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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
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Sinning Men, Sinful Places:
Spatial Politics of Moral Transgressions in the Franco-German Borderland
by
Oguz Alyanak

A dissertation presented to
The Graduate School
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2019
St. Louis, Missouri

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and to produce a piece of writing that I hope has some soul. Aria has been an invaluable source of knowledge, especially with regards to Islamic jurisprudence. I learned so much about Islamic philosophy by sitting in classes taught by him. Both Kedron and Rebecca were instrumental in helping me cultivate a more robust analytical framework, and to pose critical questions which will help further anthropological knowledge. And finally, Geoff... What a great guy to work with! His enthusiasm to produce a good ethnography, and his ambition to teach us what ethnography means, and why it matters have been critical to the completion of my dissertation. This work has also benefited from conversations with colleagues outside of my committee. Thank you Beverly Hoca, and Professor Bauman, for introducing me to the discipline of cultural anthropology back in Istanbul in 2009. And thank you Professors Akgönül and de Tapia for finding the time to sit down with me at various occasions to talk about my research project in Strasbourg.

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I am writing this acknowledgement section from a tent I set up with fellow colleagues from the Washington University Graduate Workers Union on the Brookings Quadrangle, at Washington University's Danforth Campus. We have been occupying this space together for the last few nights to have the administration respond to our demands for a fair minimum wage and free child care for all workers on campus. I salute all of them in gratitude, and solidarity. Change, I am sure, is not only necessary, but also imminent. What a fantastic group of graduate workers to share this moment!

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May 2019
St. Louis

To my mother,
Nilgün Erulu.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sinning Men, Sinful Places:

Spatial Politics of Moral Transgressions in the Franco-German Borderland

by

Oguz Alyanak

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

Washington University in St. Louis, 2019

Professor John Bowen, Chair

Where do Muslim Turkish men who live in Strasbourg go after work? What are the kinds of places they socialize? Is it home? Is it the mosque? Or is it elsewhere, like coffeehouses, or wherever the car takes them in Strasbourg, and beyond, such as nightclubs, drinking alleys, bistro-casinos and brothels in Kehl and other neighboring German cities? And if it is the latter, and it rarely should be, as the imams would warn the pupils attending religious conversation circles, and the Friday sermons, how do these men justify their presence in these spaces? How do they reflect on their moral transgressions, and come to terms with them?

This dissertation is a collection of stories of Muslim Turkish men in Strasbourg who sin. And repent. And then, sin again. The men whose stories I recount are not much different than other men of faith in that they live their lives fearing an authority: God/Allah. Almost all of them are cognizant that the eternal rewards they will get in *Cennet*, that is, the Heaven, outcompete the luxuries they can enjoy in this world. And that means that they would have to suffer now in order to find comfort in the afterworld. Yet, the desires of the mortal body are often times too hard to tame. And that is not only because the joys in life are too tempting. It is true that the youth want to “live life.” That piety can wait. And sins are to be committed in their journey to old age. But it

is also that the intimacies and respect my interlocutors seek at work, at home, or even at the mosque, are sometimes simply lacking. Hence, they situate themselves in venues where they attain the fulfillment that they seek. The caveat, however, is that these venues are often inviting of sins. Even a place as seemingly innocuous as the coffeehouse can encourage activities that are condoned such as cigarette smoking, or illicit and therefore forbidden, such as alcohol consumption. Or a night that starts at a place like a coffeehouse can lead to a night out with friends to bars, nightclubs, casinos or brothels, all of which are a short car ride away. So, should these men simply refrain from visiting these places? Some do. But for many others, such limits on the self are futile. This dissertation is written with the intention of exploring such men's lives, and to provide an account of their moral failures, that is, their failures to be/come better Muslims, and their struggles amidst these failures.

Part I: The Borderland and Its Turks

Chapter 1: Introduction

“I revere religion—you know I do. I feel that it can impart strength to the feeble
and comfort to the afflicted, but does it affect all men equally?
Consider this vast universe: you will see thousands for whom it has never existed,
thousands for whom it will never exist, whether it be preached to them, or not;
and must it, then, necessarily exist for me?”

Letter from Young Werther to Wilhelm, November 15
Johann Wolfgang van Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther, p. 91

“Allah öldürür, alır dünyadan
Sen beni öldürdün hayatta bıraktın...
Cehennem ateşi ahirette olur
Seni beni dünyada ateşe attın.”¹

Verse from a famous Turkish arabesque song,
Lyrics, Ali Avaz; musical composition, Mustafa Sayan

1.1 *The Sorrows of Young H*

H may appear at first as one of many young France-born Turkish man I met when I first came to Strasbourg in 2013 to do my preliminary fieldwork. Born to Turkish parents from a Central Anatolian town, he had been raised in Strasbourg having learned about Islam, and Turkish history culture, at home and in the mosque association, or the *teşkilat*, the organization, as they referred to it, which he attended. Like most of his peers, he identified himself primarily through his nationalist connection to Turkey, a somewhat imaginary homeland that he visited from summer vacation to summer vacation with his parents as a kid, and with his friends now, and through his connection to Islam, a discursive tradition that he got to learn about in Strasbourg, one which not only “connects variously with the formation of moral selves,” according to Asad (2009a: 20), but also consists of “a set of interpretive sources and practices,” according to Bowen (2012: 3) that Muslims around the world learn and perform through their participation in this tradition.²

¹ “God kills one, takes him away from Earth; But when you killed me, you left me here, alive; Eternal Fire exists only in the afterworld; But you threw me into fire here, on Earth.

² For Asad, what constitutes a tradition is a set of discourses that shape the proper form and practice of its practitioner, but one which is also a product of its history. Asad, and scholars taught by Asad whom I benefit from in

H, like most of his peers did not continue his college education. Instead, he took up various *Interim* (temp agency) jobs. Unmarried at the age of 26, he could in some ways be considered an exception. He lived with his family in Hautepierre, in the low-income housing units (*HLMs*) of one of Strasbourg's migrant populated *quartiers* (lit. district, neighborhood), which was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s.³ Yet H was not the usual "quartier boy." He did not spend his teenage years hanging with friends out on the streets idling⁴, smoking shisha and *shit* (hashish), engaging in petty crime, dealing drugs, stealing car stereos, setting cars on fires, or combatting rival gangs and the police, thereby making a record of going in and out of juvenile correctional facilities. Likely given his father's past role as the head of a mosque association, he rarely found the chance to socialize with his peers, second and third generation

shaping my ways of thinking about Islam, are primarily interested in the conditions, past, present and future, that enable the formation of such a tradition. For Bowen, on the other hand, the emphasis is less on the powers that mold this tradition, and more on how Muslims draw or reflect on Islamic knowledge (both written, and orally transmitted) through their practices. While the former approach enables a more critical analysis of the institutional forces that shape Islamic interpretation and practice, I find the latter more helpful in thinking through ways Muslims draw on variable, and sometimes contradicting, interpretations to create boundaries as to what constitutes proper moral conduct. This is what I am primarily interested in this dissertation.

³ The HLMs in such quartiers, however, were not always flooded with migrants. In fact, as Jocelyne Cesari writes (2005a), they were originally built with the intention to serve as "a stepping stone on the path of social mobility." Those with lower incomes, French and migrant alike, would live in them until they could afford better housing in quartiers closer to the city center. What happened, Cesari continues, was that whereas the French gained the social mobility to move out of such quartiers, the migrants did not, hence making them "no longer a symbol of progress, but instead a trap for working class families," such as the migrant families and their second and third generation offspring I write about in this dissertation. And even in cases when they did, Cesari adds, given the stigma of the quartiers, migrants living in such districts would have a hard time finding other places of residence, thus leading to a greater concentration of migrant poor in the periphery, and bringing the ghettoization of suburban French cities. It is therefore no surprise that most of my interlocutors (like H) have either been born to and raised in the quartiers, or came into flats in the quartiers as imported grooms or brides. And the quartier became an integral part of their socialization—not only because they lived in these segregated spaces, but also because many of their friends, especially growing up, belonged to the quartiers. Few parents spoke of life in the quartiers in favorable terms, and many sought ways out so that they could raise their children in calmer and more prosperous environments. To keep their children away from the dangers of the quartiers, they enrolled them in mosque-run activities and etudes in Strasbourg. Other even made the effort to send their children to summer camps and boarding schools ran by religious institutions in France and Turkey. The general idea was that future opportunities for a boy growing up in a quartier were bleak. Carrying a non-French (and most likely Muslim) name, their chances of finding a job would be further damaged simply because of coming from a quartier.

⁴ In French (Algerian vernacular), these youths are known as the *hittists*, which is a slang for idlers, those who sit out on apartment fronts and lean against walls night and day (Amirouche 1998). For them, the streets are the main playground. It is where they "settle their feuds through a 'coded' violence" and maintain "a local social order" one which builds on micro-aggression amongst each other and with the police (Roy 2005).

migrant men, on the quartier courtyards, and instead opted for activities in the teşkilat, and in particular, at the teşkilat's youth branch.

While the teşkilat did play an important role growing up, today, it was not all that mattered to H. He did have a penchant for good restaurants, and fancy clothes, too.

The clothes and the restaurants perhaps constitute part of the reason why I chose to begin my dissertation with H, rather than the numerous other fascinating characters I met in Strasbourg, some of whom will introduce themselves in the following chapters. H was one of the first to truly leave an impact on me. He frequented Devred, a retail located in downtown Strasbourg, or what the Turks called *Çarşı* (the bazaar) that sells fine clothing. And here, I am talking about that elegant French kind, one which I continue to seek to this day in the US. And one that makes each shopping experience today a reminder of those days I spent with him. H had a taste for classy shirts and silk scarves. Never in my many trips with him around Strasbourg do I remember seeing him wearing blue jeans or sneakers. Or Gucci hats and soccer team sweat suits, the stereotypical attire of the quartier boys. Instead, the moment he left home, he was in cotton dress pants, poplin shirts, and blue, and sometimes tan suede Oxfords. Always presentable. Always sleek.

And then, there were all these places that he took me. Few young Turkish men in Strasbourg truly knew how to enjoy this beautiful city, for they were either too reserved to try the new French cafés and restaurants, or too keen on eating cheap and greasy döner kebabs. H, in the company of his close friends, such as L, however, would usually share with me his discoveries in the city. A French café here, a Japanese teahouse there, or a new halal burger joint only a short walk away.

But there was one more thing that made H unique for me. And that had to do with his never-ending anxiety over his love life.

The one that did not really exist...

One look at this 26-year-old, well-clad man and you would say that he is quite the catch... The few bouts of flirtation with women in cafés, and on social media aside, H, however, had never been in a serious relationship, let alone be intimate with any woman. That appears to me as something quite rare in this city, regardless of how much the Turkish youth boasts about being “Elhamdulillah Müslüman”, Muslims, and Muslims only, thank Allah... Even those who probably never engaged in sexual intercourse, or touch a woman’s hand talked to me in some fascinating detail about their sexual experiences, such as their trips to the brothels and saunas in Germany. One of them, which I remember with a smile on my face to this day, was about a young man receiving a blowjob in a movie theater in one of Germany’s “all you can fuck brothels.”⁵

But H... he did not have such stories. For he wanted to wait until marriage to have sexual intercourse.

Not only is premarital sex forbidden in Islam, a regulation which as a Muslim he chose to abide by, but H was also a foolish romantic. Each time we went out, H fell in love with yet another woman who caught his sight. And once one such woman did catch his sight, the rest of our conversation would no longer be about my research, but about this new love of his life.

⁵ I speak more about these trips to Germany in the following chapters. Also, I owe the expletive to VICE’s reporting. “A Visit to One of Germany’s All-You-Can-Fuck Brothels.” *VICE*. 15 July 2014, available at https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/mvb49p/a-visit-to-one-of-germanys-all-you-can-fuck-brothels-432. For another relevant newspiece, also by VICE, on Eastern French youth’s interest on German bordertown brothels, see “Les bordes de la frontiére franco-allemande.” *VICE*. 17 March 2016, available at <https://www.vice.com/fr/article/vdwjey/les-bordels-de-la-frontiere-franco-allemande-796>

Gradually though, I realized that there was something captivating about H's love life. His approach to women almost always appeared to me as somewhat reserved. His fantasies were rather unusually non-sexual as he talked about the women with whom he exchanged glances. Instead, these fantasies were often about things way ahead, like family and children. And when I inquired why that was the case, the floodgates of anxiety opened. The ambivalence pertaining to women was part and parcel of his moral self. While many of his friends talked about their sexual adventures with other women, and consumed alcohol and sometimes even drugs in front of him, H, who did hang out with them in nightclubs often, chose to tame his *nefs* (Arabic *nafs*), that is, the carnal desires of the mortal self.

Yet, taming of the *nefs*, as I reflect further on in greater detail in each of the following chapters of this dissertation, is not an easy feat. When I met with H towards the end of fieldwork, he seemed rather upset with himself. I had seen him before, equally upset, talking about the need to retain himself, which he had done for 26 years now. Many men of his age were married by now but he, despite the forces put on him by his mother, still could not make up his mind.

Yet one thing was certain that night. H could only hold on for so long...

The night when he, L and I gathered in downtown Strasbourg's recently opened halal café/restaurant, Moody's, H was antsy. His anxiety had something to do with my soon-to-come departure, I am sure! But really, there was something more to it than that. H started talking about his most recent weekend trip to a nightclub in Germany with friends, some of whom he knew from his *quartier*, and others from the mosque association. He was in company of friends whom we all knew were quite the players, always returning home with a female companion, and if not, having obtained telephone numbers and Facebook profiles. Things apparently got a bit heated in

the club. There was drinking and dancing involved. H, as usual, did not participate in either act. He chose to stand by a wall and watch instead. Yet, he felt at unease about the whole experience.

“Good thing nothing happened, but I have regrets, nonetheless....” H said.

“Regrets for?” I asked.

“The girls were beautiful... But you know what, it is for the better [*bunda da hayır vardır*]... It was not my kind of scene anyways. But I still had to be there...” H responded.

Here was a young man troubled over not having taken his chances. A young Muslim revealing to me his anxieties over a night out which could have ended up with him hooking up with a woman, but ended, instead, in his bed, alone by himself, yet again.

Why could he not do what others did?

“I can’t stand it anymore,” H raised his voice, while banging his fist loudly on the table.

L, who was listening to our conversation with a grin on his face, intervened: “If you take such paths, you have to deal with the consequences. If you don’t, then you won’t.”

This was not the first time that L and I were listening to H’s troubles. But this time, he sounded rather desperate.

L had been in a serious relationship with a woman only once. At one point, he was engaged, but he kept things Islamically proper, meaning that the time alone with his then-fiancé was for the most part limited to phone conversations and texts. His uncle, who was a pious man, had advised him many times to not go out on dates, and although he broke this rule a few times, he still followed his uncle’s advice. He had also advised him to not wait for too long before marriage in order to not be bogged down in doubts. L, like H, wanted to retain his virginity until marriage, which never took place. For L, it was God’s will that rings were thrown. And now he

could focus more on his work. He had, after all, great aspirations to become a politician or a consultant in Turkey.

L's advice is rather telling, not just for H, but for the rest of the men whose stories I share with the reader of this dissertation. What L is saying is not that one should avoid sleeping with women, but instead, he should avoid the paths that would put him in situations where he would have to make that choice in the first place. Because human mind is weak against lust, the choice would likely be one where a man commits *zina*, illicit sexual relations, which is a grave sin in Islam. Rather than face the *nefs*, then, one should avoid paths that would necessitate such an encounter in the first place. In various *sohbets* (religious conversation circles), Friday *hutbes* (sermons), and conversations with *imams* (Islamic preachers) I attended, I, too, was reminded of the same thing. The *nefs* was not something that one could kill, but only curb. Human beings were fallible, and even the most pious amongst them were prone to fall victims of their *nefs*, and eventually sin.⁶ Hence, L's advice to H is to stop putting himself in situations that would leave him alone with his *nefs*. Without the path leading to the vicissitudes of the *nefs*, H would have little to worry about. That, after all, was the duty of a moral Muslim.

⁶ One could battle the *nefs* by constantly reminding himself of the existence of Allah (such as through repeating His names, a practice known as the *zikir/dhikr*, by taking ablutions and praying, or by fasting. In Turkish one does not just "hold" fast [*oruç tutmak*], but also asks for the fast to hold him/his *nefs* [*oruç, beni tut!*]). The imams, however, would remind their congregation that the best place to tame the *nefs* was at the presence of a *mürşid-i kamil*, religious teacher par excellence, and with other Muslims in a religious establishment or order. One such order was the Hüdayi Vakfi, which I talk further on in the chapter on the mosque. In his interview with the Islamist columnist Ahmet Taşgetiren for Hüdayi's monthly journal, *Altınoluk*, the theologian Nureddin Yıldız makes an interesting parallel between the role of the teacher, and that of the mirror. Yıldız describes the teacher as someone who can tell a Muslim what is behind him (and by doing so, reminding him of the mistakes he may have committed through the paths he has taken in life). The teacher is one who serves the role of a mirror, Yıldız argues. This analogy brings to mind Plato's cave allegory, one where without the guidance of the Philosopher King, the only reality that consist of is their shadows projected on the wall. "Nefs Terbiyesi Beyin Ameliyatı Gibidir" [Taming the Nefs is Like a Brain Surgery], *Altınoluk*, May 2016, pp. 6-11.

1.2. Sinning Men: A Study of Moral Failures

Where do Muslim Turkish men who live in Strasbourg go after work? What are the kinds of places they socialize? Is it home? Is it the mosque? Or is it elsewhere, like coffeehouses, or wherever the car takes them in Strasbourg, and beyond, such as nightclubs, drinking alleys, bistro-casinos and brothels in Kehl and other neighboring German cities? And if it is the latter, and it rarely should be, as the imams would warn the pupils in *sohbets*, religious conversation circles, and during Friday sermons, how do these men justify their presence in these spaces? How do they reflect on their moral transgressions, and come to terms with them?

The following pages provide stories of Muslim Turkish men in Strasbourg who sin. And repent. And then, sin again. And as they go through these cycles, they reflect on their practices, and engage in an internal moral dialogue, which may surface through their conversation with their friends' or through the anthropologist's probing. Men like H provide a necessary exception to remind us of two things: Firstly, although there are some men who try their best to retain a sense of moral self as good Muslims by following proper Islamic conduct and avoiding sinful practices, their journey is not an easy one. It involves a heightened sense of attentiveness to *haram*, things, behavior and practices that are considered illicit in Islamic thought. Secondly, those who choose not to avoid such sinful practices are not unaware that they are sinning, or ignorant of the consequences of their sinful engagements. They still consider themselves as Muslims, utter the name of Allah, feel regretful, repent, and talk about how, one day, they will find the righteous path. For some, that day may be this very moment. For others, it could be sometime in the future—"soon, İnşallah."

An interesting question arises here: How do these men retain a sense of moral self despite the many contradictions and divisions wherein the self presents itself? Perhaps, in thinking of the

moral self, we need to be more critical of the rational self that has come to define the Western secular subject. The self, as I contend following theoretical discussions provided in response to forensic approaches (Ewing 1990; Douglas 1995; Sökefeld 1999; Lambek 2013) retains a sense of unity, or wholeness, despite the contradictions and ambiguities it faces (Berliner 2016). And the way it retains its wholeness involves a process of critical, self-reflexive voice, or what Walzer (1994) calls a moral voice. For Walzer, this is a voice that comes inter-subjectively, that is through an informal web of relations between individuals. But for my interlocutors, this is a voice kept within, and one which we will get to hear through the anthropologist's probing. My interlocutors are sinning men, but they are also men who present this moral voice when asked to reflect on their sins. It is this voice within that I am attentive to in the stories that accompany each chapter, each of which takes us into men's dialogue, with the anthropologist, as well as with each other and with themselves, where the conversation over sins turns into a self-reflexive confessional.

This dissertation, then, provides an understanding of what goes on in a sinning Muslim man's mind as he engages in morally transgressive practices. It asks how he reflects on these practices and comes to terms or justifies them to continue on living albeit knowing that these practices are sinful, and that there would be repercussions, both in this world, and the next.

The men whose stories I recount in the following pages are not much different than other men of faith across the world in that they live their lives fearing an authority. In the case that I present, this authority is Allah. Almost all of them are cognizant that the eternal rewards they will get in *Cennet*, the Heaven, outcompete the luxuries they can enjoy in this world. And that means that they would have to suffer now in order to find comfort in the afterworld.

Yet, the desires of the mortal body often times too hard to tame. And that is not only because the joys in life are too tempting. It is true, as we will see, that the youth want to “live life.” That piety can wait. And sins are to be committed in their journey to old age. But there is another side to this story. It is also that the intimacies and respect my interlocutors seek at work, at home, or even at the mosque, are sometimes simply lacking. Hence, they situate themselves in venues where they attain the fulfillment that they seek. The caveat, however, is that these venues are often inviting of sins. Even a place as seemingly innocuous as the coffeehouse, which I write about in Chapter 5, can encourage activities that are *mekruh* (condoned) such as cigarette smoking, as well as *haram* (illicit) and therefore forbidden, such as alcohol consumption. Or a night that starts at a place like a coffeehouse can lead to a night out with friends to bars, nightclubs, casinos or brothels, all of which are a short car ride away.

