies with German society but her Turkish origins remain a stigma. Thus, Hülya gains the status of a marginal person in both societies.

The case of Hülya serves as a very good example of a marginal person—the concept introduced by PARK (1950) and STONEQUIST (1961). “The marginal man is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures” (PARK, 1950, p.XV). Such a situation may occur as a result of migration.

Although Hülya is in a marginal position in both societies, her own interpretation of this situation is different in the case of each country. The narrator does not accept the way in which Turkish society evaluates her status as a (divorced) woman. Therefore, Hülya chooses the role of marginal person in Turkish society. She distances herself from its values, and she is not up to date to what is going on in Turkish life, politics, economy etc. Whereas in Germany she is situated in a marginal position of not being accepted in German society because of her being different. Hülya represents a minority which is “partially assimilated and psychologically identified with the dominant group without being fully accepted” (STONEQUIST 1961, p.121). STONEQUIST enumerates three possibilities for a marginal person to develop his or her biography: “1) assimilation into the dominant group; 2) assimilation into the subordinate group; or 3) some form of accommodation, perhaps only temporary and incomplete, between the two groups” (p.130). In my opinion, Hülya represents the third type. She is in-between two cultures. She has distanced herself from Turkish society and at the same time, being a Turk, she aspires to be a member of German society.

The paradox of her case refers to the fact that (in terms of her present identity) she is no longer a Turkish woman, and she is also not an accepted German citizen although she wants to be a part of German society. That is why she talks about going back “one day.” But I think she will not because of the significant changes in her identity.

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