So, should these men follow L’s advice to H and simply refrain from visiting these places? Some do. Some men also gather at each other’s homes or workplaces instead to drink tea and play FIFA and PES on Playstation so that they can refrain from going out. Some are simply too regretful, and too fearful, of the deeds they had committed in the past. But for many other men, such limits on the self are futile. This dissertation is written with the intention of exploring such men’s lives, and providing an account of their moral failures, that is, their failures to be/come better Muslims, and their struggles amidst these failures.

Cultural anthropologists have a long tradition of studying human communities as moral wholes. While morality, in its essence, can be described as judgment over values and practices which are either good/right or bad/wrong, or “oughts” and “ought nots” (Beldo 2014), and finds its guiding principles, at least in Western thought (McIntyre 1981), in Aristotelean writings on practical logics and virtue, Kantian moral imperatives, and its utter rejection in the Nietzschean

übermensch, the judgment regarding the good or the bad, as social scientists have long come to argue, entails a much messier process. Perhaps, a more cultivated approach to morality is one that considers it not as a binary, but an ongoing inquiry into “possibilities” (Carrithers 2005) and “boundary-work” (Lamont 1992), one which entails the making and maintenance of moral structures by human communities in variegated forms.

Over the past two decades, there has been an amplified interest amongst anthropologists to study ways individuals adhere to ethical or moral standards, bringing into fruition numerous ethnographic studies, as well as edited volumes, anthologies and compilations on morality (Howell 1997; Zigon 2008; Fassin and Stoczkowski 2008; Heintz 2009; Fassin 2012; Schweder and Menon 2014; Lambek et. al 2015). The objective of studying morals anthropologically, according to Lambek, was to discover “the evaluative principles and practices operating in the social works, the debates they arouse, the processes through which they become implemented, the justifications that are given to account for discrepancies observed between what should be and what actually is.” (334-335). The interest to study morals, however, also had to do with a need to develop a body of theoretical reflection on ethics, according to Laidlaw (2002), one which has long been part and parcel of anthropological inquiry, but often relegated to the study of the social thanks to Durkheim (1906). To that end, anthropologists and moral philosophers have discussed alternative approaches to discuss morality. Rather than taking it as a principle, object or force necessary for social organization and cohesion as it was for Durkheim, scholars such as Laidlaw (2002), Robbins (2007), and Throop (2010), following Aristotelean and Foucauldian discussions on the formation of moral subjects (Faubian 2001), proposed an individual/biography-centered study of freedom and will, as opposed to “the social force of moral norms and practices” (Mattingly 2012: 162) as a prerequisite to moral judgment. Zigon

(2007) proposed a study of embedded dispositions which are locally produced; Lambek (2010), a study of ordinary speech and action that enables moral judgment; Keane (2003; 2015), an inquiry into ways moral selves are situated; and Fassin (2013) a study of moral refusals, resentments and *ressentiments*. Out of this discussion, various ethnographies on the Muslim subject were produced, including Mahmood's (2005) study on a women's mosque movement, Hirschkind's (2006) study on ethical cultivation through cassette sermons, and Agrama's (2012) study on the making of Muslim selves amidst shari'a law and secular law, each of which discuss comprehensive conversations over the concept of freedom, sovereignty, and the making of ethical selves for Muslims in Egypt.

My approach to morality builds on these scholarly conversations by thinking of this concept in the plural, that is, plural registers that individuals reflect on in framing their ordinary practices. In this dissertation, I am primarily interested in exploring how Muslim men justify their positions as sinning Muslims while adhering to a religion that demands of them to repent, and to refrain from repeating their old mistakes again. This leads me to a discussion of the plurality of forms of moral worth, a discussion that scholars have theoretically engaged in within the context of morality (Lamont 1992) and justice (Walzer 1983; Boltanski and Thevenet 2006). Following their lead in pragmatic sociology, as well as similar studies on Islam that use this pragmatic approach to studying Muslims' lives (Bowen 1993; Bowen et al 2013), I explore the practical, rather than theoretical and scriptural ways through which my interlocutors justify their subject position vis a vis sins. To that end, I ask how my interlocutors stand their grounds and rationalize (for lack of a better term) their behavior that comes in contradiction with the moral registers that are inscribed in the Qur'an, defined through the hadiths, and conveyed in each Friday hutbe as well as weekly sohbet.

Furthermore, my interest in studying moral transgressions grows from a scholarly discussion in response to Lambek's assertion (2010) that ethics is intrinsic to human nature, and the subject of inquiry should therefore be the ways individuals strive to do right or good (Lempert 2015). This, as Lambek clarifies in a later article (2015) has come to be taken as a call to associate human action with moral good, but was rather misread, for his attempt was to also encourage exploration of ways where individuals failed to do good. I take this as a welcome invitation to study sinful behavior, which, at least amongst scholars trained in the study of the anthropology of Islam, still stands as a rather under-investigated subject. Sins and transgressions are an important part of masculine (Herzfeld 1990; Osella and Osella 2000), as well as Islamic selves (Ouzgane 2006). While almost every ethnography written on Muslims is mindful of the role of sins, often as deeds to refrain from, few actually provide case studies as to how and why Muslims engage with sins in the first place. The literature rather focuses on Muslims' attempts to avoid sins in order to live ethical lives, that is, to live halal lives, and to promote good and prevent evil, as the *sura* (chapter) on repentance reminds us.⁷ One novelty of this dissertation, then, is to provide a window into men's negotiation of sins as they engage with them. Doing so requires the ethnographer to accompany men who not only come to the mosques to pray, repent, and search for moral guidance in sohbet and the Qur'an, but also who get in their cars to go to coffeehouses and casinos to gamble, to drinking alleys to drink, or kill time by getting high on their neighborhood streets. Doing so requires the Muslim ethnographer to sin along.

⁷ Tevbe Suresi [Sura al Tawbah], Ayet (Arabic ayah, line) 119 reads: "[Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of Allah], the travelers [for His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], *those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] Allah . And give good tidings to the believers.*" (Italics mine)

1.3 Sinful Places: Towards a Spatial Analysis of Morality

Another contribution this dissertation makes to the discussion on masculinity and pragmatics of Islam is the inclusion of a much-neglected factor: space. For me, space is more than a mere place-holder where interviews take place. The venues where my interlocutors socialize are not mere “research sites” that I utilize for data collection. They also shape the kind of practices they engage in, and engender affect and emotions in and towards them (Low 2003; Simonsen 2007; Pile 2009; Davidson and Bondi 2004). I should clarify that here that I am not talking of space as the built environment. I am more interested in looking at the socialities produced in a given place, where I ask how these places may encourage or discourage moral transgressions by producing new intimacies. I approach each place as a habitus in itself, and explore the kinds of dispositions, intimacies, and affects produced in them.⁸ This helps me to investigate why some men continue to frequent certain venues which may be deemed morally ambiguous or corrupt, such as coffeehouse, casinos, or brothels, or avoid others which are considered morally appropriate or proper, like the mosque.

My initial interest in choosing a more spatially oriented approach comes from my earlier readings on sociological discussions on the city led by Simmel (2002[1903]) and his students in the Chicago school of urban sociology which produced a number of studies on the mental, psychological, and moral order of the urban fabric (Park 1915; Wirth 1938).⁹ These

⁸ Though often ascribed to Pierre Bourdieu, the term, habitus, in fact has a rather long genealogy, and has been used as early as in Aristotelean writings (on hexis), and St. Thomas Aquinas. For a comprehensive genealogical review of the term, see Wacquant (2016). For a similar engagement with space that is attentive to the notion of habitus, see Ghannam’s (2011) article on Egyptian men.

⁹ In his 1915 essay on the city, Robert Park points our attention to the segregated “moral milieus” that the city provides: “The processes of segregation establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate. This makes it possible for individuals to pass quickly and easily from one *moral milieu* to another and encourages the fascinating but dangerous experiment of living at the same time in several different contiguous, perhaps, but widely separated worlds. All this tends to give to city life a superficial and adventitious character; it tends to complicate social relationships and to produce new and divergent individual types.” (608)

conversations have been particularly useful in shaping what came to be known as the cultural/human geography tradition, which is attentive to “the moral readings” space generates, as evident in comprehensive inquiries over moral geographies, topographies, terrains, locations, and landscapes (Smith 1997), as well as the ways time and space factors in “to operate through the negotiation between multiple practices of evaluation, justification and accountability” (Barnett 2014: 157).

I am also guided by discussions led by philosophers (Bachelard 1964; Lefebvre 1974, and de Certeau 1984), cultural geographers (Tuan 1986; Kong 1990; Smith 2001), and (urban-) anthropologists (Low 1996; 2010; 2016; Gmelch and Kuppinger 2018), who investigate the kinds of subjectivities produced and performed in different spatial confines (Hopkins et al 2012). The role of space in anthropological work was an issue that was brought up early on by Gupta and Ferguson, among others in an edited volume for the journal, *Cultural Anthropology* (1992), as well as a later edited book on the same theme (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Because this discussion was taking place at the peak of anthropological inquiry on migration and transnationalism, it intervened in debates on practices of transnational movement and spatial belonging amongst diaspora populations. I benefit from these conversations by reorienting my ways of thinking about movement across space, which helps me to centralize space as a variable in both my data collection practices and analyses.

Another key debate that shapes the ways I think about space and morality came out of my reading of the cultural geographer Tim Creswell’s illustrious study (1992) on the relationship between space/geography and transgressions. While reading Creswell’s account on how certain spaces are more conducive to transgressive behavior such as vandalism and youth delinquency

than others, I started extrapolating this line of thought towards my own research on morality and masculinity, asking whether certain spaces can be considered more conducive, and even inviting of sins. This helped me to move beyond the mosque as a site for the study of Islamic disposition and ethical cultivation, and to seek how Islam, as a moral register, becomes part of the moral, self-reflexive dialogue that men engage in other spaces too. Hence, when I accompanied my interlocutors to a trip to a brothel or a casino, which are spaces where men sin, my conversations with men often invoked religious commands. To that end, my analysis accompanies the already growing scholarship on Muslims undertaken by cultural geographers and anthropologists that is spatially oriented. Examples that come to mind are Metcalf's edited volume on space-making practices Muslims engage in North America and Europe (1996); Çağlar's study on migrant socialization in Berlin (2001); Soysal's study on new forms of self-expression by second and third generation Turks in Kreuzberg (2004); Ehrkamp's discussion on immigrants' sense of belonging and attachment to Marxloh (2005); Henkel's study on performance of Islam in Istanbul (2007); Schielke's ethnography on moral transgressions and ambivalence in Cairo (2008); Schmidt's fieldwork on Muslim visibilities in Copenhagen (2011); Sunier's work on mosque building and place making in Amsterdam (2012-2013); Deeb and Harb's research on different neighborhoods of Beirut (2013); Kuppinger's ethnography on Turks dwelling practice in Stuttgart (2014); and Gökarıksel and Secor's study of pious belonging and performance in Istanbul and Konya (2017).

While the scholars conducting these studies take different cities and neighborhoods as their spatial laboratories, my dissertation approaches space at both the city and the more micro, *venue*-scale. Similar to Lester's discussion of the role of the convent space in shaping ethical cultivation among young nuns in Mexico (2005), and Mattingly's discussion on the role of the

clinic lobby in configuring moral dispositions in the US (2010), and her invitation to investigate social and physical spaces where ethical transformation takes place (2014), I bring the reader into a number of spatial confines, including work spaces, home, the mosque, the coffeehouse, and the automobile, which itself becomes a conduit for introducing my interlocutors to new tastes and venues that may not be readily present in their neighborhoods in Strasbourg. Being in different spaces helps me to not only be attentive to the multiple scenes in which my interlocutors socialize, but also be aware of the constant flux that shapes my interlocutors' daily lives. My attention to the fluidity of spaces (Ingold 2009; Kirby 2010) demands of me to conduct what Lee and Ingold (2006) called "fieldwork on foot," one where just like my interlocutors, I am also constantly on the move, and shadowing their practices (Alyanak et al 2018). In a sense, I replicate the urban exploration practices of the *flâneur* (Baudelaire 1995[1863]; Kramer and Short 2011), or the urban stroller that Walter Benjamin called the detective of street life (McDonough 2002; Frisby 2014; Shields 2014), and walk with them around Strasbourg and Kehl, or drive with them in their cars to new venues across the borderland. This means that while some of my interviews take place in fixed settings, a large share of my data also comes from more mobile forms of data collection, including walking (and driving) interviews (Bassett 2004; Carpiano 2009; Evans and Jones 2011).

1.4 The Men, the Arabesk, and the Melancholy

Growing up in a middle-class family in Bursa, a large metropolitan with over three million inhabitants, and having gone mostly to private boarding schools, my knowledge of Turkey's urban poor—who they are, where they come from, in which conditions they live—was limited to the cleaning lady who visited our flat in the city center once a week. It was also limited to the songs and movies that spoke of the vulnerabilities of the urban underclass which

rarely played on the stereo or the TV in our household—with the rather late exception of the times when my dad, at home in his drunken melancholy, cultivated a disposition towards the *arabesk* (arabesque), listening to it and singing along, with a glass of *rakı* in his hand.

Arabesk is an interesting cultural phenomenon. Among the middle classes and the aristocracy in Turkey, it is readily dismissed as the music of and for the uncouth. But aside from its fascinating historical trajectory, it accompanies the somber mood that one finds himself in, be it in the aftermath of a bad breakup, or that of not being able to marry a girl he has long dreamt of, for he was poor, and she, the spoiled daughter of a factory owner.¹⁰

Arabesk denotes more than a musical or filmic genre, but also highlights a cultural rift in Turkey, and among Turks in Europe (Özbek 1997). Seen as a “backwards, emotional, and disorderly form of entertainment” (Aksoy and Robins 1997: 1944), and banned for a long time from being aired on public television (Stokes 1992; Tekelioğlu 1996), the rise of arabesk, both in its musical form, as well as a melancholic and defiant mood, goes hand in hand with demographic changes in Turkey, and exposes the impact of these changes on migrants who, upon their arrival to urban centers, lived in squatter towns and urban peripheries of Turkey’s Western cities (Stokes 1994; Stokes 1999; Ergin 2005; and Birkalan-Gedik 2011 for a review of the anthropological literature on demographic change in Turkey). While I speak further about these demographic changes in the following chapters, here, I would like to briefly explain why I think arabesk is also an apt analogy to describe the mood of the Turkish men I study in Strasbourg.

There is already a large body of literature on arabesk, and the ways it accompanies the experience of the metropolis for Turkish immigrants. While some of this literature focuses on the

¹⁰ These are some of the main themes that are brought up in the lyrics of arabesk songs, as well as movies that arabesk singers played in, which were big hits in Turkey since the mid 1970s. For a comprehensive discussion on the role of arabesk in Turkish cinema, see Dönmez-Colin (2008).

migrant perceptions of Istanbul (Stokes 1994; Solomon 2005; Demirtaş and Şen 2007; Şenova 2011), and approaches arabesk as a response to the disorienting experience of migration and to the pangs of integration into new environments (Özgür 2006), scholars of Turkish migration have also explored the new forms—such as hip hop music, and movies and literature by Europe-born Turkish novelists, poets, and directors—in which arabesk, as a mood, is invoked amongst Europe-born second and third generations in European cities, such as Berlin (Çağlar 1998; Kaya 2001; Kaya 2002; Schiffauer 2005; Kaya 2007; Güney et al. 2017).

Arabesk, as a mood, is invoked not only in response to a homeland that is lost, but also the host country that the migrant uncomfortably belongs. Contrary to the literature on transnationalism that highlights migrants' simultaneous belonging to both the homeland and to the host country (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004), the Turks in Europe are often spoken of as hybrids who are *neither* Turkish *nor* German/European (White 1997; Yeğenoğlu 2005). Scholars focus on this hybridity and in-betweenness to explore the ways Turks integrate into Europe, pointing out how they have transformed over the years from *gastarbeiters*, or labor migrants, to cultural actors (Soysal 2003; Abadan-Unat 2011), while also being attentive that the cultural actors which they have become, as I also experienced first-hand in Strasbourg, may be one they are not fully comfortable with (Mandel 2008). Most of my interlocutors, like those studied by Ehrkamp (2006) in Germany, would prioritize their Turkishness despite holding French or German passports, and would differentiate themselves against mainstream Europeans through linguistic practices, such as the *Kanak Sprak* that the Turkish-German writer Zaimoğlu (1995) describes in the case of Germany (Cheesman 2004).¹¹ Yet upon their return to Turkey, no matter

¹¹ The situation is similar in France. Especially in cities like Strasbourg and other cities in Alsace where Turks constitute a majority immigrant population, the language used by their non-Turkish quartier peers includes Turkish words like *kardeş*, brother. The common greeting among those who come from migrant populated quarters is “*wesh*

how much they long to identify themselves as Turks, they would be treated by other Turks as non-Turkish, or as commonly framed, as *Almançıs*, or German-ers or German-like (Robins and Morley 1996). Even in Strasbourg, one could find a big divide within the Turks belonging to different generations or born in different countries (Turkey or Europe). It is a rare occasion—though it exists at least in one of the stories I convey in the chapters to follow—to see Turkey-born and France-born youth and middle-aged men socializing amongst each other in the same venues.

Arabesk is one of many “melancholic modalities” that defines the urban migrant and masculine experience (Gill 2017). But it is one that captures my imagination the most in conveying the experiences of my interlocutors. Not only are many of them consumers of Turkish arabesk music, and movies, their lives can also be told as a narrative of pain and suffering and the concomitant defiance to the structural conditions that cause these feelings (Erol 2007). On various occasions, often in car rides, and at times when I was one-on-one with my interlocutors, I was recounted love stories—stories of past girlfriends and fiancés, which left behind broken hearts, and broken men. In recounting these stories, the men were not only sad, but also somewhat rebellious. In their suffering, there was a sense of disobedience and masculine protest (Broude 1990; Connell 1995). To what? To the circumstances that led them to live lives as working-class migrant men; to experience unreciprocated love and suffering (from their families or lovers); both of which were linked to fate, and therefore, to the authority who wrote their fate: Allah. Melancholy, as Gill thoroughly unpacks, is a loaded term, one which can invoke different emotional regimes amongst the people who experience it (Gill 2017: 15). For my interlocutors, melancholy was generative of defiance, one which helped them to not only cope with the past,

kardeş,” a mix of Arab (wesh/ouesch) and Turkish (*kardeş*) dialect. For an etymological review of the term wesh, see Dominique Caubet’s 2015 piece on *Mediapart*.

but also justify the present transgressions they committed. While I have argued in the previous pages that it is the carnal desires, or *nefs*, which, tempted by greed and lust, invites men to sin, it is also the need to respond to the pain they feel, the melancholy they experience, and the dreams (to marry the woman they love, to be rich, to achieve a status in the communities they live, to go back to their homelands, to the houses they were born, to the father's hearth, or to be better Muslims) that will likely never be attained, that helps a narrative to justify the paths they take, the people they hang out with, and the places they socialize. Hence, *arabesk* is an important cultural motif that defines how my interlocutors reflect on their daily lives, and their transgressions.

My knowledge, and interest in the urban poor, and their *arabesk* lives, is of a rather late nature. Although my hometown, Bursa, has grown exponentially since the 1960s due to incoming migration, I have lived much of my life in relative isolation from the urban underclass. My ignorance came to an abrupt end first when I visited Strasbourg in 2013 for a Washington University funded preliminary research on the members of the Turkish community, and a year later, during a Social Science Research Council funded trip to the Central Anatolian town of Kayseri, which, aside from being Strasbourg's sister-city, also makes up a large percentage of Turkish migrants who live in Strasbourg and its neighboring French and German cities. While in Kayseri, I spent the majority of my five or so weeks in the highland villages¹², which were largely abandoned since they had been sites of outmigration since the early 1950s, with their population migrating to urban centers in Turkey, and to urban centers in Europe since early 1960s.¹³ With the exception of the summer months when Turkish families from Europe who

¹² I spent my time in Karakaya, Şihbarak and Kermelik as these villages constituted the main sites that sent the majority of their population to Strasbourg.

¹³ It has been over sixty years since labor exchange programs were initiated in Europe which brought the first migrant workers from Eastern Europe and North Africa to Western Europe. During the early years of labor

could afford the trip to Turkey visited these villages, only a few dozen households lived in them permanently. And although there were some relatively recently built two and three-story apartments, also known as remittance houses, one could still see remnants of the one cell adobe structures and barns, which was where most labor migrants who now lived in urban centers once dwelled in (Alyanak 2015).

The majority of my interlocutors in Strasbourg were either born in Europe or came to Europe through marriage migration. But their fathers, some of whom were still alive, did in fact leave these underdeveloped and (still) much neglected villages. Almost all left Turkey to escape impoverished conditions, to find jobs, to make money, and eventually to return to Turkey. Few did attain that dream of return with the exception of those who died, whose coffins were sent back to their villages, travelling “at the ass/rear end of the plane,” as I would often be told with a

exchange, the priority was given to migrants coming from former colonies. In France, French-speaking migrants from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia were given a free pass until late 1960s (Castles 1986). Citizens of other nations, such as Turkey, were granted the permission to apply for the temporary worker positions starting 1961. Indonesians were invited to the Netherlands as colonial migrants in the aftermath of the war, and agreements were signed with other countries during the 1960s; The “Aussiedler”, who had departed Germany during the Nazi regime, were given the permission to repatriate after the war, and the “Gastarbeiter” (guest worker) program was put in place in 1961 which enabled Italians, Greeks, Spanish and Turks to find “temporary” employment in West Germany. East Germany drew the majority of its labor force from other Soviet satellites and socialist countries. Countries such as Switzerland, Austria, Great Britain and Belgium were also engaged in similar exchanges with their former colonies and neighbors (Italy and Ireland in particular). The Turkish state took part in bilateral agreements (Labor Force Agreements) with Germany (1961), Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands (1964) and with France in 1965. (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Web Site). Today, Germany hosts the majority of Turkish immigrants in Europe, followed by France and the Netherlands (Icduygu et al. 2001; Erzan and Kirişçi 2013 [2007]; İçduygu 2012). The closure of borders for labor migration in the aftermath of the Oil Crisis as well as money offers proposed to immigrants to “go home” (such as the Voluntary Return Program of 1977 in France and the return aid paid by the German government in 1983) may have slowed down the pace of influx, but the process did not put an end to the increase of migrant populations in Europe (Penninx 1986; Castles 1986). Western Europe continued to attract migrants who traveled to the continent within the legal framework of family reunions, marital arrangements (“imported grooms and brides”¹³) or found illegal ways to enter the European Economic Community (EEC). The increasing number (and visibility) of immigrants in Europe forced European governments to undertake greater measures to regulate border control as an external precaution—which resurrected the notion of “Fortress Europe” that Western European countries, through initiatives such as the Schengen Agreement, hoped to leave behind.

fleeting-smile. Some, especially the Kurds in Alevi and Kurdish villages of central and eastern Anatolia, also escaped ethnic and sectarian strife, which sadly continues to this day in Turkey.¹⁴

In choosing my interlocutors in Strasbourg, I made the conscious decision to focus specifically on those who adhered to Sunni Islam. Even though when it comes to sinning, men, regardless of religion or ethnicity, engage in the similar practices, there are two major distinctions that I came across. Firstly, many Alevi practices, such as prayers or burial rituals (Zirh 2012), as well as the required religious duties, or *farz*, such as the five pillars of Sunni Islam, are different. It is a very rare sight to find an Alevi woman wear the hijab or an Alevi man fast during the Ramadan, to pray in a mosque, or do the pilgrimage to Mecca. Secondly, the places that Sunni Muslim and Alevis socialize differ. While most Sunni Muslims gather in mosques for religious activities, Alevis gather in *cemevleri*, or gathering houses. The coffeehouses they frequent also differ: Sunni Muslim men may gather in a regular coffeehouse while Alevis gather in *türkü evleri*, or folk music bars (Aksoy 2019). In the former, alcohol may be consumed “under the table” whereas in the latter, it is commonplace and practice. Even the places they eat can show diverging patterns. Some nationalist Sunni Turks would avoid frequenting Alevi restaurants and döner kebab restaurants for the fear that their meat would not be halal, or that the money they spend would fund “terrorist” causes in Turkey. Or while Alevi owned restaurants may sell French dishes that include pork products, or pork gelatin, I have yet to encounter a Sunni owned restaurant that sells pork. These are some differences which I wrote

¹⁴ While Alevi and Kurdish may sometimes be conflated into the same identity category, there are, in fact, many Kurds who adhere to Sunni Islam. In selecting my interlocutors, I was not interested in knowing whether they identified themselves as Kurds or Turks, though I did ask them whether they were Sunni or Alevi. Despite my lack of interest in ethnic identifiers, ethnicity clearly mattered to many of my interlocutors, especially to those who took nationalistic pride in being Turkish or Kurdish, such as organizing Turkish or Kurdish parades to condemn Kurdish guerilla activities in Turkey and state violence against Kurds, respectively. For a more comprehensive read on how these identities are performed in accentuated forms in the diaspora, see Bruinessen 1998; Eccarius-Kelly 2002; Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003; Özyürek 2009; Ayata 2011; Demir 2012.

in greater detail in a publication on this theme (Alyanak 2016). My intention here is not to consider Alevi and Sunni spaces and practices as mutually exclusive. Or to speak of Alevis as more secular, and Sunnis less. It is rather to point out to the complexity of studying a multiethnic and multi-sectarian diaspora like the Turks, and to elaborate why this dissertation focuses specifically on Sunni Turkish men and their sins. Needless to say, working class men and the urban poor, both in Turkey and in Europe, include both the Alevis and the Sunnis, and both the Kurds and the Turks.¹⁵

The Sunni Turkish men I chose to study represent a diverse sample in themselves too. Some were more conservative than others when making decisions regarding where to eat or socialize. Some spent much of their time in teahouses in mosque associations while others frequented coffeehouses where alcohol and hashish could visibly be consumed. Rather than distinguish these two groups based on their levels of piety, however, what interested me was the fluctuations in their lives. Almost all the men whose stories I convey in this dissertation had moments where they displayed a heightened sense of piety. Some even chose to fashion themselves based on what they considered in line with the *sunnah*, Prophet Mohammad's view on ways to live a moral life. They did, for example, let their facial hair grow, wear the Islamic skullcap, put on rings with Islamic scripture on it, or don long Islamic gowns. Yet the same men who displayed this heightened sense of piety and refashioned their appearance and demeanor accordingly may have been gambling addicts only a few months back. They also could revert back to sinful practices a few months after. In studying Muslim men, I learned to shy away from qualifying their piety, or treating it as a binary. Instead, my approach to Islam is one where

¹⁵ Though I was often told both by both Alevis and Sunnis that Alevi kids do a better job in school and in finding white collar jobs because they stand out less as Muslims or Turks, and more accepting of secular guidelines to frame their everyday lives. A similar finding is proposed by Verkuyten and Yıldız (2009) in their study of self-identification and attitudes amongst Alevi and Sunni Turks in the Netherlands.

religiosity is heightened in certain moments, and brushed under the carpet in others. The imams who read this dissertation may be in disagreement here, for that is not how a Muslim should act. They would remind me that one can fool others, but not Allah. But all, I am sure, are also familiar with the aphorism that while Islam should be the defining principle of life, often times, one finds life defining the commands of Islam.

I also feel it is necessary to say a few things as to why I focus specifically on men in this dissertation. Part of the reason has to do with feasibility. Simply because I am studying a patriarchal community does not necessarily mean that women are harder to encounter outside of their homes. While it is true that men tend to be the ones who participate more visibly in nightlife, Turkish women are visible in the city too—and not just in *Çarşı*, downtown Strasbourg, shopping, and taking their kids for a walk, but also in venues that are amenable to women's gatherings, including male hangouts like coffeehouses and hometown associations many of which free up a day or night of the week for women's *matinées* alone (where men are strictly forbidden from attending). They also gather in French and Turkish cafés. Yet, despite the growing literature on Muslim women's visibilities in public spaces (Özyeğin 2015), the predominant understanding that a woman's place is her home, or her father's home, still exists to date. Many women, for example, gathered with each other in one another's houses to socialize and watch Turkish soaps, yet these gatherings are almost impossible to attend as a male researcher. As a male researcher, then, my access to men was much easier than say single, engaged or married Muslim Turkish women. While I did get a chance to listen to women reflect on their husbands or fiancés outside lives on many occasions, and in workspaces, cafés, or in their homes with their husbands, their voices in this dissertation is more subdued compared to men's.

And this lack, at times, can come as a problematic aspect of this dissertation. Because, with rare exceptions, the stories I convey are told always from the male perspective, and because the researcher is male, my story telling prioritizes men, which may come across as revamping gender roles, and reifying problematic binaries such as public and private (Göle 1997; Thompson 2003), active/dominant and passive/submissive (Mead 2001 [1963]; Friedl 1975; Yuval-Davis 1997), subject and object (Mulvey 1989), or culture and nature (Ortner 1972), that are constitutive of gender stereotypes (Murphy 2004). An earlier draft of a chapter in this dissertation was subjected to criticism from two of my committee members who argued that my writing style reproduced the male gaze by feeding into the voyeuristic pleasures of the men whom I study. Men were those whose eyes saw the world, and women were to be looked at. This “to-be-looked-at-ness”, Mulvey writes, continues to reinforce the image of the woman as an object of the male phantasy (1989: 11).

This, it seems, is not just a challenge unique to this dissertation, but other ethnographies who prioritize migrant men’s perspectives. I have come across a similar soul-searching by Jason De Leon, whose writing, I believe, also drew similar criticisms. In his *Land of the Open Graves*, De Leon writes how “at certain moments” in his ethnography, “women are visible only through male eyes.” He continues to argue that that was not his intention, while acknowledging that “the male perspective [is] a recurring framework in parts of [his] book. “...in this research context that perspective shouldn’t be written off as simply patriarchal or pornographic. Instead, the viewpoint of men can highlight the power and experiences of female border crosses and illustrate the extent to which the elements included here signal male ‘identification with, sympathy for, or vulnerability of the feminine’” (De Leon 2015: 18). In writing this dissertation, I may be prioritizing men to provide a better understanding of their life worlds, and of their inner moral

voice, which is complex. But I am also in constant conversation with my mother, who, like many women in Strasbourg, was the one to stay home and wait for my father's return. Like many women in Strasbourg, she always had food on the table, and kept the house in impeccable condition. In addition to it, she raised me, and sat with me every night to go over my homework. My father was not the absent father for most of my childhood, but it was certainly my mother who was always there for me. Hence, while this dissertation is about men, and the story-telling prioritizes men's point of view, I hope I do not fail at keeping the reader attentive that women, as fiancées, wives, and mothers, are always there, and fighting against an understanding that keeps them vulnerable in their subjectivation to male power. It is this understanding that I hope to deconstruct. And to do so, I choose to first understand how it works.

1.5 The City and Its Turks

Now that I have clarified how I use the terms Muslim and why I focus on men in this dissertation, let me now turn to the third component that defines my interlocutors: Turkish. I have already mentioned above how the identifier, Turkish, is a complex one, which includes not just the Turks, but also the Kurds, and not just the Sunnis, but also the Alevi. In the context of Strasbourg, the definition of a Turk is further complicated since almost all of the France-born second and third generation are French citizens, who, unlike their parents, speak French fluently, and socialize not only with other Turks in mosques and coffeehouses, but also with other second and third generation immigrants, such as Algerians, Moroccans and the Chechens, and sometimes (though rarely) with the French, in shisha bars, quartier courtyards and other venues.

Turkish migration to France goes back to 1965, the date when France signed a labor agreement with Turkey—four years after Germany—to invite Turkish migrant labor (Akgündüz

1993).¹⁶ Today, although no estimate of immigrants is certain in France due to technical complications with the way census data is collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), there are somewhere around 500,000 Turks, including people of Turkish descent, living in France (Akgönül 2018). The majority of them live in France's eastern border with Germany, Switzerland and Italy, including Alsace, the region where Strasbourg is located (Tapia 2009: 10).¹⁷ Strasbourg is also a city with dense Turkish institutionalization. Almost all of the eastern France headquarters for Turkish institutions, religious, political and economic alike, are located in Strasbourg, as well as major European courts, such as the Court of Human Rights, and the Council of Europe, making this European capital a good site to study diaspora institutionalization and transnational politics (Akgönül 2005; Western 2007; Windle 2009; Çıtak 2010; Arkılıç 2015; Western 2016; Bruce 2019). While research on Turks in France is nowhere as prolific as research on Turks living in Germany, Strasbourg's large Turkish population, its status as a European capital, and its (Alsace-Moselle's precisely) exemption from France's 1905 law on the separation of the churches and the state made it a suitable site to undertake my study. As I write further in the following chapter on the Franco-German borderland, its status as a border town, and one of the two capitals of the Strasbourg (France)-Ortenau (Germany) Eurodistrict, makes Strasbourg a particularly interesting site as the differences in legal framework between France and Germany encourages transborder movement from Strasbourg to the neighboring German border towns.

¹⁶ Similar bilateral labor recruitment agreements were signed by Turkey with other Western European countries, such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria, and later with Sweden and Australia. Between 1961 and 1974, when the labor recruitment agreement was in effect, France was the second largest recipient of Turkish migrant labor (approximately 56,000), superseded by Germany (approximately 649,000) (Akgündüz 1993).

¹⁷ Alsace is not the most Turkish populated region in France. It comes only after Rhone-Alpes (wherein Lyon is located) and Ile de France (wherein Paris is located). But it is where one finds the densest Turkish population. In Alsace, Turkish immigrants constitute the majority immigrant (*étranger*) population: Approximately one in five immigrants in Alsace are of Turkish origin, as opposed to over one in ten in Rhone-Alpes and one in three in Ile de France.

Strasbourg's geographic, demographic and legal particularities aside, my interlocutors also consider themselves to be different than Turks who live in Germany. Whereas they considered the Turks in Germany more established, and therefore better integrated, they spoke of Turks in Strasbourg as a generation behind Turks in Germany. This was an issue some spoke with pride for they considered themselves to have retained stronger ties with their homelands. Others, however, also added that this also comes at the expense of a lack of Turkish presence on the urban fabric. While many Turks live in Strasbourg and neighboring French cities in the region, they appeared less active, and visible in the city's social and cultural activities. Whereas in major German cities, one could find neighborhoods with greater concentration of Turkish restaurants and businesses which cater to not only the Turks but also to Germans, in Strasbourg, such amenities are a lot more scattered, and in size and grandeur nowhere near their German counterparts. Hence, many Turkish inhabitants of Strasbourg would choose to cross the border first to Kehl, and to bigger German cities like Mannheim and Karlsruhe to go shopping in Turkish stores, and to eat in Turkish owned restaurants. Turks own European style cafes and restaurants, and even nightclubs in major German cities. They are active in local and national politics. Many Turkish players play in major German premier league teams. These are of the some things missing in France. Turkish presence in Strasbourg is rather largely limited to smaller bodega style "exports" and snack döners, construction firms, and auto-repair shops.

1.6 Organization of the Dissertation

To understand what pushes men into sinning, and why they continue on sinning while knowing the consequences requires an approach that extends beyond such transgressive practices, and beyond the mosque, and includes other domains of daily life, and spaces in which men spend a bulk of their time. It requires a more holistic approach to daily life, and its routines

as they unfold in different domains. For me, these are work, home, and outside. To that end, I first provide an ethnographic account of what the daily work schedule of a Muslim Turkish man in Strasbourg looks like (Chapter 3). I then take us into the spaces they live (Chapter 4), that being their homes. And from there, we got out, and first visit mosques (Chapter 5), followed by the coffeehouses (Chapter 6), and finally, we take a drive in automobiles (Chapter 7) which takes us to various venues in a European borderland that is often blamed for promoting sinful behavior, and tempting men into giving into their nefs. In fact, this geography plays such a central role in shaping daily routines and practice, as well as justificatory and calculative logics, that it deserves its own chapter (Chapter 2), one which takes us into two neighboring border towns, Strasbourg and Kehl, and introduces us into the lived realities of his geography. In Chapter 8, I conclude this dissertation by revisit some of these stories to point out the general patterns that emerge in men's transgressions, and reiterate the need to bring discussions on morality in conversation with space.

Chapter 2: Blaming Kehl

Preserving Moral Unity in the Franco-German Borderland

Swamp:

1: a wetland often partially or intermittently covered with water
especially one dominated by woody vegetation

2: a tract of swamp

3: a difficult or troublesome situation or subject

Intransitive verb: to become submerged

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

The Rhine River, which has historically served as a natural border between France and Germany separates more than the two countries, peoples, languages, and cultures. For many residents who live in this borderland, the Rhine also separates two modes of life.

The French mode is the day. And the day for Turkish migrant men and their Europe born male offspring means one thing in particular: work.

The German mode is the night. It is seductive. It has its vices. It is fun yet dangerous. Like work, it is dirtying. But the dirt here is of a different, moral kind—slot machines, nightclubs, brothels, sex workers, covert dates, to name a few.

Men and women, but mostly men, and especially migrant men, cross the border at night to go to the slot machines, or *makinelər* (machines) as the Turks call them. Some also go to Kehl, or to Offenburg or Karlsruhe, to get lucky in private saunas and love houses as they seek to fulfill their fantasies. They argue that there are certain things that they can never demand of their wives. Like blowjobs. “That is wrong, Oguz! These women are our wives, the mothers of our children.”

But the market economy solves this problem. Supply and demand economics for lust and greed are well in place across the border. Hence, men end up seeking pleasures elsewhere. And that elsewhere lies in Germany, and in particular, in Kehl, and beyond.

But all in all, most men cross the border to simply disappear, to do away with the many masks they must wear as wage laborers, as husbands, as sons, as in-laws, as “imports,”¹⁸ as somebodies, or as nobodies.

To disappear is a challenging task, especially when men are expected to come home or to go to mosque directly after work. There are even smartphone apps that some fiancées and newly married brides use to track their (future) husbands’ whereabouts. They fear that their men may give into the temptations of the outside world. And they may be right.

A reminder from a Turkish proverb I was reminded of while conducting my fieldwork: “Çok gezen pabuç bok getirir.” The shoe that wanders around much brings back shit.

Or its more subject-oriented variant: “Çok gezenin ayağına bok bulaşır.”

The one who wanders around much gets shit smeared on his foot.

One does not hear such proverbs in the Friday hutbes. Not in such a vulgar form at least. But by going to the teahouse at the mosque or a migrant coffeehouse after work, one realizes that these aphorisms are a part of the everyday vernacular.

Important to remember is that those who utter them may very well be the ones who get shit smeared all over to begin with. For no one is safe from sins. For the *nefs* is too strong.

Yet everyone complains that people talk... likely too much, especially when it comes to giving advice. And rarely do they follow it themselves.

¹⁸ “Import”, or *ithal* in Turkish, is an adjective used to describe men who arrive Europe through marriage. Imports object to being called *ithal* and see it as a pejorative term. They argue that they are not commodities to be bought and sold. However, *ithal* is also a term that garners solidarity amongst men who share a similar life trajectory, and face common problems pertaining to their adjustment to life in Europe.

The French mode is Strasbourg, one of the most populated cities in the Franco-German borderland, and the administrative capital of both the EU and the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict.¹⁹

The German mode is Kehl. A small town one tenth the size of Strasbourg in population, but also a town that brings in people from French border towns due to its active leisure scene and nightlife. For the 30-some thousand Turks who live in Strasbourg and neighboring French towns, life revolves between Strasbourg and Kehl, day and night.

2.1 What the Border Does

No binary suffices to fully capture social reality as no border provides a sharp divide. For the people living in Strasbourg, too, the Franco-German border in some ways both divides and unites. Considered as spaces of heightened mobility and pronounced hybridity (Hannerz 1997), borderlands are interstitial areas. The vast anthropological literature on the US-Mexico border was driven by a simple critique: that borders are not just thin lines on a map or barrier to movement. There is in fact a rich social life that forms and foments in borderlands (Stoddard 1986; Kearney 1991; Heyman 1994; Alvarez 1995). Similar discussions envelop other borders and borderlands around the world, including Europe (Anderson et al 2003; van Houtum and Ernste 2001; van Houtum et al 2005; Green 2013).

My approach to the Franco-German border in this paper feeds on scholarly approaches that treat borders and boundaries as processes that are constantly in the making (Barth 1969; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Jones 2009). I, too, see borders and borderlands as processes and as dynamic entities that “tell us about the spatial and social ordering of society than the mere

¹⁹ The Eurodistrict, first proposed in 2003 by French and German presidents to promote trans-border cooperation between the two neighboring cities, Strasbourg, France and Kehl, Germany, was created in 2005, and came into force in 2010. As of 2017, it encompasses 107 communes and covers a geographic area of 2445 km square across the Franco-German borderland. It is home to approximately one million residents.

existence of the lines” (Newman 2006). This does not mean that the line, no matter how imaginary or defunct²⁰, is of no significance. What it means is that one should study borders not only from the perspective of the state where the focus is on power and governance (Stolcke 1995; Fassin 2011), but also from the perspective of the individuals who reside in these spaces. Borderland narratives, which provide accounts of everyday life in borderlands as experienced by their residents (Anzaldúa 1987; Borneman 1992; Castillo and Córdoba 2002; Vila 2003; Western 2012) are useful in this regard.

In this chapter, I approach the Franco-German border as a performative (Kaiser 2012). What I mean by that is that the very act of crossing does something. Here I am interested in explaining what that thing is.

The Franco-German border plays an important role because it regulates the possibilities of where one can go and what one can do after work to kill time. Crossing the border from France to Germany opens up a new set of possibilities as to how a man can expend his free time. These are possibilities that may not be readily available in France, like going out for late-night snacking or gambling, or are outright illegal, like visiting sex workers.

These possibilities become particularly problematic for the Turkish community which I have been studying in Strasbourg since the summer of 2013. That the border encourages such activities constitutes a problem since it is Turkish men, that is, individuals who are expected to abide by Islamic moral guidelines, who benefit from such forms of leisure. In other words, the border enables an immoral culture that seduces Turkish men, young and old, and pushes them into living morally corrupt lives.

²⁰ Due to the Schengen Agreement, which was signed in 1985 and came to force in 1995, administrative borders dividing Schengen countries are now defunct. The border, however, comes to existence in moments of state of emergency, such as in the aftermath of the Paris attacks in November 2015.

But why focus on space when there are individuals who engage in the very practices that are considered morally transgressive? Why not keep Muslim Turkish men accountable for their sins, and blame Kehl instead? Why exculpate them from their sins?

These are key questions that I tackle not just in the following pages, but in the entire dissertation. After having spent countless hours with Turkish men and women in Strasbourg talking about everyday life and Islam, I ended up with the following conclusion. For my informants, blaming Kehl achieves two things.

First, externalizing pollution and trapping it in a place (i.e., Kehl) that is outside of geographic and moral borders helps to retain a sense of security at home, in Strasbourg. While this does not solve the problem of men crossing the border to engage in transgressive practices, knowing that the worst of the moral ills is not in one's backyard but across a border provides the community with a sense of comfort.

Second, blaming not individuals, in my case, Muslim men, but spaces, such as Kehl, allows my interlocutors to point out that it is not Islam that is contradictory, or Muslims who are bad, but the geography which exploits their weaknesses and corrupts them. Blaming a particular European border town for social ills, and not the weak will of Muslim men, serves as one of the ways of retaining a sense of security at heart, and protecting Muslims and Islam.

2.2 How the Borderland Feels

In the following pages, I provide several anecdotes that unravel the ways members of the Turkish community talk about living in a borderland geography that evokes moral anxieties. But before delving into them, I would like to clarify how Muslim Turkish women and men in Strasbourg reflect on their dwelling experience in the Franco-German borderland.

The Franco-German borderland is a happening place. Strasbourg has a booming construction business, and many factories that employ laborers. Older men argue that things had been better in the times before the transition from the French *franc* to the European *euro*, but as I further explain in the following chapter on work, most agree that if you have the skills and are willing to work hard, it takes an effort to go unemployed here. Unless, they add, you want to be like those Arab moochers who suck on benefits from the French welfare state, living on welfare paychecks during the day and selling drugs at night. And that mooching mentality, they argue, is pervasive. And it is, they argue, slowly capturing the imagination of young Turks, too.

Strasbourg is a calm place. It has a thriving arts scene. It is historic and bucolic. Go berry picking if you want to. Visit the medieval Haut-Koenigsbourg Castle. Or rent a two-floor *chalet* in the Vosges mountains for an escape from the city with your family. Alsace is a gem waiting to be explored.

Kehl, on the other hand, has cheap cigarettes, gas, groceries, as well as a thriving night scene. It is a gateway to Germany—to a land where over four million Turks reside. And with that comes a Turkish feel that Turks in Strasbourg argue to not find in their neighborhoods. In Germany, there are streets full of Turkish shops, tea gardens, and restaurant, as well as Turkish wedding and dancing venues. In Strasbourg, they come scattered at best.

Yet the abundance of possibilities associated with life in this borderland are overshadowed by the availability of forms of leisure such as gambling (primarily slot machines), nightclubs, and brothels. This issue is not particular to Kehl. Similar forms of leisure also exist in the rest of Germany as well as elsewhere in the EU. But Kehl is a border town. It is right next door to Strasbourg. A man can leave work, hop onto his car, and without even changing his clothes, he can find himself in front of one of those slot machines.

And many do. Go to the casinos and see who sits in front of those slot machines, some interlocutors would ask me. Pay attention to the language they speak, they would add. They would most likely be immigrants, and most likely, Turks...

Up until a few decades ago, these were activities readily available in Strasbourg too.²¹ But today legal sanctions require those who want to pursue such activities to cross the border to Germany instead, thereby keeping Strasbourg clean.

Strasbourg has its own issues still. On-table gambling in migrant coffeehouses was a big problem before the slot machines in Kehl took over in late 1990s. Drug dealing, and use, is prevalent in the migrant-populated neighborhoods, or as they are widely known in Strasbourg, the *quartiers*. So are other types of crime, such as theft, arson, and gang violence. Many French-born sons of immigrants get into trouble with the French police. Some serve long sentences in prison. The stories of young Turkish men hanging themselves in prison or committing suicide afterwards haunt many parents. As I further elaborate in the following chapters, to distract their children from spending too much time out on the streets, some parents register them to after school *études* in mosque associations. They send them to boarding schools during summer breaks. But that works only until a certain age. And these are activities that the kids often find boring, despite mosque associations' eagerness to continue to promote them enthusiastically. In one such association, there is even a flyer that reads: the youth who come here do not go out and do drugs on the streets.

²¹ While active solicitation was banned since the 1940s, stricter laws were put in place to prevent passive solicitation under the Domestic Security Bill passed by the Sarkozy government in 2003. A new bill was proposed in 2013 to fine customers seeking sexual relations for 1500 Euros, and passed in 2016. And while on table gambling and slot machines are legal in France, they are often found in hotels and spas located outside of urban centers. The French casinos closest to Strasbourg were both about an hour's drive from Strasbourg, in Ribeauville and Niederbrunn.

Furthermore, racism continues to be an everyday battle—especially for young Muslim women who want to wear the hijab, or Muslim women and men who seek better employment opportunities.

The general sense is that that no matter how hard they try, there is no future for a young Muslim man in Europe.

But the important distinction here is that one is subjected to racism or crime. One does not make an individual, conscious decision to be exposed to racist policies or criminal activities, unless he decides to become a criminal himself.

Engaging in extra or premarital sex, nightclubbing, gambling, and other transgressive practices, however, is a conscious choice. As we recall from L's advice to H in the introductory vignette of this dissertation, the more the opportunity presents itself, the harder making the choice becomes. Hence, imams would ask of their congregation to stay at home or to come to the mosque, and minimize their time out, for the outside world is considered to be full of dangers. As I further explain in the chapter on the mosque, exposing one's heart to these dangers is considered enough for dangers to have an impact on one's soul.

France may be no Germany, and Strasbourg, no Kehl. But Strasbourg is right next to Kehl. And because such activities are accessible via a short car ride from downtown Strasbourg, those who feel threatened experience complex, and at times, ambivalent emotions.

2.3 Moral Accountability and the Borderland

My discussion on moral accountability and commensurability in Strasbourg is shaped by how space, and spatiality comes to define one's sense of moral worth.

As it should be clear by my theoretical conversation in the Introduction to this dissertation, I stand firm by the argument that an ethnographic narrative to capture the

complexity of everyday life and moral anxieties is partial at best without taking into account the geographic conditions that enable the habitus that one is born into and molded out of (Bourdieu 1970). My assertion on space is not a new one. Since the turn of the 20th century, social scientists starting with Simmel and his students have paid close attention to the ways in which the lived environment influences individual behavior and preferences. While the emphasis of these earlier studies transformed into a sociological inquiry of urban sprawl and the spatial distribution of migrant populations (rural to urban internal migrants, as well as transnational migrants) in big cities like Chicago, New York and London, with the phenomenological turn, a number of philosophers and cultural geographers shifted their attention towards the emotions and experiences that spaces evoke. Building on the Baudelarian fascination with the narcissist stroller, *le flâneur*, who, rather than being restricted by spatial boundaries, would cross them in search of aesthetic cultivation and pleasure, scholars argued against Euclidian, geometric approaches to space and instead emphasized the importance of feelings, rhythms and ambiance (Debord 1955; Bachelard 1994 [1957]; de Certeau 1980; Benjamin 1982; Lefebvre 2004).

The phenomenological approach to space has more recently been taken up by anthropologists under the rubric of embodiment (Lawrence and Low 1990; Low 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2009). One theoretical contribution that I find particularly useful focuses on risk geographies and discusses how spatial distribution of risk (natural and moral hazards, pollutants, diseases, crime, etc.) shapes ordinary life (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; Stallybrass and White 1986; Cresswell 1996; Smith 1998; Petryna 2002, Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Kirby 2009; Hirsch et al. 2009). This literature keeps me mindful of risk as a phenomenon that is not only socially and culturally perceived (Douglas 1966; Wildansky and Dake 1990; Boholm 1996) but also spatially organized. Spaces are affective, in the sense that they engender certain emotions.

The spatial distribution of social risk defines how we feel about our presence in a certain space, and our dwelling experiences. They may limit our movement across space (Bannister and Fyfe 2001; Listerborn 2002; Pain 1997). For Muslims in Istanbul (Henkel 2007), and Konya (Gökarıksel and Secor 2017), this means negotiating mobility across Islamic and secular neighborhoods. For Muslims in South Beirut (Deeb and Harb 2013), it means navigating moral and immoral geographies. And for Turks in Strasbourg, the risk of moral corruption plays a key role in shaping conversations over men's whereabouts in the borderland.

In order to understand how space sanctions moral behavior, we need to take a closer look at how Kehl transforms into a “geography of blame,” that is, a border town that is kept accountable for human practices, failures and misery.²² To that end, I now turn to ethnography. In the following pages, I present several stories provided by my interlocutors. In each anecdote, we listen to a member of the Turkish community recount a story of men—their husbands, sons, friends—engaging in sinful practices. Important to note is how each person avoids blaming the other for such practices, and instead, blames Kehl.

2.4 A City that Steals Husbands

In the summer of 2013, during my very first visit to Strasbourg, I shared a bus ride with a Turkish woman. We both got on the bus at Les Halles, the bus stop by one of the few shopping malls in downtown Strasbourg, wherein once lied one of the region's prominent synagogues, Synagogue du Quai Kleber. The Turks refer to this area, including the city center, as *Çarşı* (Bazaar), for they—women, usually, because men often work during the day—come here to the shopping malls and other department stores, often dragging their small kids along.

²² While the term was first coined by Paul Farmer (1992) to explain Western attitudes to the AIDS epidemic in Africa, my use of geographies of blame is more in line with that of Parikh (2009), where she describes how certain spaces in Iganga Town, Uganda, are blamed for men's unfaithfulness.

In a city where Turks constitute the majority immigrant population—a title that they share with the Moroccans—finding Turks to talk to is not a problem. Engaging in a conversation with a Turkish woman, however, is another story. Out of fear that a man’s intervention to initiate a conversation with a Turkish woman in a public and highly exposed space such as the bus could be taken as a transgressive act, I did not exchange a single word with her during our bus ride.

We exited the bus at the same stop near an establishment that now hosts the DITIB mosque association complex. She kept a steady pace, possibly intrigued by my following her, despite being overburdened by big bags.

“*Selamın Aleyküm, ablacım* [older sister]. May I help you carry those bags,” I asked her in Turkish. I did not expect a “yes,” let alone a response. I do not have the stereotypical Turkish looks, and certainly not the accent of a Central Anatolian or Europe-born young man, who constitute the majority of migrants from Turkey.²³ Who was I, then? And how come I spoke Turkish? She wanted to know that. What brought me to Strasbourg? She demanded an answer from me. “I want to know about daily routines of Turks in this borderland,” I responded, probably not as eloquently put as I state it here. I told her further that I was interested in men’s leisure practices. Men such as her husband, for example! Could she have a few moments to discuss, perhaps?

Normally, when I mentioned my research interests to men, I would get a weird grin—the kind we in Turkish call *bıyık altından gülmek*, or to smile under the moustache. It is the kind of smile you see forming on a person’s face when a public secret that he very well knows, and

²³ A large majority of Turks in Strasbourg came from Central Anatolian highland villages located in now thriving urban centers such as Kayseri, Konya and Sivas. Those who migrated since the mid 1960s, but especially starting late 1970s and early 1980s also include Kurdish families from the southeastern province of Kahramanmaraş.

perhaps participates in is unveiled. At that point, emotions can no longer be contained and seep through the lips, transforming into a weird grin.

That was not what I got from her. Instead, she gave me a bitter look. And after a short pause, she exploded: “You want to know where Turkish men are? Go to the coffeehouses. Go to the *makinelers* in Kehl. That’s where they are.” She was tired, but the repulsed look on her face must have had less to do with her tiredness and more with the sentences that were to follow next.

“Kehl stole my husband. *Haydi sana kolay gelsin*. [Take it easy].”

I had heard of men going to Kehl to play the machines. I have heard of them going to Kehl to buy cigarettes and gasoline. But never have I heard of Kehl stealing a woman’s husband.

How could a city steal one’s husband, really? And what would that tell us about the lived realities of the borderland?

The brief exchange that day would play a key role in orienting my gaze to men’s hangouts in Strasbourg, and across the Rhine, in Strasbourg’s German neighbor, Kehl.

2.5 Destroying le Pont de l’Europe

Three years later, during my yearlong stint of fieldwork, I was chatting with another Turkish woman, and the conversation yet again was on husbands who avoided spending time at home and engaged in leisure activities in venues located around in Strasbourg and Kehl. G Hanım and I had both attended a brunch at a Turkish organization in Strasbourg and we were sipping our teas while she waited for her son to come out of the Sunday *saz* (lute) *étude*. Like most women from Turkey, she associated herself with child-rearing responsibilities. She agreed that men should help too, but if they did not—and they often did not—then who else would take care of her child but the mother? She told me that while she occupied herself with her two kids, her husband was either at work or outside. For the most part, she was not sure what his day

consisted of, let alone the night. “I do not go to places he frequents, like the slot machines, cafés and discotheques,” she stated with an indifferent look on her face. Discotheques? Alone? She was not the first woman I talked to who was well aware of her husband’s leisure life, and the likelihood of him wasting his money on alcohol, gambling, or even on women. And she chose not to question her husband’s habits. They had, as she would tell me, an unwritten agreement, one where they both lived their lives as they wished to. And as long as money that should be spent at home, for the kids’ welfare, was not spent outside for personal leisure, she was fine. Like G Hanım, no woman ever admitted outright that they suspected their husbands of cheating on them. But some did indeed insinuate that if that were to be the case, there was little that they could do, and little interest in shaming them about it.

G Hanım explained to me that she and her husband had an arrangement which involved keeping the family together rather than filing for divorce. As she explained, this was all done for the sake of their children. With the exception of the little time her husband spent at home playing with the kids, which G Hanım was very proud of, the two had rarely seen each other. During our interview, she would show me videos on her phone of the whole family singing together in their home. As if it was an artefact of the past she wanted to keep, and to be reminded of. And further interesting was that she did not feel betrayed by her husband’s actions. In fact, as long as he did not ask her to provide money for his gambling habits (which is why the two had separate bank accounts), she was content.

I still do not understand how G Hanım appeared so calm and why she spoke so peacefully about her relationship with her husband. To me, the situation appeared unlivable. Here was a husband who had a separate life, who came home whenever he wanted, spent time with his kids only when he wished to. He seemed to be living the best of both worlds, as a social worker I later

met in a Turkish association in Strasbourg would remind me. Food ready at home, kids demanding to play with, and a wife who was fine putting up with it all. G Hanım had sympathy for her husband, and to this day I do not understand why she felt that way. Maybe that was love—not just for her kids, but also for a husband who in my view did little to deserve it. What I find particularly intriguing in this story is something else though. It is that the sympathy she had shown for her husband, a man who gambled away his wages and did not spend time at home left in its place strong emotions when she talked about Germany. She did not directly blame her husband for his excursions into venues in Germany. Instead, she blamed Kehl, and more so, le pont de l'Europe, the bridge that ties Strasbourg to Kehl, and France to Germany. “That bridge,” she argued with passion, “should be destroyed.”

All that fury which in my view should have been directed at a man who failed to comply with his duties as a husband and father was projected instead onto a bridge that his husband used on his way to his dreamland.

2.6 Losing Your Path in Kehl

It was not only women, but also men who either considered themselves to have fallen victim to the allure of this border town or had friends whom they had lost to leisure activities which usually ended in family dramas, blame Kehl for social and moral ills. Most of my conversations with these men took place in migrant coffeehouses, döner kebab shops (known in the French vernacular as *snack döners*) or shisha cafés in Strasbourg and Kehl. I will get in further detail when I speak about these spaces in the following chapter on work. But for the purposes of this chapter, allow me to provide a snippet from one such conversation was with S Bey, a man in his late 40s, whom I encountered in a coffeehouse in Schiltigheim, Strasbourg.

When I told S Bey that I was interested in studying men's nighttime excursions, he shared with me the story of his son who frequented the shisha cafés in Kehl. Many French-born young Turkish men that I met in Strasbourg frequented shisha cafés and shared selfies on social media to make a statement. This statement, like the "cool pose" Majors and Billson write about on Black American youth, helped them to deliver a message. In Majors and Billson's case, the message conveys values of pride, strength and control (Majors and Billson 1993: 4) and acts as a strategy to fight off racism and its everyday repercussions. In my case, the message is one of rebellion, transgression, and virility, all the while being mindful of moral norms. Mindful because shisha cafés are considered safer spaces to socialize. They do not share the stigma associated with going to a nightclub, casino, or brothel. At the same time, unlike coffeehouses that the elderly frequent, shisha cafés are cool. For these reasons, going to a shisha café is considered the cool yet safe thing to do.

Yet there is more to the shisha cafés than the image of a tranquil smoking environment. Initially, I thought that young men went to shisha cafés to smoke water pipe. Yet a brief review of pictures posted about these venues in the social media left me with a different sense. Many shisha cafés, especially in Kehl, were open until early in the morning, and in addition to shisha tobacco, they provided live music (a DJ spinning or live music under disco lights), alcoholic beverages, female companionship, and sometimes even slot machines, thus blurring the line between a place where one goes to smoke (which is what most youth tell their parents, "I am going out to smoke shisha") or where one goes to party (e.g. a nightclub or casino).

S Bey probably knew that there was more going on in a venue such as a shisha café than smoking, but he did not want to restrict his 20-some-year-old son's freedom. S Bey, like many other men of his age, had been young once, too, and had committed his share of mistakes back in

the day. Mistakes had to be made in order to grow up, and to have something for which Muslims could later repent. But some mistakes were harder to cover up than others. One drunken night, on his trip back from a shisha café in Kehl, S Bey's son crashed his dad's Mercedes. He was not hurt, but the car being totaled aside, the accident left its mark on both the father and the son. The son, S Bey argued, no longer frequented those places in Kehl. Instead, he went to smoke shisha at a hometown organization close to their house in Hautepierre.

While there are shisha cafés in Strasbourg, too, the more famous ones are in Kehl. Part of that, I was told, had to do with restrictions on indoor smoking in Strasbourg. The other part had to do with earlier closing times in Strasbourg as opposed to partying all night long. Spatial restrictions also apply. Whereas in Strasbourg, finding a large enough venue to open up a shisha café is harder and more expensive, in Kehl, space is less of a problem. Hence, major nightclubs and shisha cafés that young men and women frequent, such as Kiss Club and Gold Club, or Velvet, Oasis and Sahara, are located in Kehl.

In recounting this experience, S Bey was not angry at his son for his totaling his car. He was grateful that his son's life was spared. Instead, he kept the town next door accountable for facilitating such transgressive behavior. "Kehl appears weird to me," he argued, and continued:

"The venues there, the places... they make me sad. Go to the casinos. See the filth in those places. I do not like the *ortam* (environment/ambiance) there. The youth who goes there, and my son went there too for a while and... they lose their path. And that bridge (connecting Strasbourg to Kehl)... that's problematic too. I do not want to see people in their most wicked state."

S Bey was never into smoking shisha, and he argued he did not have any business gambling or going to women in Kehl either. Given his experience with his son, and the "wicked"

stories he heard about Kehl and maybe he himself had experienced, he chose to avoid going there for any business other than shopping.

2.7 Those Godforsaken Slot Machines

Like shisha cafés, *snack döners*, or *imbisses* as they are known in Germany, also morph into hybrid spaces in Kehl. Because the German state allows small restaurants such as *imbisses* and coffeehouses to place up to three slot machines in a room connected to the restaurant, most of them have rooms allocated to machine gambling. Hence their name in the vernacular, bistrocasinos. And although there are bigger casinos in Kehl and other German towns bordering Kehl, those wishing to avoid casinos out of fear that they might encounter friends and relatives go to restaurants to play the slot machines.²⁴

“Kehl was not used to be like this”, argued A Bey, who runs an *imbiss* which has three slot machines in a separate room attached to his restaurant. A resident of Kehl today, he came to Germany in 1991. To date, he continues to work in a factory during the day. With the money he saved, he chose to invest in a new business venture, opening an *imbiss* which would be run by his wife and older son. If it turned out profitable, he told me that he considered leaving his daytime job and turn the *imbiss* into a full-time family business. He explained to me that the place he took over came with slot machines in it. He made clear that he did not like the idea of having these machines, especially given that his family was helping him take care of the place, and his children often brought their high school friends over for a bite. The idea of his own children getting addicted to the machines was a risk he despised. He also did not want other parents to know that their kids came to Ahmet Bey’s *imbiss*, a place that had slot machines.

²⁴ There are also those who avoid going to Kehl altogether, and drive another half an hour to Karlsruhe, Offenburg or even further to Mannheim, to avoid any encounter with acquaintances.

Yet, each month, the slot machines alone brought in approximately eight thousand euros—four thousand of which he pocketed after taxes and expenses. He probably made more money from them than the döner kebabs he sold. But he was disturbed by their presence. “Back then (in early 1990s), this place (Kehl) was a lot calmer. People were closer to each other. Those things inside (the slot machines in their separate room), those *Allah'in belalari* (godforsaken things), were not as prevalent. Nowadays, Kehl is Las Vegas.”

Profitable yet stigmatized, A Bey had to continue on running the *imbiss* with the slot machines for two additional years as he had a contract to abide by.

The parallels drawn by A Bey between Las Vegas and Kehl need little explanation. Both are towns known for their gambling scene, and both towns attract tourists. Both, furthermore, are escape-scapes—which, like a funpark, provide alternative reality to escape to. Like casino cities or resort towns—a phenomenon that exceeds the geographic boundaries of the U.S, France or Germany, and is also encountered in cities like Macau and others in South Africa (Hall and Bombardella 2005; Hannigan 2007)—both towns prioritize consumption and entertainment over residence. Despite its 35,000 residents, and factories lining up the banks of Rhine (such as the steel plant that continues to employ many Turks today), the city of Kehl is felt less like a city in Germany, and more as an extension of Strasbourg, and less like a city to live in (though those already living in Kehl would likely disagree with this statement) and more like a city one comes to party.

Another point emphasized about Kehl was that the influx of people from Strasbourg played a key role in its development. In fact, in a short time frame, it led to the promotion of Kehl from a no-name town to a center of attraction. In an article published in *Politico* in 2016,

the journalist Tara Palmeri coined the term “Strasbourg’s Tijuana” to describe Kehl.²⁵ Another, in the French weekly *L’Express*, called Kehl Strasbourg’s casino.²⁶ Yet another diffused on the TV channel, *France3* called attention to the all-nighters in Kehl’s slot machines.²⁷

According to A Bey, in Kehl alone, there were more slot machines than the entire city of Berlin: “In Berlin, there are maybe 20 million people. You find 2,500 machines the most. Here, there are 3,500. And Strasbourg and its vicinity has maybe two million people. All of them come here. Kehl alone, probably has five times the revenue of Strasbourg.” While A Bey’s account includes exaggerated numbers (the estimates for slot machines in Kehl are around 550), the point he was trying to make is clear: that venues such as the bistro-casinos were Kehl’s cash cows, and Kehl itself fed on constant demand from people who despise the very border town they frequent, almost on a daily basis.

2.8 The Swamp, the Sewage, the Dirt, the Haram

Kehl is a space that flourishes with metonyms and metaphors. These figures of speech are central to anthropological inquiry for they are “arresting repositories of feeling” (Fernandez 1972). No matter how extreme or exaggerated their descriptive richness, they serve as a mode of talking about experiences, and are evoked in conversation to guide future practices. Going to Kehl is never just about visiting a neighboring border town, for the act itself carries with it a moral weight that is partially captured through the use of metaphors.

²⁵ “Welcome to Strasbourg’s Tijuana,” <http://www.politico.eu/article/welcome-strasbourgs-tijuana-kehl-cheap-hotels-gambling-beer-sex/> In the comment section, many of the readers—and especially those who live in Kehl—adamantly rejected their city being compared to a border town known for its drug scene and crime, and provided instead bucolic narratives of Kehl. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to defend or refute the journalist’s description, it is interesting to note that a majority of Turks living in Strasbourg would use a language similar to Palmieri’s in talking about their German neighbor.

²⁶ “Kehl, le casino de Strasbourg,” [Kehl: The Casino of Strasbourg] <http://defigrandesecoles.lexpress.fr/strasbourg/2015/02/27/kehl-le-casino-de-strasbourg/>

²⁷ Les nuits blanches des bandits machots de Kehl,” [The All-Nighters of Slot machines of Kehl], <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xtx0fw>

In conversations over nightlife, which almost always ended up focusing on Kehl, young men I met in snack döners and coffeehouses in Strasbourg used the terms “no limit”, “Sin City” and *la vie du Diable*” (life of the Devil) to describe this border town. I have also heard on numerous accounts of people speaking of Kehl as the swamp, or *bataklık* in Turkish. Some also referred to the practice of going to Kehl (and to the slot machines) as *batmak*, or sinking, for that is what happens to someone stuck in a swamp. He sinks.

During a conversation at a coffeehouse in Kehl with Turkish men from Strasbourg and Kehl, I was told that Kehl was “a swamp... the center of fun, drinks and gambling.” The same person also told me that if one were to get rid of slot machines, not a single person would stay in Kehl after 7 pm. The problem was that it was mostly *étranger/Ausländer*, the foreigners, who came to Kehl to gamble, and politicians, such as the German Chancellor Merkel and the then French President Hollande, were seen as profiteering from the plight of the foreigners. Politicians, according to such accounts, allowed such vice to continue because it left men numb and dependent on the very system that they otherwise despised. Another man sitting with us in the coffeehouse agreed: “Kehl is where all of Strasbourg’s dirt comes to wash away.”

Metaphors, according to Hastrup, “reveal what is otherwise concealed from language: experiential densities.” (Hastrup 1992: 339). They give us cues on the dynamics that shape our informants’ imaginary, and through that, help us take a glimpse at how that imaginary organizes human experiences and behavior. In other words, the use of metaphors such as Las Vegas, Sin City or the swamp tell us something about people’s relationship with the spaces they are referring to.

Important to note here is the ambiguity that this border town entails. Kehl is a swamp, but it is also a place where the action never stops. And for those who get bored squatting by store

fronts or apartment entrances in their quarters, or attending the same teahouse at the mosque association or coffeehouse in the city night after night, a quick trip to Kehl provides a much-needed change of air.

One of these young men who took advantage of living in a borderland was Ö, a Strasbourg born 20-year-old from Strasbourg's quartier of Schiltigheim. Ö spent most of his evenings after work killing time at a snack döner while he chatted with friends. He also followed soccer match scores on the Internet with the hopes that his ticket (he was into soccer match betting) would hit the jackpot. On several occasions when I showed up in the snack döner, he treated me and others to a trip to Kehl as he was the only one in that circle with a car. That particular night Ö chose to stay in the snack döner rather than go to Kehl. When I asked him why, he told me that Kehl was full of vices: "Friday nights, at three or four in the morning, the parking lot of McDo in Kehl is full of all kinds of dirt. Go there at four, and the police is there. Back in the day, each time we went there, there was a fight. All those who left the discotheques were there..."

I was not sure if his staying in Strasbourg really had anything to do with Kehl being a place full of dirt, given that he had been exposed to it many times before. To me, it had more to do with him not being able to enter the nightclubs for he was "a quartier kid, after all", thus leaving him with little to do in Kehl other than cruise around and buy cigarettes. He also added that Kehl is "the world of *haram*". Were he given a chance, he might have entertained that world of haram but with a low paying job and lack of proper clubbing clothing, the chances were slim.

Metaphors like the swamp are important for they describe a kind of relationship with space that cannot be captured otherwise. Metaphors do not only have poetic use, but are also speech acts—"acts that encourage some thoughts and actions and discourage others, and this has

geographical implications. Many metaphors are distinctly geographical acts that encourage spatial thoughts and actions while prohibiting others.” (Cresswell 1997) The metaphor of swamp does not only describe Kehl. It transforms it into a prohibited place. Men who go there sink their time, fortune, and eventually themselves, and for these reasons, the swamp needs to be drained. And if it cannot be drained, then should be avoided. For some, it is Europe in general that needs to be avoided. But when such discourse comes from people who have been living in France or Germany for generations, the conversation takes a self-harming turn—one in which men discuss how much they hate their lives. For others, the harm is contained in Kehl. Kehl, to them, is “where the sewage flows...”

2.9 Taming the Nefs

The fear of excursions around the borderland to Kehl and beyond is also invoked by lack of trust of men in themselves. But even in men’s reflexive accounts, rather than blaming themselves for their failures, they spoke of greater powers that they could not fight. Even the most pious men would argue that one can never be so sure of himself for the *Şeytan* (the Devil) is always at play. There were few who were certain that they were strong enough to avoid sinning. Others who argued that they were done with their past, ignorant days, the times of *cahiliye* (Arabic *jahiliyya*), could eventually return back to repeating the same mistakes.

The reason why some men cannot resist temptations has to do with the coexistence of different registers, such as the pious or Islamic and pleasurable or lustful self. What is relevant for the argument I present here, however, is that the lack of trust in oneself and one’s actions is spatially guided. An imam from the DITIB mosque even took it further to think of nefs, the carnal desires of the mortal self as a horse—an animal that is highly mobile and if not tamed, wild. This wild creature, like the nefs, would take its rider to places out of his control when not

ethically guided. When tamed, however, the rider would be in charge of guiding the horse. Through the metaphor of the horse, the imam wanted to explain that no one was ever 100 percent contained, not in Turkey, and especially not in Europe. But he also wanted to point out to his congregation, a handful of youth he was addressing at a conversation circle at the mosque, that they could have been elsewhere too, like gambling in Kehl. Accordingly, the way to tame the *nefs*, and to make sure that it did not take men to places where they would engage in immoral practices was by coming to the mosque, and remembering and reiterating the names of Allah on every instance.

Although the imam's thoughts on the *nefs* and sinning were widely shared by men, many continued to go to venues in Kehl rather than to mosques in Strasbourg. They argued that they did not trust themselves not only because their will was too weak, but their desires were too strong. And that one's *nefs* was not something wholly inherent to the individual, but was rather at the mercy of his surroundings, which could include people, practices and places.

Most men I met in Strasbourg took to heart what appears to me to be a spatial excuse. They did not just forgo blaming themselves for their weakness. But they found a subject of higher guilt which they loved, and feared. And that was Kehl.

Some took interesting measures to ensure that they could exercise self-restraint. One such measure was transforming their surroundings and the people who occupied them. During a late-night shisha-smoking gathering by the lake in another Strasbourg quartier, Croenenbourg, two Strasbourg-born youths explained to me the role the lived experience of space played in controlling their *nefs*. "In the Qur'an," argued K, the more ambitious one who chose to focus his energy on his studies, "it says that a man's *nefs* is tested by three things: women, gambling, and alcohol." He was not sure which verse or chapter he was referring to. These three were likely

things and practices that he himself was tested on before. His friend T told me that he was putting aside his past life and opening a new page by praying regularly, and even wearing the long Islamic robe for he had enough of fooling with girls and wanted to “marry a pure girl.” He added that in order to find a pure girl, one had to avoid places where one meets one-night stands. T continued:

“What is important is having good friends. By hanging out with friends who do not go to nightclubs but instead spend time together in each other’s houses or public spaces, like the park we are in or in the mosque, men who do not frequent the mosque start going to the mosque again. Others want to take you to Kehl, to shisha cafés and clubs... You say, let me get off at Kaufland (a shopping mall in Kehl), you guys go ahead.”

A few weeks later, when I went back to the lake to smoke shisha again, only K was present. T, he told me, was out in Kehl. He had fallen back into a life that he only a few weeks ago argued to have very much despised.

2.10 Blaming Kehl

“You have encouraged each other to come here tonight. You could have gone to some other venue too,” argued the DITIB mosque imam in his address to the youth who had gathered for the Friday night conversation circle. His talk was also broadcasted live to Facebook users via Periscope—a new media that the youth branch was experimenting with to reach out to larger crowds. But where was this other venue that the youths could be at instead? He proceeded: “In a swamp, what do you do? You sink. Being a friend, being a Muslim, being brothers... these things demand of you to talk to those who go to wrong places and tell them the right things.”

The imam’s point was that one should never forget the omnipresence of God, for even in the realm of *Şeytan*, Allah was present. All that one needed to do was to be remindful of His

presence, either through saying one of His many names, or reciting a prayer. The imams asked “Is there no Allah in Germany?” and in a calm manner, continued “When one forgets Allah, there is no limit to what he can do. Lads, we need to protect ourselves. Gambling and extramarital fornication (*zina*) pull you in like a suction cup. We have to protect those who go to discos, those who smoke... No! come to namaz (*salat*). A fish gets trapped by the hook the moment it forgets Allah!”

Throughout fieldwork, I rarely heard anyone mention to me that Muslims were not unaccountable for their actions or that they were free from guilt. Pretty much all were aware that it was individuals engaging in certain practices that led to problems. But rarely did my interlocutors put it in these terms. And rarely did the critique of men going to the slot machines in Kehl or transgressing moral boundaries by other means take such a turn where individuals who identified as Muslims were put on trial. The very men who went to Kehl were not only Turks, but also Muslims, after all. Behind closed doors, some argued that their faith may not be so pure (“but only Allah can judge that”) or they were instrumentalizing Islam. Some even recounted stories of imams going to Kehl, Offenbourg and Karlsruhe, and being spotted with women at private saunas, though those stories were impossible to corroborate. But the accusation that it was Muslims going to Kehl would never be made in public. This was a public secret that could not be revealed. These men attended prayers, fasted, and complied with other Islamic rituals. And the imams’ attitude towards them was to cajole rather than rebuke. Mistakes were a part of the game, and mistakes were to be made only to be reminded of Allah’s grace. That was why the institution of repentance (*tövbe*) was in place. Most Friday sermons ended with the imam mentioning that Allah, the most graceful, is also the most forgiving. And all that a Muslim had to do was to repent, and as long as his intent was pure, he would be absolved of his sins.

No one wanted to blame each other for being a “bad” Muslim. Not even the imams.²⁸ Instead, it was either the nefs, something that defines Muslims for it is a part of them but is at the same time external to them (for it is beyond their control), or it was the Europeans and their immoral lifestyle. And as I tried to explain in this chapter, it was often places associated with such a lifestyle, such as Kehl, the next-door neighbor, the Sin City.

Even in instances where men’s going-out habits led to family crises, and ended in divorces, women seemed to avoid blaming their husbands, ex-husbands, or sons. The frustration they felt for Kehl superseded that which they felt for the men.

In a community where no men ever dared to question another’s faith—not to each other’s face, at least—the very institution of shame may be enacted in new forms. In this chapter, I was not able to open up for discussion the new ways through which individuals render each other accountable for their actions, or the ways that they track each other’s movement and practices to instill a sense of guilt. And one should not draw from my analysis that all men are out in Kehl. Some refrain from even crossing the border by gathering with friends in mosque teahouses, migrant coffeehouses, or each other’s houses. Others do not like the leisure that Kehl offers, and instead stay at home or engage in activities as a family. But in short, what stops men from

²⁸ When I talked to imams and the elderly in the community about why they were not more outright in their criticism, and why they did not want to institute a better functioning mechanism to shame those who transgressed moral boundaries and committed sins, they often told me that they tried, but the results were nowhere near fruitful. Those they attempted to talk to often avoided them and stopped coming to the mosque altogether. Hence, they asked their mosque-going friends “to put in some sense” into their friends’ heads, which sometimes worked, and other times did not. A good example to that is the story of A and H Beys that I write about in the chapter on the mosque. To avoid breaking anyone’s hearts, and to be understanding, in their sermons, imams warned the congregation about the times we live in, and how it put each and every believer on trial. They warned about the uncertainty of the times and the dangers of the outside, asking them to spend more time in their homes, or with members of the community in the mosques. And they blamed Europe, warning fellow Muslims of the complications that being away from home brings.

transgressing moral boundaries is mainly their accountability to themselves. Some would call this fear of Allah. Others, just being a good person.

Can spaces be blamed for moral ills? Can they take the blame for actions taken by individuals, like the husbands and sons who avoid domestic spaces and engage in leisure activities outside? The ethnographic evidence provided in this chapter suggests that spaces can and do take the blame for human mistakes and failures.

What is important to note is what is achieved by blaming space. In this chapter, I presented an argument that speaks of the ways that the borderland in general, and Kehl in particular, gets conceived as a space that is blameworthy for certain male engagements helps to retain a sense of moral wholeness. Rather than accusing men for their actions, it is the city of Kehl that gets put on trial. Rather than individual will and self-restraint, it is the vice that is associated with Kehl and Germany that explains men's sins. Rather than Muslims, it is the slot machines. And rather than Islam, it is the liberal European lifestyle that is corrupted, and continues to corrupt.

Part II: Work

Chapter 3: Work

Ethnography of a Snack Döner

“Everyone comes to realize that they’re not doing a worthwhile job. They’re just on the line. For the money. Nobody likes to think that they’re a failure. For when you know that you’re just a little cog. You just look at your pay packet – you look at what it does for your wife and kids. That’s the only answer.’
A British worker at Fords, cited in Berger, *A Seventh Man*, p. 103

“The blessing of life as a whole, inherent in labor, can never be found in work and should not be mistaken for the inevitably brief spell of joy that follows accomplishment and attends achievement.”
Hannah Arendt, *Amor Mundi*, p. 34

The döner kebab shop is the quintessential Turkish business in Europe. They are found on almost every corner (Panayiotoupoulos 2008; Çağlar 2013; Sirkeci 2016), and accompany the image of the Turkish *gastarbeiter*, or migrant labor, in popular culture, including movies and stand-up comedy performances (Inglis et al 2009).

The döner is such a central figure of Turkish presence that the “shish kebab,” Müftüler-Baç writes (2002), is even used as a derogative term to index Turks in Europe.²⁹ The food item itself partially owes its prevalence to its long history in the continent. Whereas the earlier Turkish immigrants who emigrated to Western European countries starting Germany in 1961 were employed primarily in factories, and as manual labor in infrastructural projects such as pavement, and garbage disposal (Abadan-Unat 1976; Magnarella 1977; Rhoades 1986; Soysal 2003), in less than a decade, as the feeling of a permanent stay started to find roots, they started founding their own businesses. The döner kebab shop, alongside the equivalent of Turkish bodegas, called *exports*, were two of the early businesses that the Turks have established in Europe (Rudolph and Hillmann 2008). Today, in Strasbourg, in addition to running over 100

²⁹ There are numerous other derogative terms used in France to describe the Turks. Ones that came to my attention during fieldwork were *tete de turc* (lit. Turkish head, fig. whipping boy), and *l'oignon* (onion, mocking Turkish eating habits).

snack döners, Turks also have an active presence in the city's construction and auto-repair industries.

But I would like to stick with the döner kebab shop because it was where I was employed during my fieldwork in France in 2016. It was also the döner kebab shop where I got to experience what work means to working class Turkish men in Strasbourg, and how it becomes an integral part debates over morality and masculinity within the Turkish community.

The döner kebab shop may no longer be a lucrative business given their increasing numbers, but it certainly is one that continues to attract customers. There are a number of reasons for that. For one, the wraps are cheap. A döner in Strasbourg costed approximately five Euros when I was last there in 2018. Such cheap food was on high demand especially among the city's unemployed youth and minimum wage workers. In an industrial city like Strasbourg, access to cheap food mattered. Döner kebab shops are also open much later than any other restaurant in the city, some of them until 1:30am to be exact, (which is when all shops must close in Strasbourg due to municipal regulations), serving the night owls of the city. Because most döner shops, but not all³⁰, also sell alcohol, and some sell cigarettes (including cigarettes per unit, which is an illegal practice), they provide a go to stop for those who want to extend their night outs until the early hours of the morning or for those who get out of jobs after most other restaurants in the city are closed and need a cheap and quick bite.

While the döner kebab is arguably Turkish, the way it is served, and the way döner kebab shops function make them an integral part of European life. Perhaps, the sociologist Czarina Wilpert was right. One could after all, easily argue that the döner kebab must really have been invented in Berlin (Wilpert 2003:246 cited in Panayiotoupoulos et al. 2006). *The Wall Street*

³⁰ For a discussion on some Turks religious reservations in selling alcohol in their döner kebab shops, see Alyanak 2016.

Journal agrees with that analysis, too. “There is Nothing More German Than A Big, Fat Juicy Döner Kebab,” the title of a news article from 2012 reads, with a picture of the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, shaving a döner kebab back in 2009. The döner’s inventor is touted to be a Turkish migrant in Germany, Kadir Nurman. According to the *BBC*’s reporting (2013), in 1972, Nurman opened the first döner stall in West Berlin. Also credited is Mahmut Aygün, who is named as the King of Döner, and who, according to the *Guardian* (2009) opened a döner stall also in Berlin, but even earlier than Nurman did, back in 1971. Whether it is Aygün or Nurman, two Turks who emigrated to Germany in the early 1960s, who was first to introduce the döner kebab to European audiences continues to be an ongoing debate amongst kebab circles. But what matters more is that although the döner, as it is served in Europe, may be distinctively different than in Turkey in terms of the sauces and ingredients added, through its transnational journey from Turkey to Europe, and re-appropriation in the diaspora context, it became an identifier of Turks’ presence in Europe.³¹ And that is, as I heard it on numerous occasions, despite the increasing number of Chinese who take over shops previously owned by Turks, Algerians and Moroccans in France.

The döner goes by a number of different names in France, and so does the shop that sells it. According to the linguist Mathieu Avanzi’s work on linguistic differences across France (2018), the shaved meat served in a pita wrap is commonly known as kebab. But in the Parisian region, it goes by the name *grec*, or Greek, due to the number of Greeks who familiarized hungry Parisian with this food item back in 1980. And in the northwest, it is known as *dürüm*, or roll. In Alsace, including Strasbourg where I conducted my research, it goes by the name döner. This, according to Avanzi, has to do with the Turkish influence in the region, which neighbors

³¹ For more on food as a maker of transnational identity, see Wilk 1999; Mintz 2008; and Counihan and van Esterik 2013.

Germany, and is home to a highly concentrated Turkish population in France. For that reason, I will use the term snack döner when I talk about the döner kebab shops, and the term döner, to denote to the food items sold in the snack döners.³²

Prior to my year long stay in Strasbourg, I would have never thought that I would be working at a snack döner. I did not even have the intention of studying anything work related for my fieldwork for I was keen on studying men's going out habits, that is, their lives outside of home and work. My interest, initially, was to investigate the kinds of places Muslim men socialized in this border town, and to explore how they negotiated their leisure activities in light of Islamic and cultural norms that regiment the use of *boş zaman*, that is free, or literally, empty time.³³ But I soon realized that for many working-class men, there was little empty time outside of work because work was all encompassing, and money-making, a highly valued practice that was associated with one's moral worth. A hard-working man was still something that my interlocutors highly valued. The youth born in France would often be accused of slacking off, and avoiding hard work. I remember how offended I felt when one of the youth I met at a mosque association told me that working in a snack döner was such a burden that only dogs could endure it. But I worked at one! He told me that he found the job too taxing, and lacking in dignity. Strangely, a few weeks later, he ended up getting a job in a snack döner himself. He needed money, after all...

I also remember older men recounting me stories of their earlier arrival. With little money in their pocket, and cheap shoes made of thick, black rubber for that was all they could

³² These shops, however, sell more than döner kebabs. The items in the menu of the store I worked at included tacos (not at all similar to the tacos sold in taquerias in the US), the Belgian, the vegetarian, meatballs, chicken breast, chicken nuggets, among others. Snack döners equipped with pizza ovens also sell pizza, and other items, such as icecream, coffee, chocolate, and cup noodles (YumYums) are also for sale in most snack döners.

³³ I also presented a paper on this theme, in the 2017 Anthropology of Religion biannual conference in New Orleans.

afford. They left their villages where toilets were outdoors, and in winters, animals slept in the same room, right next to them. They would tell me how hard they had worked, saved, and invested their hard-earned cash in their hometowns in Turkey and later on in Europe. Work, for them, was such a central part of their life that it often came at the expense of time spent at home, with other family members, or at the mosque, with other members of the congregation. The man, F, whose story I bring to you in this chapter, for example, stopped frequenting his mosque association-cum-nationalist lodge, the *teşkilat* (organization), which he used to hang out and volunteer at when I first met him back in 2013. And the only times he really got to see his children were times when his wife would bring them to his snack döner after school, or when he would ask of his wife to let them skip school, so that he could be with them for a full day at his snack döner. “Sometimes, when the longing is overwhelming, I ask for the kids to stay here with me in the shop, rather than go to school,” were his words.

F worked seven days a week, pulling 12-hour (and sometimes longer) days at his shop, which was not larger than 40 meters square, including the kitchen and the patio space which he made little use of. I worked with him starting late February, occupying myself in the kitchen slicing vegetables and pita bread, and preparing French fries in the deep fryer, and sometimes tending the customers during rush hours. Because the snack döner was the first place where F worked for himself, he also needed to be successful so that he could avoid a reputation as a failure. And, then there was the need to work hard to save up enough money so that he could go to Turkey over the summer for about a month for the *congé*, the summer vacation, and treat his family to a holiday in his hometown, and to a hotel in a beach resort.

Although the snack döner has been, and to some extent still is *the* Turkish business in Europe, there surprisingly is not a single ethnography written about it. There is plethora of

literature on Turkish migration to Europe, but few really tell us about the realities of the backbreaking work that labor migrants of the earlier days, and their offspring today engage with. The exceptions often come from the humanities. Some prominent examples are the novelist/literary critic John Berger's *A Seventh Man*, (1975), novelist Adalet Agoğlu's, *Fikrimin İnce Güllü* (1976), which was also made into a film, *Mercedes Mon Amour*, by Tunç Okan (1992); Turkish-German essayist Bekir Yıldız's *Alman Ekmeği* (1974); Turkish-German novelist/playwright Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* (1992); Şerif Gören and Zeki Ökten's film, *Almanya Acı Vatan* (1979), which is based on a song by the same name by Ruhi Su (1977), Osman Çeviksoy's short stories, and Fakir Baykurt's Duisburg trio (1983; 1986; 1997), among others.³⁴ The lyrics, texts and movies that these works portray often deal with the conditions of labor, with a particular emphasis on alienation and loneliness that migrant labor bring to its laborers.

These themes, which also appeared in my fieldnotes based on my employment at a snack döner in Strasbourg constitute the main motifs of the following pages. But I feel I must add that the boredom, isolation, and loneliness is not contained in the snack döner alone. It follows one around, as I was to personally observe, to other spaces one travels—home, coffeeshop, mosque, bar... Like the scent of the gyrating meat, garlic, and onions that stick on one's skin, and travels on one's hair. Or the specks of grease, crumbs from potato fries, red pepper flakes or bread crumbs that one carries under the nails. No matter how deep a wash you get in the shower, these artefacts of work stick with you, and accompany your troubled mind for you are never sure how

³⁴ Recent scholarship contributes to my compilation on Euro-Turkish literature and arts. These include Karakus and Kuruyazici's compilation (2001) on this theme, various works by Hikmet Asutay, including his most recent compilation on Turkish-German literature (2017) and *Yeni Dergi*'s 2016 issue.

many customers you will get in your shop the next day... Or whether you will be able to sell all the meat on the gyrating spit, or throw it away. My aim in conveying T's story at his snack döner is therefore to provide the reader with not only a sense of the work routines that consume a large share of a working man's day, but the physical and emotional consumption such routines bring. In other words, I want to be able to convey a sense of what work, for a working-class man in Strasbourg, feels like. And to do so, I will now be taking you inside of the snack döner.

3.1 A Day in a Snack Döner: Introducing F

F's day usually started at 8am if the kids at home behaved and slept in. Otherwise, wake up time would be no later than 7. "Allah'a şükür (Grace be to Allah) I am not running an export," F would say with a smile. If he did, he would have to wake up at 5 the latest to go to the *hal*, the wholesale fruit and vegetable market to choose fresh groceries for the day. Instead, he paid a visit to Aldi in Kehl (because shopping in Kehl was cheaper) before arriving his snack döner, which was open from 11am until 10pm every day.

Allah'a şükür I am not running an *ekmek fırını* [bakery] either, he would add, for that would require him to work all night, and depending on the shift, day too, without seeing the light of day.

"Allah'a şükür," he would continue, "I am running this döner shop, and that Allah gave me this opportunity to be my own boss."

F came to Strasbourg around 12 years ago. I remember once telling him how he must be one of the many *ithal damats*, the imports, in Strasbourg. I also remember his face turning stern, for he was aware what it meant to be an *ithal*, and why people called each other that.³⁵

³⁵ For a good read on vulnerabilities that migrant males suffer following marriage migration, see Charsley and Liversage (2015).

But F was not an ithal. Unlike all other ithals who come to Europe through marriage, that is, through getting engaged to France-born fiancées, F first came to this city as a visitor. He already had members of his more proximate kin, like his uncle, in Strasbourg. His *titre de séjour*, stay permit, however, came after his marriage to some distant kin. Their marriage did not appear to be a passport marriage to me, that is, the kind of conjugal tie that only serve one function: a migrant to legally work and stay in Europe. F and his wife seemed to have a respectful and loving relationship, which can be hard to sustain especially in marriages between France-born men and women and their Turkey-born, “imported” distant kin. Part of that had to do with his wife, who was loving, and respectful of F. She would come and help F with the shop whenever she could despite the two kids she had to tend. The other part, however, had to do with F being respectful of his family, and unlike many other married men, not fooling outside after work. He worked hard, and loved his kids and his family. He did not want to lose himself to pleasures outside, for he was well aware of that that could cost him his business, as well as his family.

F worked in various jobs in those earlier years of their marriage, such as the cooling unit of a chicken distributor, where he loaded and unloaded frozen chicken to trucks, followed by a short term at a snack döner. And although during those early months prior to his marriage he did go out like most single men did, once he got married, he chose to limit his time outside to one space only: the nationalists lodge-cum-mosque association/*teşkilat* in Neudorf. Both F and his wife considered themselves Turkish nationalists. They came from families where their fathers played active roles in Turkey and France organizing events for the Turkish ultra-nationalist faction, the Grey Wolves, and their political representation, the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi [Nationalist Action Party]. The *teşkilat* was where I also met F during preliminary fieldwork in

2013, and where I encountered him again upon my return to the city for the yearlong fieldwork in 2016.

Recently, F decided to start his own business. His uncle had an empty store on the outskirts of Strasbourg, which was previously a snack döner too. He rented the place from his uncle. Normally, he would have to pay a take-over charge to the previous proprietor, and for a place this size and in this location, that could cost somewhere around 30,000 Euros.³⁶ But, he got lucky. The previous proprietor owed his uncle some months' rent. His uncle, who ran two other snack döners in Strasbourg, made a deal and took over the store from the previous proprietors in exchange for the rent they owed him. And because F was close kin, and his uncle, who would stop by the snack döner every now and then, a generous man, he absolved F of the take-over charge. F would still have to pay him the rent, and he still would have to buy some the equipment from the old proprietor, and others new, such as the grills, the fridges, the gyrating vertical spits for the döner rolls, as well as the pizza ovens which he hoped to make use of one day. The vertical spits, first hand, would cost 1500 Euros each. He bought them refurbished instead and paid upwards of 400 per spit. The electric blade/meat shaver, which is an essential component of every snack döner in Europe, costed 400 Euros. The toaster was somewhere between 300 and 500 Euros, and the hot plate which he used to grill meatballs and sausages costed 500. Fridges, which he had three, were anywhere between 1000 and 2000 Euros each first hand. And then there was the fryer, the pizza ovens, deep freezer, and other equipment. Altogether, he would have had to pay 15-20,000 Euros alone on the equipment were he to buy them new. There were additional costs, too. He had to redo the tiling in the kitchen which, he argued, was in miserable condition when he took over the shop. Luckily he had friends from the

³⁶ Compare that to the snack döners in the city center, for which the new proprietor would have to pay 200-300 thousand to the previous proprietor alone, just to exchange hands.

teşkilat, who cut him a good deal on that. He paid around 7,000 Euros for the kitchen renovation. And then there were tables and chairs for customers, and additional furniture, like mirrors, plants, and a TV. If he were to get everything first hand, with the equipment included, he would have to had to pay upwards of 30,000 Euros to set up his new business. Getting most things second hand, he was able to get it started for about quarter of that cost.

Since few men of his age (he was 29) have that kind of savings, he took a loan from his uncle and a few friends. F told me that back in the day, getting loans from banks to start up a snack döner was easier. Today, with many snack döners going bankrupt and exchanging hands, the banks hesitated giving lump sums to open up restaurants, and especially snack döners. Moreover, to get a loan, one would have to have proper declaration of earnings. Because a proper declaration would mean a bigger chunk of the money lost to taxes and security, most Turkish businesses would show minimum or below minimum wages on their *bilan*, the balance sheets, and pay their employees a part of their paycheck under the table. “You breathe, you pay taxes here. For example, just because I have a TV installed in this store, I have to pay 300 Euros to the state. And the same goes for the signage outside the shop. If you do not declare [your earnings] fully, when you need to take out a loan, they [the state officials] will say that your income is too low.” Taking debt from his friends and kin was a viable option, but also one which came with strings attached. It meant that he would have to work extra hard to pay them off and in time. He did not want to be like some other Turks who were indebted to each other and never paid back. He did not want that kind of reputation.

F was an optimist. He believed that Allah would eventually see the efforts of an Allah-abiding, hardworking man like himself. Unlike many other snack döners in the city, he did not sell alcohol, nor did he consume any. Back in the day, before getting married and having kids, he

did participate in the borderland's nightlife. And like most young men, he did have his share of sins. But today, he did not consume alcohol, and tried his best to do the daily *salats* in the snack döner's kitchen. Yet, being an optimist did not suffice to eliminate his anxieties. T's snack döner was not on a busy street. It was located in Strasbourg's outskirts, closer to the industrial complex near the Rhine River. Each time the wind blew, we would smell the malt in the air of some beer production facility nearby. Much of the customer traffic would take place during lunch and dinner hours, where he would cater mostly to employees working on the nearby construction sites, and young kids and families who chose to not cook at home, and preferred a cheap meal outside instead. The location meant that the rent was cheap, but it came with its risks. The previous owner could not keep the shop open because he did not have enough customers visit it. F, however, had faith that his faith, ambition, and willingness would pay off, and that customers would start coming once they realized that he was a hardworking, clean, and honest man.

3.2 F invites me to work with him...

Being one's own boss also meant dealing with the obstacles all alone. F could not afford to hire an employee. And that is where I come in the picture in a somewhat illegal fashion, for my long stay visa in France prevented me from taking legal employment opportunities. Even if he were to pay an employee the SMIC, the minimum wage of approximately 1100 Euros, with insurance, a good two grand would come out of his pocket. And he was not sure if his store would be able to make that kind of money from the get go.

One late February night, when I was sitting at the *teşkilat*, F walked through the door. I was to later learn from others that he had been busy setting up his new snack döner, which explained his absence from the teahouse of the *teşkilat* which he would previously frequent. This was the first time I was seeing F in 2016 (I was only a month into my fieldwork), so we

exchanged a few words about my return to Strasbourg. That night, in the teahouse, he asked me whether I would be interested in helping him out. “You would make some pocket money,” he added. I told him that my stay in Strasbourg was already funded, and furthermore, my research had nothing to do with work routines. I remember a young man who was sitting across me and listening to our conversation encouraging me to go help him while F was still in the tea house. I said that I would consider the offer, and asked for some time to think.

And voila! A few weeks later, I was at F’s snack döner, learning the tricks of the trade.

I must make it clear that never in my lifetime have I worked in a restaurant, let alone a snack döner before. In the US, many of my colleagues had previously worked in similar work spaces. But in Turkey, most college kids depend on their family’s income until they find a job. I took pride in my skills in cooking, but my tasks in the snack döner would involve more of the dirty parts of kitchen work, such as slicing vegetables and pita bread, or frying French fries. In fact, his snack döner was so small that most of the time, I would not even be standing next to the gyrating meat rolls, or cutting them. That was a task F would do behind the counter by himself, while I busied myself in the kitchen. I would have some interaction with the customers, but my skills in French were more mostly academic at that point. I could probably tell the customers what I researched, but asking them what kind of sauce (there were many, each with strange names like sauce Samurai) they wanted with their fries, or if they preferred beef or chicken in their döner was another thing. Transportation was also an issue. F’s snack döner was located at the opposite end of town from where I lived, and I would only be able to reach his shop after a 50-minute bike ride, or an over an hour long ride on public transportation. And furthermore, I needed the nights for my night outs with my informants. That, after all, was the main focus of my research.

All things considered, F and I made a deal. I would work in his store three to four nights a week, arriving at 5pm and staying until closure at 10 (which usually extended to 11 with cleaning). I would help him with the second batch of customers who came to his snack döner for dinner. If he needed my help during the day, he would have to let me know at least a day in advance. My role would be mostly in the kitchen, as he needed someone to make sure that there was enough bread, sides, and fries ready to be served when customers filled up the snack döner. I would also tend the tables if necessary, and clean them after the customers left. If I had another appointment that night, I would be exempt from work. And if I got a call to go join my interlocutors who would be interested in taking me out, I would be granted the permission to leave. I told him that he did not need to pay me, but I would use my experience in the store as part of my dissertation research, bother him with many questions about his life and work in the snack döner whenever the store was empty, and take pictures. He rejected the idea of not paying me, but the research part, he was fine with that. At the end of each work day, he would pay me approximately 20 Euros for my five or so hours of work at his snack döner. And I could get free food and drinks at the store. As a vegetarian, the food did not matter much to me, but I did consume much of his Capri Suns, and made myself the occasional cheese *tacos*. F accepted the rest of my terms. After all, my alternative would be some young, third generation Turkish man who would likely demand more money. And the ones he brought in to help him occasionally from the *teşkilat* proved to be unreliable.

From time to time, F also got help from his wife. Many other Turkish restaurants in the city, after all, were family businesses. Wives, sisters, and cousins worked in the same shop, allowing the main employer (usually a married man) some time off during the day. And F's wife was there in the earlier months following the opening of his snack döner. She would usually

come to the shop after having dropped off the kids to school, taking care of the morning cleaning while F worked on preparing the sauces for the chicken döner, which, unlike the meat döner, he did not buy frozen, and instead, chose to prepared from scratch. This was something that he took great pride in. His chicken döner, he argued, was the best in town.

Whenever she was there, F's wife would slice the pita breads, and cut the tomatoes and the onions into thin slices so that they would later be served in döner wraps. When she was not there, F expected the same skills in slicing from me. And I think I did a good job at it. F's wife also prepared specialties like the bulgur rice, which F served as a side for the döner plates. When F had to leave the store to go grocery shopping, she would be in charge. And when there was paper work (and there usually was many, for France is notorious for its complex bureaucracy) that needed to be filed in municipal buildings, she would leave and take care of them. She was, after all, born in France and had French citizenship, which F lacked.

But his wife could not be there all the time. After all, they had two kids, one in kindergarten and the other in primary school, which required regular care. The kids could be dropped off to school on the way to work, and would stay in school until early afternoon, and F's wife would sometimes pick them up and bring them directly to the store, for F did not get many chance to see them due to his work schedule. But when one of kids got sick and needed care, his wife would have to stay home and tend to his or her needs. This meant that for the next ten months that I worked at T's snack döner, with the exception of some of his friends from the teşkilat who stopped by, I was the only person that made a consistent appearance there. It was me and Monsieur Jean Paul, a French man in his late 70s who would arrive at around the same time as I did each night, at approximately 5:30pm, to drink his espresso and chat with us about things we mostly did not make any sense of. Was it his Alsatian French? Was it the lack of teeth.

It is hard to tell. And, yes, we did get an Espresso machine around March, and ended up drinking most of the espressos ourselves over cigarettes in the patio while waiting for customers.

3.3 Building Rapport

The attentive reader may have picked up my sudden switch in narrative form, from F and I to “we.” The reason for this change has much to do with the fictive kinship we started to build working together. Gradually, I started calling F my *abi*, bigger brother, despite the fact that I was two years his elder, and that we shared no kinship ties.

Work has a way of bringing people together. Be it care-work facilities (Dodson and Zincavage 2007), South Americans in North Carolina tobacco farms (Benson 2012) or Mexican migrant labor in American restaurants (Kim 2009), work, especially in a diaspora context where one is surrounded by compatriots who speak the same language, and laugh at the same jokes without having to explain himself, slowly brings the workers together. My relationship with F never felt like one of employer-employee for I had more freedoms than any employee would enjoy. Maybe, if it did, I would be more sinister in my remarks about my ways of thinking about him, as does the immigrant tobacco workers Benson (2012) writes about. But the comforts I enjoyed working with him did not mean that I did a sloppy job at his snack döner either. I worked hard, and that gained F’s respect to the extent that a few months prior to my departure from Strasbourg, he told me that he would have never had expected me to pull it off. I was, in his words, a more hardworking man than any other kid born in France he could have employed would turn out to be.

F’s appreciation of my hard work is telling on a number of accounts. His commentary carries with it an evaluation of generations born in France, who are criticized for their lack of work ethic. Many of the young Turkish men born in Strasbourg are high school graduates or

college drop outs, which means that the kinds of jobs that they get—unless they work for the family business— are usually through temp agencies, and are therefore, temporary positions. Some also choose to live off of employment benefits, and receive financial aid from their parents. Similar to the men of Meerut, India that Jeffrey studies (2010), they “pass time” to withstand the forces of a rapidly changing global economy. That is their way of coping with the void in which they find themselves. Men like F, on the other hand, had to leave their hometowns and come to Europe in search of employment. In Turkey, unless they had relatives they could rely on for finding more cushiony forms of employment, such men worked in construction yards, autorepair jobs, open air bazaars, or as porters. Men like F took pride in being self-made men (Clay 1932, cited in Kimmel 1993). But as Connell reminds us, in an age of rapid globalization, the myth of the self-made man is under threat (Connell 1998). As various scholars of masculinity also add to this debate, the values associated with being the alpha male are under threat due to dwindling employment opportunities, and the changing nature of jobs (Osella and Osella 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; McDowell 2008; Yang 2010).

Men like F, however, would beg to disagree with this analysis. For them, jobs are out there for those who are willing to take them. Certainly it is backbreaking work, but there is dignity in seeking these jobs, rather than opt for unemployment (Purser 2009). Strasbourg, they would add, has a thriving construction business. But because construction is hard work, the youth, they would argue, opt out of seeking such jobs. Several times in my conversations with him, F used the term, “wasted sperm” to describe the new generation of Turkish men born in France. They were wasted in the sense that they had no ideals in life, and had no will to undertake strenuous tasks, such as working at a snack döner. They sought short cuts of making

money, such as dealing drugs on the quartier courtyards, instead of more righteous means which involved hard work.

The apex of our friendship, which in anthropological parlance one would call rapport, came during the summer vacation, which F took for about a month. The previous months of hard work must have paid off, for he was able to afford closing the snack döner in order to treat himself and his family to a vacation in Turkey. Spending the paid vacation days, or *cong *, in Turkey is common practice among migrant Turks, and their France-born offspring. I have often heard from others that the Turks in Turkey earn their money and save it with one thing in mind: the vacation in Turkey, which includes a visit to the hometown or village, followed by a week or so at a sea-side holiday resort. The exchange rate would often help with the expenses, but going to Turkey, as a family, was still expensive business. Be it airfare or a 30-some hour road trip, transportation was costly. Some took out loans to make this trip possible, which as I argued earlier on, has become harder to obtain. Others who could not afford it would postpone the trip until next year, and listen to their friends' vacation stories with burning eyes. A week before F left for his cong , he asked me if I would be interested in taking care of the snack döner, all by myself, while he was gone. I could keep half the money made, which could provide me with anywhere between 1500 to 2000 Euros, if not more. But I declined his offer because this was not a task I was ready for. It was a big responsibility. Furthermore, spending an entire month in his snack döner would take away from my time with other Turkish men, who expected my presence in coffeehouses, mosques, courtier courtyards and other restaurants.

3.4. Hard and Dirty Work

Remember the young man whom I cited earlier in this chapter? He had considered working at a snack döner to be the kind of job that not even dogs would want to endure. And

working like a dog, *köpek gibi çalışmak*, is a practice that most men would argue to engage in here. It was not anything to take pride in, but a necessity that they had to undertake. The young man was right. The snack döner job was a job that not even dogs would withstand. While men like F may find meaning and “dignity in dirty work” (Lamont 2000; Stacey 2005), it is hard to conceive of the work that goes into running a snack döner as dignified.

Working at a snack döner is one of the nastiest forms of labor one can find in this city. I am sure things get equally nasty in bakeries, or construction yards, but the snack döner is a beast in itself, one which breaks you down. Standing in front of the grill where the vertical spit gyrates all day, the laborer is subjected to not only the scorching heat, but also the thick, greasy smell of the meat. It takes a thick skin, both figuratively and literally, to withstand the forces of fire and smoke. The first time I stood in front of the spit roast to shave off pieces of meat using the electric razor, I remember my knuckles burning. “Hold it strong,” F commented and laughed, “not like the way a newly married bride holds a cock.” I remember feeling upset at his comment, not only because of its sexism, but also because of the way it made me feel weak in front of F.

Unlike construction work, which requires physical strength, and is usually undertaken by men, much of the work in a snack döner is similar to domestic work that women are expected to engage in Turkish culture (Secor 2003; White 2004). This is not to disregard the fact that a large percentage of the migrant labor force in Europe, as elsewhere, consists of women (Simon and Brettell 1986; Kofman 1999). The birds of passage, as Morokvasic has argued in her famous essay are also women (Morokvasic 1984). It is also not to downgrade the physicality of labor that women engage in. While psychoanalytical accounts masculinity have come to be defined as a rejection of the feminine (Chodorow 1994), including labor that is traditionally associated with women (Simpson 2004), during my stay in Strasbourg, I have met many Turkish women who

were active in the workforce, such as bus drivers and shop keepers. I have even met a woman, now in her early 50s, who once worked in construction. Yet, despite the emancipatory potential of migration for women's participation in the labor market (Abadan-Unat 1977; Erman 1998), the association of women with domestic work and men with outside work continues to be prevalent in Turkey (Kandiyoti 1987; Muftuler-Bac 1999; Arat 2000; Ilkcaracan 2012), and amongst members of the Turkish community in the diaspora.³⁷

As Hillman (2002) reminds us, for the most part, ethnic businesses, such as snack döners, are not only ran by men, but are also seen as male businesses, leaving women who do not share kinship ties with the proprietors a harder time accessing to them. Some Turkish women would also tell me how they did not even want to enter these snack döner alone, for they did not feel comfortable with the act itself. It is uncanny, then, how in the snack döner, men end up undertaking tasks such as chopping vegetables, preparing sauces or washing the dishes which would be considered feminine work.³⁸ But working in a snack döner, one quickly realizes how consuming such labor can become. Standing in front of the vertical spit, one gets embalmed with greasy fumes. Back in the kitchen, which is where I spent much of my time, my hands would be infuse with the onion and garlic scents, and get colored in dark burgundy from slicing up the red cabbage.

These scents and colors accompany one not just in the shop, but also afterwards, to home, or other venues that one might want to go to socialize. Each day, after closing the shop, I would stop by my favorite café/bar, La Taverne Française in the Gallia neighborhood close to the

³⁷ In his 1986 movie, *40m2 Deutschland*, the director Tevfik Baser provides a brilliant analysis that shows how migration may further reinforce binaries such as public/private; outside/home; domestic/external for women. In academic literature, migrant women's reinforced social roles as homemakers, and housewives is known as the golden cage effect. For a Swiss case study on this theme, see Wessendorf 2008: 212-216; and for its American counterpart, see Parson and Heckert 2014

³⁸ For a comparison of men's labor in female dominated occupations, see Simpson 2004.

university to type down fieldnotes, and to grab a drink before heading home. I would normally be alone in some corner, but every now and then, I would step outside to smoke a cigarette and chat with the young French men and women who would be socializing outside the café. I remember very clearly, after one of those earlier nights when I started working at F's snack döner doing something obnoxious: smelling myself. I reeked of grilled meat and French fries. As I paid closer attention to my body, I realized that my nails were stuffed with potato crumbles, and encircled with dark burgundy spots. My fingertips and palms were covered in the same shade of red-black. And there I was, in a French café, surrounded by well clad French men and women, reeking of the scents that I was exposed at work. My pants were blotted because of the bleach I used to wipe off the floors. What did others think of this smelly, tired man? Did I belong to this space? Were they comfortable around me? Were I to approach a young lady and ask her how her day had been in my broken French, would the first thing she notice be the way I smelled? Would she ask why my hands had dark red stains? Would she even talk to me? Perhaps, that was why the young man who dissed me for working at a snack döner thought it was a job that not even dogs would withstand. Perhaps, he wanted to work at a space where he did not smell like grilled and fried food. Perhaps, he did not want to be seen as a lowbrow, working class man.

One of the things that I bought, for both F and I, after that malodorous experience was a can of deodorant, which we kept in the kitchen, used each night before closing the store, and replaced frequently. It was one thing that the store was impeccably clean, and the food, tasty. And business was good. F was happy with the increasing number of customers who praised the taste of his döners, and welcomed his hospitality. But all of that came at the expense of us. First our looks, and slowly, our health. The F that opened the store and the F I left right before my

departure from Strasbourg looked like two different people. In his 2012 ethnography, Benson writes about the physical impact of tobacco labor on migrant laborer in North Carolina farms which he himself also personally experienced. He talks about the way tobacco leaves stain the hands. Up until now, I had a strange fascination with construction workers who carried with them specks of paint and dust each time they took time off from work to pray the Friday salat at Strasbourg's mosques. The same goes for those who work in auto repair jobs, who would walk around with hands stained by motor oil.

I remember visualizing these stains that men carried as war scars, one which, I thought, made them stronger and more charismatic. There was beauty, I believed, in being worn down because of hard work, and showing it on one's face and clothes. In most Southeast Asian countries including Japan, *karōshi*, or death by overwork, is a highly regarded practice because of a prevalent corporatist culture that praises the sacrifices one makes for his firm, and his family (Smith 2008; Tsai et al 2016). I think that a similar logic is in play for Turkish migrant labor in Europe. The men who worked in construction may not have worked long hours, but their labor was taxing on the body. Often times, they worked an additional, off the books sixth day, and some even took on extra jobs for the additional cash on Sundays. And men like F worked in snack döners six to seven days a week, pulling off 12-hour shifts preparing food and serving customers. While work-related accidents are common among Turkish migrant labor in Europe, and many elderly who came to Europe during the 1960s and 1970s and worked in backbreaking jobs today suffer from work related illnesses, such as osteoarthritis and hernia, I have not heard of anyone dying due to overwork. Yet, I have been surrounded in coffeehouses and mosques by hordes of tired faces sitting, smoking, and chatting with each other. The new generations born to Turkish families were raised seeing their fathers coming home after work, tired and stained. And

many of them, such as the youths in Strasbourg's quarters, just like in Japan (cf *hikikomori*), chose to not participate in this work culture—leaving them with feelings of isolation (Borovoy 2008).

Like the first-generation men, and itals in Strasbourg, I have always found pride in being a hardworking man. But now that I was carrying the same war scars myself, I could see that there was in fact no strength or charisma in any of these labor specks. Work was smelly and dirty. It probably made me look ugly, and made people distance themselves from me. Moreover, despite all the hard labor in the snack döner, my intake of junk food and beverages had increased exponentially. I was smoking a lot more, drinking numerous bags of Capri Sun, cans of diet Coke and Red Bull each day, and eating lots of pita bread and French fries. Like F, who had grown a hunch and a bigger belly over the months, I, too, did become fat, and looked very tired. Similar to construction workers who have big, calloused hands, my already eczema-ridden hands were red and cracked from washing dishes. Six months into fieldwork, when John, my dissertation advisor, came to see me in Paris for a conference, he was literally concerned for my health. Simply put, I looked like... crap.

But none of that mattered when I was at F's snack döner. There was money to be made, customers to be served, and a growing sense of loyalty and camaraderie between the two of us. Over time, I got invested in the business. I remember feeling bad when we could not sell the entire spit roast and had to throw it away, for that was money lost. I also remember when the fridge broke down, or the sink started leaking for that meant more money lost to repairs. We also shared the joys of having had a successful day, often by drinking an espresso and smoking cigarettes after we finished cleaning the shop and prepared for departure. And on good days, the

pocket money F gave me included a bonus. “I know you like to sit at cafes. Here’s something extra for your next coffee,” he said once with a smile.

It is not that F and I were level on all grounds. The two of us disagreed on a number of things. He did complain about my over-frying the French fries, or over-serving them (“They cost money, Oğuz”), and spilling water on the floors when I washed the dishes in the tiny sink (“The water will eat away the wooden cupboards, Oğuz”). Other disagreements were not work related, and had to do with politics. But through working with him, I learned to ignore his political views on Kurds, his pride in being a gray Wolf/Turkish nationalist, which, often times, appeared to me to be borderline xenophobic if not racist. But if I were to rewrite T’s story from that angle, this section would have included many bitter remarks about his personality, and would probably cost me my friendship with him, as was the case for Benson (2018). And I choose to personally not do that, for I want to think and write of F as a hardworking man who cares for his family, and does not squander his hard earned cash in casinos in Kehl, which he could have easily done each night after work.

3.5 Boredom

Despite the hectic schedule of F’s snack döner, one could find plenty of time to get bored. There were many long hours where we sat, often facing each other, chatting, playing with our phones, staring at the TV which played the same songs over and over, or dosing off. F preferred the hectic schedule to these moments for he did not know how to fill in the emptiness. He was likely immersed in thought and anxiety for future, where each minute spent without a customer meant money lost. And for a man who needed to repay his debt to his uncle and his friends, and who had so much at stake to prove to be a success, sitting still on a chair while waiting for customers was an anxiety-inducing practice.

In her essay, “Labor, Action, and Work,” Arendt writes of boredom as something that disrupts the balance in a life spent between painful exhaustion and pleasurable regeneration (Arendt 1984: 34). Boredom, for Arendt, causes misery. The kind of labor F engaged in is certainly what Arendt would call work—the kind where it is not the hands that produce the life-worlds we live in, but where bodies are put into labor to sustain one’s livelihood. And work was boring. There was little creativity to the work F and I engaged in that snack döner, other than trying new sauces for the chicken döner, or contemplating new items for the menu, such as the rice pudding, which we ended up eating mostly ourselves. There was little joy, or added value, in serving customers döners with fries and beverages. Day after day, it was the same thing all over. Come to the shop at 9am, prepare the sauces and vegetables and clean up the place by 11am, then open the shutters and wait for customers until closing time at 10pm. Get in the car, go home. Take a shower. Sleep. Press repeat.

While these tasks may pay more than the minimum wage, and allow F to take save up some money to treat his family to a summer vacation in a holiday resort in Turkey, they also come at the expense of his time with his family at home, his friends at the teşkilat, and his physical, and perhaps even mental health. There are numerous ethnographies that detail the strains that backbreaking labor puts on laborers, including Ong’s highly acclaimed study of factory women in Malaysia (1987), Benson’s study of migrant labor in tobacco farms of North Carolina (2012), Thomas’ ethnography of counterfeit clothing producers in Guatemala (2016), Kim’s study of factory workers in South Korea (2013), among others. In each of these ethnographies, the laborers are subjected to routinized work to sustain their livelihood. In these ethnographies, we also get a glimpse of the ways that the laborers devise ways to retain a sense of dignity, and self-worth, by engaging in what de Certeau (1984) would call tactics, which are

anti-disciplinary practices and measures to respond to the structural forces that demand of them robot-like schedules and behavior. But could one speak of similar anti-disciplinary measures at the snack döner? An office worker bored in his cubicle may spend his time playing Solitaire on the company computer, or sending personal emails. He can hide behind the disguise of work, like a wig (or what de Certeau calls *la perreque*) hides the bald head, and engage in subversive behavior. For F, who was his own boss, and who still had so much to prove, these measures would only come at the expense of his own pocket. There was too much to lose in even being bored. And while we both enjoyed the conversations we engaged in, we were both aware that the kind of boredom that came from idleness was something F could not afford. The boredom associated with preparing döners for customers, however, was something he desperately needed.

3.6 Coda

When I first started working at F's snack döner, I asked him what he would do for a job were he given the chance to choose. "I would work at a retail, selling suits," F replied. I remember seeing him often suited up, in Facebook pictures as well as the teşkilat he frequented a lot more back in 2013. Part of it had to do with being presentable to the visits that his organization made to other associations in the city, and for the events they organized. But another part had to do with how much he enjoyed looking sleek. His attire in snack döner was the exact opposite of what his dream job would expect of him. He wore cushiony Crocs-knock offs over socks because he was standing up and serving customers all day long, which would make his feet hurt. He normally came to work with jeans and a sweatshirt, all clean and ironed thanks to his wife. And by the end of the day, he would have to change his clothes because they stank of meat and fries.

F worked, and as far as I know, continues to work at his snack döner to this day. After his congé in 2016, he decided to close the shop Mondays, which were slow compared to other days, in order to spend more time with his family. That left him with six 12 plus hour shifts a week, which to me still seemed to be an unsustainable schedule.

When I visited him in 2018, we sat together in his snack döner to have breakfast with his family. His wife was pregnant with their third child. F was exuberant. They had just been back from another vacation to Turkey. Business must have been good. But F and I rarely talked about money. There was once a time where opening up a snack döner was every Turk's dream in Europe. There was much money to be made in the business, and not many döner vendors functioning in European cities. Today, the döner hype seems to be still in place. The turnover rate for snack döner proprietors, and employees, is high. Like the business F took over, many snack döners exchange hands on a frequent basis. Yet, there are always new buyers waiting to try their chances in this business.

It is likely that F will sell his business one day. And maybe, next time I get to see him, he will be the floor manager at some department store, maybe in Strasbourg, or maybe back in his hometown in Turkey for, as is the case for most Turks in Europe, plans for that permanent return are never fully set aside. But in the meantime, he will probably continue to open the snack döner each morning at 9, working on the day's menu. He will open the store for business at 11 and wait for the first batch of customers to arrive. And perhaps, by then, he will have someone to help him, like I did back in 2016, to not just slice pita breads and prepare the vegetable, but to also sit and chat with him to pass time while waiting for the customers to arrive.

Part III: Home

Chapter 4: Home

“there is no place like home”
F. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz*

“...after all, leaving women sitting around in empty houses had been specialty of all men for ages.”
James Baldwin, *Come out the Wilderness*

If workplaces constitute one of the spaces that men want to escape from, for work is less a joy and more an obligation, and moneymaking an expectation from men whose departure from Turkey, in the first place, was to make money, home, often, is the first stop that they escape to. But for most my interlocutors, even including F from the previous chapter, who would normally spend much of his free time at the teşkilat (but no longer could, because he had no free time anymore), home constitutes a rather short stop. A dinner and shower stop, at best, if they do not end up dosing off in front of the TV, only to be awakened by friends calling, and inviting them out. But that, we will delve further into in the chapter on coffeehouses.

In this chapter, I am rather interested in men’s ambivalent stay at their homes. To that end, I ask the following questions which explore men’s puzzling relationship to domestic spaces: Why do many Turkish men not spend more time at home? Why do many of them speak of it as a space that they ambivalently belong? Why the lack of intimacy, tranquility, and the ensuing discomfort? This chapter builds on a scholarly tradition that explores the spatial aspects of masculinities (Jackson 1991; van Hoven and Hörschelmann 2005; Hopkins and Noble 2009), and seeks answers to these questions by examining men’s ambivalent relationship to their homes.

While similar questions have been asked by scholars working on the Turkish context (Ayata 2003; Özbay and Baliç 2004; Aksu and Üstün 2005; Barutçu 2015; Özarslan 2016), ethnographic account on Turkish men’s home lives remains scant. Part of this scholarly void, as I further elaborate in the following pages, has to do with a long tradition of deconstructing the links between domesticity and femininity, which led to numerous fruitful explorations of

women's home/domestic/private and outside/public lives. These scholarly takes, however, came at the expense of research on men's home and outside lives, an aspect which has relatively recently been gaining scholarly traction even in the non-Turkish context (Gorman-Murray 2008). The same omission extends to research on gender in the Turkish diaspora where, with few exceptions (Scheibelhoffer 2007 and Ewing 2008 for diaspora, Kandiyoti 1994 for Turkey), research on migrant Turkish men, and their second and third generation male offspring focuses primarily on questions of integration (and often lack thereof), and deals with topics such as Islam, honor-based aggression, and domestic violence. In these studies, men rarely get a chance to speak. Instead, they are spoken on behalf. These accounts, unfortunately, tell us little about their ways of making do amidst attempts (and failures) to conform to social roles demanded of them to perform as better sons, husbands, Turks, and Muslims.³⁹

In this chapter, as for the rest of this dissertation, I am less interested in condemning men for their failures to conform, and more interested in understanding their choices for not spending more time at home. And that, I cannot deny, comes as a result of my having grown up in a household where my own father did spend much of his time not with me or my mother, at least when I was old enough to make sense of what was going on, but elsewhere of which we had little knowledge. As far as I can remember, the little time my father spent at home was also filled with sour memories, including alcohol induced aggression and emotional outbursts. Perhaps, part of this dissertation is driven by an attempt to reach out to him, and to understand why he acted the way he did, and why, at times, he felt uncomfortable spending more time with us.

³⁹ The literature on Arab men, on the other hand, is more attentive to men's domestic and outside lives. See Inhorn (2012), Ghannam (2013), and Naguib (2015) for three excellent ethnographies on what home and household means for men in Egypt, Gerami (2005) for a review of literature on Muslim masculinities, Ouzgane (2006) for a compilation on Islamic masculinities, and Amar (2011) for a discussion on Muslim masculinities in crisis. For other studies on masculinity in the non-Western world, see, for example, Shefer et. al.'s (2007) compilation on African masculinities, and Jones' (2008) reader on "the men of the global south." Finally, for a review article on the growing scholarly interest on masculinity and manhood, see Schrock and Schwalbe (2009).

To that end, I am not here to blame men, and fathers in particular, for being absent, or acting violent in their presence. Instead, I am trying to understand what keeps them away from home, and what pulls them to the outside world.

In short, this chapter is an attempt to explore what home means to men.

4.1 Ambivalent Expectations

In Turkish culture, there is an ambivalent expectation from men when it comes to how they structure their time *vis-a-vis* their family/homes and friends/the outside. Men's relationship with their families are in transition, argue Boratav et al., whose study on married men in Turkey informs us that masculine subjectivities are not stable, but in flux due to men's changing roles in the family. To understand men's changing social roles, the authors divert our attention to the socioeconomic shifts in Turkey (Boratav et al 2014). While the situation is not that different in Strasbourg, through interviews with men and women, husbands and wives, I was able to observe firsthand how members of the community negotiated this flux.

On the one hand, certain members of the community, such as religious leaders, the elderly, as well as parents, wives, and children expect men to come home after work. The imams I talked to over this issue, and which I will further speak of in Chapter 5 on the mosque, would often tell me that a Muslim's time outside of home has to be spend either at the mosque, in the company of other members of the congregation engaging in good deeds such as volunteerism, or with their families, at home, and/or visiting their parents and in laws. Wives would share with me how they would like to have their husbands stay more at home, not to help them out with daily chores, but sometimes simply to just sit next to them to watch TV rather than go out.⁴⁰ In light of these expectations, masculinity, one could argue, could be defined within the parameters

⁴⁰ There were also wives who were fine with their husbands being out, as long as they did not spend away the money that they should be bringing home gambling in Kehl.

of a man's presence in, and ownership of the home space (Bourdieu 2002; McDowell 2002), and his protection of the family and kinship honor outside the boundaries of home (Gutmann 2006; Ehrkamp 2008; Ghannam 2013). Extant literature on domestic violence (Anderson and Umberson 2001; Hearn and Whitehead 2006) and in particular, on honor crimes provides many examples regarding the outcomes of men's loss of respect and hegemony at home (Koğacıoğlu 2004; Ewing 2008; King 2008; Korteweg and Yurdagül 2009).

There is also vast literature on men's changing roles at home, questioning what loss of dominance at home does to men's sense of manhood. Part of this literature considers masculinity in crisis and explores men's troubles in overcoming their loss of hegemony at home (Kimmel 1987; Guttman 1997; Hearn 1999; McDowell 2000; Whitehead 2002; Yang 2010) as well as their increasing participation in domestic duties, which are traditionally associated with women (Gelber 1997; Pink 2004; Charsley 2005; Doucet 2018). On the other hand, masculinity is also defined through men's socialization with other men outside (Herzfeld 1985; Gilmore 1990; Flood 2008), where their homosocial interactions are sited in public venues like coffeehouses, streets, bars or nightclubs (Kaplan 1995; Bird 1996; Grazian 2007). There is pride for a man to be outside. No wonder, when phones start ringing and messaging start arriving in these homosocial venues, men start throwing jokes at each other. "His time is up!" "The ministry of interior is calling!" "He'll have his luggage waiting outside the door!" In Turkish, there is a word for men, especially those who are newly married, who spend much of their time at home, and not with their male friends. They are called *pısırık*, pusillanimous; or *kılıbık*, henpecked, and in Central Anatolia, such men are called *soğan erkeği*, onion men. In popular culture, one could also encounter the term "light" to be attached to men, as *light erkek*. These descriptions, of

course, are not unique to Turkish men. One slang that comes to mind to describe similar men in the Western world is pussy-whipped.

The ambivalence pertaining to being attached to home but at the same time not being seen as too homely was prevalent on the practices and worldviews of the men I studied. On the one hand, home meant family, and kids. It was a place that they needed to take care of and protect. On the other hand, home was also where they had to endure their wives' nagging. Most men I talked to during fieldwork would tell me that they would die for their kids. Some would add that they loved their wives, too. Their social media uploads would display them taking their families to vacation or playing with their kids, playing to the image of responsible fathers, that is, the kind who would spend time with the family, and money on his family. In pictures and videos, we would see them mock wrestling with their kids in their homes. Or like G Hanım's husband, who was introduced in Chapter 2, playing the *saz* (long necked lute) and singing in their living room with his wife and children. Also, in social media shares, one would encounter pictures and videos of men taking their kids out for a walk. For a snack. For a trip to the mountains of Kintzheim, also known as the Mountain of Monkeys, to feed the monkeys. Or to pick strawberries. Or to Mannheim, to the Istanbulstrasse, to eat döner kebabs and Turkish pastries. To reminisce what life would have been like were they to live in Turkey. What was the purpose in all that? To retain an image as a responsible father—one who would comply with his expected social role as a sensible husband? But while our hearts could melt with these images, we would also know if we were to spend time with them, we would suspect—for there was so much gossip about men's misdemeanors—that much of these men's lives would be spent not at home with the family, but outside with male, and sometimes female friends.

When I told women that I met in Strasbourg that I studied men's outside lives, one of the first questions they would ask me was, "So, where do they go?" I was never sure whether they did not know where their husbands really were, or if they knew but played dumb. Some would jot down my contact information so that they could reach me when "the book" came out, hoping that in it they could decipher their own husbands and sons.

This is not to say all men seek a way out of home. Not all men avoid staying at home. While some would argue to have found the comforts they sought in life at the presence of their family, others would speak of the home as more of a space of discomfort. In this chapter, I ask why that is the case. I question what men expect of these comings to home after work, and in doing that, I question what kind of becoming the home space entails.

4.2 Making Sense of "Home"

In writing this chapter, I am in dialogue with three scholarly conversations. The first is the conversation on home that equates it to an imaginary homeland. The migration literature on home is inundated with idealized accounts of the homeland, often by way of juxtaposing it to the host country. I do not know what else to add to this debate other than reiterate what has already been told. The literature on transnationalism (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992a; Glick-Schiller et al. 1992b; Basch et al 1995; Portes et al 1999), and home-making and homing desires in diasporic contexts (Brah 1996; Hage et al 1997; Rapport and Dawson 1998; Duyvendak 2011) has long questioned our assumptions on (up)rootedness, and accounts that treat movement as a mechanic motion from one location (homeland) to another (host country). We know that homes and homelands are never fully left behind, but rather carried with migrants as they move from different spaces in which they engage in new acts of home and space making (Metcalf 1996; Fortier et al 2003). This literature has also brought to our awareness the possibility of hybridity,

of peoples and borders, as well as multiple belongings (Levitt 2001; Foner 2005). While some of these accounts, in the spirit of globalization and ruminations on a flatten world, were optimistic of movement, as apparent in discussions on routes and flows (Clifford 1997; Castells 2000; Urry 2000; Hannerz 2002a), and celebratory of the making of the cosmopolitan, creole participants of a global culture/*eucumene* (Chambers 1994; Featherstone 1995; Hannerz 2002b; Featherstone 2002), others were quick to draw our attention to the constraints to movement, and the gendered, racialized, classed regimes that govern movement of peoples across borders (Anzaldúa 1987; Ifekwunigwe 1999; Ong 1999; Bauman 2000).

In this chapter, I am less interested in imaginary homelands and returns, or discussions over identity making (and constraints thereof) in movements across national borders. Instead, I focus on the physical space of home. I am interested in writing about a place that men come to after work which is not Strasbourg or Kehl, France or Germany, but an actual house, a flat in an apartment located in a migrant populated neighborhood. An F2, 2+1. Or an F3, 3+1. A kitchen, living room, bathroom, and some bedrooms. Sometimes a small courtyard or even a garden. This is a space shared with other inhabitants, parents, partners, and kids. And a space located next to neighbors, Turkish, Moroccan, Algerian, Chechen, Roma, and French... Individuals may construct many homes in their heads. Some of these constructions would reflect the houses they grew up in, both in Turkey and France, and bring up memories of their mothers taking care of them while the father was absent, outside, in a coffeehouse or elsewhere. These memories would also build up on an imaginary homeland, one in which they would argue to have found the serenity they seek. The dusty roads of the village, the late-night trips to the nearby town, the vegetable garden, the chicken coop, the cold clean water, and the crisp air... But on a more

practical level, the flat in the quartier was where my interlocutors would find themselves when they were done with work. It was the house they came to.

In this chapter, I also intervene in accounts that equate home with the private, and outside with the public, and provide a critical analysis—one that is critical of the universal application of European accounts on the public/private distinction (Thompson 2003)—and one which that juxtaposes space and gender to the Muslim context (Bourdieu 1979; Wigley 1992; Göle 1996; Gal 2002). Spaces, public or private, are gendered (Massey 1994; Chapman 2004), and the still prevalent expectation, at least within the Turkish community that I study in Strasbourg, is similar to that of Victorian households that Tosh (1999) describes in great detail, one in which women, as “homemakers” are expected to stay at home to take care of the children. I have from time to time heard from men, including those in religious conversation circles, the Turkish aphorism that it is the female bird who build the nest (*yuvayı dişi kuş yapar*). There is already vast literature that discusses the gendering of space according to Islamic ideals (Barth 1961; Antoun 1968; Nelson 1974; Beck 1980; Tapper 1990; Abu-Lughod 1993; Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2001). Yet, there is also an expectation that men should assist women too in their home affairs and bring their kids to the mosque for ethical cultivation. In other words, while feminist scholars are right to problematize the gendered relations of space by focusing on the power dynamics that keep women at home, and perpetuate inequalities between women and men (Blunt and Dowling 2006), they omit an important side of the picture, one that asks what keeps some men at home while others, outside (Ahmet 2013). And while much of the literature on “masculinity in crisis” asks how men negotiate their loss of power in home spaces (Gerson 1993; Gelber 1997; McMahon 1999; Pease and Pringle 2001), less attention is paid towards asking what pushes them outside of home (Frank 2002; Özarlan 2016). Simply put, we know little of men’s outside lives,

or what drives them to seek alternative lives outside. And rather than explaining the motives that keep men outside, and away from their homes, the current focus rather is on men's ab/use of their power in different domains of life, which constitutes the foundation for what we today call "toxic masculinity." (Connell 2001a; Connell 2001b).

Given the extant literature on the subject, I will shy away from a lengthy discussion on how toxic masculinity is a reaction to men's loss of power in different domains of life. Instead, I want to focus on why the men I study continue to enjoy certain rights—such as seeing themselves entitled to go out without constraints, especially from women with whom they share the same spaces. Or not considering themselves accountable for their transgressions. That is, not having to answer to anyone but Allah, for only Allah can judge them. While some men, especially among the older generations, would argue that home is a feminine space, which they propose as a justification to qualifying their time outside of home, others, especially the younger Turks, rarely speak of their outside lives as a natural right. They would rather speak of regrets, adding that they should spend more time at home, but cannot because of complications at home. Complication such as their presence leading to confrontations with their parents, or wives, which, then becomes a justification of their decision to leave home in search of spaces that are more welcoming of their presence.

This brings me to the third conversation that I engage in this chapter, which romanticizes the home space as one of intimacy, affection, and familiarity. One could trace this conversation prominently in phenomenological accounts that treat home, and in particular, dwelling and being at home, as an integral part of self-making (Heidegger 1971). While nostalgia for an idealized home may permeate narratives of home as a space of meaning, attachment, emotional belonging and comfort (Bachelard 1964; Tuan 1971), I question how home, as a lived reality, fails to meet

this expectation. My aim, then, is to provide a critical account that treats home as a space that is not familiar, intimate or caring.

In formulizing my approach to home, I benefit largely from the literature that destabilizes this home-familiarity equation and treats it as a contentious space, one which is filled with ambiguity and tension. Home is as much a space of resistance to norms as it is to abidance by them, for both women, and men (hooks 1991). It is as much a site of strangeness as it is a space of familiarity. “The space which is most comfortable and familiar is not the space of the inhabitation but the very space in which one finds the self as almost, but not quite, at home,” writes Ahmed (1999: 331). In the following pages, I benefit from the conversation she leads in conceptualizing the migrant home. In doing so, I treat home as an impossibility, a place one is aspiring to get to but can never fully do so.

4.3 Home as Ambiguity

Home is an ambiguous space. It encapsulates feelings, as well as “failures to feel”, as argued by Ahmed. This ambiguity has to do with men’s yearning to belong to home but also their failure to do so. And tensions at home are accounted for these failures. Home is a space that one escapes to, but also escapes from.

The men whose stories I convey in the following pages share what Brah (1996) calls homing desires, a longing to return to a place (of origin), a physical space, as well as a fantasy which may never be realized, but is kept alive nonetheless.

Houses, of course, have long attracted social scientific scholarly attention. While the bulk of research done on houses, at least until the early 2000s, came from disciplines other than anthropology (for a review of the literature, see Cieraad 2006), the house, as a domestic unit, and the household, as the building block of human communities, was considered central to

understanding concepts often-associated with anthropological inquiry, such as kinship, social organization, and marital and burial practices. Earlier work on houses focused on their significance for human socialization and organization (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995). Houses were seen as symbols which helped anthropologists understand variations in marriage practices across cultures (Leach 2006 [1954]). They were central to the exploration of themes such as social hierarchy in the larger societies studied, as exemplified in Douglas's work on the construction of gendered relations around a British family's meal table (1972), Bourdieu's work on the gendered structuring and symbolism of Kabyle houses (1970), Cunningham's ethnography on affinal relationships build around Atoni houses in West Timor (1964), Levi Strauss' ethnography on affinal alliances cemented by living in house societies (1982 [1988]), *societes a maison*, among the Kwakuitl, and later societies in the Pacific and elsewhere (1987), and Hodder's research on Neolithic dwelling and burial practices (1984). Houses were also central to understanding human's engagement with space, which led the way into earlier anthropological work by Mauss (1950) and Morgan (1965) on Eskimo and American Aborigine dwelling practices respectively, as well as a plethora of work on human interaction with the environment , a theme widely explored by ecological anthropologists such as Netting (1977) and Steward (1977).

However, much of the earlier anthropological literature on houses also treats the home-space as a fixed one, both in its material and imaginary forms. It is imbued with essential values pertaining to the making of a family, and the sustenance of kinship structures. This approach to home, as a fixed imaginary itself becomes a fixation—one which helps social scientists to treat home as a space that provides stability to our theorization. This fixation can also be traced in ways the men I study speak of home—a place of ultimate return, albeit often a distraught one.

Yet home, as feminist scholars like hooks, Ahmed, and others rightly respond, is not a space of fixity, but rather one of “ever-changing perspectives” (hooks 1990; Ahmed et al 2003). Both as a concept, and more so a lived reality, it is an unstable space. Home, and return to home, as Constable (1997) proposes needs to be conceptualized as a space of ambivalence. A place that is both yearned for, or escaped to, but also escaped from.

Furthermore, what makes home an interesting space to study is that, like other spaces I deal with in this dissertation, it is “a local moral world” in its own. It is imbued with values, such as family (and familiarity), care, and love. Being at home in the world, for Heidegger, and making oneself familiar with the world through home-making, was the essential characteristic of human beings. But often times, life constitutes of the very failures to make oneself at home, and to feel belonging to particular moral worlds such as the home. Home is one space that men are expected to belong. It is their failure to feel at home, and to belong to home, and to the others who inhabits this home space that I problematize in the following pages.

Home is not a place void of fantasies. It is indeed a product of fantasies. For the men studied in this ethnography, the fantasy itself is shaped by imaginaries that defines what it should look like, and what dwelling in it should feel like. Often in narratives, home is brought up as a place where there is a warm meal, ready on the table, kids waiting to greet their fathers, and a loving wife who treats her husband with the dignity he thinks he deserves. But these expectations are not always met, and men blame various proxies for this discrepancy—the wife who may have been out all day, shopping, chitchatting, and neglecting his house duties; the children who are busy playing games or surfing on their phones, but who still demand from their fathers expensive electronics and clothing; the in-laws who almost always find the blame in the groom. These failures, some argue, have nothing to do with Turkish culture. Instead, they blame the changing

times, and the shifting moral attitudes for failures of home to meet the fantasy. Rarely do men blame themselves. Rarely do they ask themselves how little time they may be spending at home. Or how they neglect their wives and children. Some would argue that they “work like a dog” all day to bring money back home. And when they would come home, and cannot find that warm plate of food, or when they would be greeted with a bitter face, they would either sit in front of their TV sets and dose off, or grab their jackets and leave to the land where other men, equally discontent, are waiting to greet them. Like women, who may seek commodified forms of intimacy outside of home (Boris and Parrenas 2010), men, too seek outside the intimacy they consider lacking at home.

There is, in other words, a discrepancy between the home as an imagination and a fantasy, and home as the physically lived space. The fantasy is one where men’s attachment is defined through a sense of intimacy, and maternal care, one which some of my interlocutors argue to have received from their biological mothers growing up. In practice, and especially amongst married men, however, this sense of care is often argued to be missing. The affection that their wives show for them can never be a match for the affection that they argue to have received from their mothers. This lack provides a motive for men to neglect the home space. To escape to it, and eventually, escape from it.

To that end, in the following pages, I will be taking you to two homes. In these two anecdotes, we will mostly be reading about men who are not too comfortable spending their time with their families at home. However, these men, as it will be clear, cannot let go of home altogether either simply because that could mean losing their ties to their kids.

The first home will be S Bey’s. S Bey, like most men who live in these homes neither spends much of his time in the house, nor does he do much of the speaking during the interview.

S Bey claims to love his family, and his home. But his frequenting the coffeehouse still intervenes with the time he could have been spending at his home. Unlike his outspokenness in the coffeehouses, at home, he leaves the floor to his wife, or better put, it is B Hanım who dominates the conversation despite her husband's intermittent grunts and interjections. In the story below, S Bey will pick me up from a coffeehouse close to his home, drive me in his car to it, introduce me to his wife and three kids, and we will sit altogether for an interview. And when the topic becomes too sensitive, the kids will be sent to their rooms to play. We will drink Turkish tea, smoke cigarettes and talk about an event that almost led S Bey losing B Hanım, and eventually his home.

Next, I will be greeted at N Bey's home. Unlike S Bey's home setting, at N Bey's, I will only get to meet his wife, whose name I will never get to know. We will meet her only once when she brings us soft drinks and pastries. N Bey will talk more about his affairs with his girlfriend in hotels outside the city, and discrete parts in parks and the Ostwald forest south of the city, than his relationship to his wife, and to his home. At some point, his girlfriend will call, interrupting our interview, and they will have a brief chat. N Bey will then tell us why he needs this girlfriend as much, if not more than his wife. But, he will remind us that he also needs his son, whom he loves dearly. And for that reason, his relationship with his girlfriend, whom he had been seeing for almost ten years now, will always remain hidden.

4.4 S Bey

I met S Bey at his usual spot, sitting in the coffeehouse in his post work outfit—shorts and a T shirt—surrounded by other men playing cards. At around 7 PM each night, he would come to this coffeehouse and sit, accompanied by coffee, men, and cigarettes, for a few hours before he left for home. What men find in these comings to this coffeehouse is something that I

describe in greater detail in Chapter 6 on coffeehouses. What home means to them is what I will focus on in this one.

The second week of September, over nine months into my year long stint in Strasbourg, I mentioned to S Bey that I wanted to visit him at his home, at the company of his family for a change. He had shown great interest in the possibility of inviting me home, which was strange, and somewhat unexpected considering that most men either were not accommodating of bringing a male researcher into their home due religious reasons or because they feared an outsider's moralizing gaze, siding with their wives and making them feel accountable for their actions.⁴¹ While the saying, "I fear no one but Allah" was a common trope amongst men, most men, it seemed, feared others demanding justification for their actions. That is why they sought places where no one would bother them. Or remind them of their moral failures. That is also why they likely sought places where they would be surrounded by men who shared similar anxieties, and chose not to question each other's practices, for they themselves were guilty of the same crimes. Furthermore, in a place like a coffeehouse, sitting with an anthropologist and surrounded by other men, they could control the narrative by hiding certain facts, and presenting themselves as victims. At home, however, their narrative could be challenged by a wife humiliating them in front of the anthropologist. Family life, after all, constituted their *mahram*, that is, private. Men rarely invited others to this private. On the contrary, they were more open to inviting me to other spaces where they engaged in practices that could be considered more secretive, such as visits to casinos or brothels. In a coffeehouse, when an anthropologist demanded them to open up, they

⁴¹ Some men would argue that a man who is not part of the kin cannot be brought into one's private sphere, and especially to the wife's presence, for this would obstruct the sanctity of the religious wedding, *nikah*. Hence, in some of the houses I visited, I dined with men in a room separate from their wives, and did not get to see the wives to even thank them for feeding me that night. The imams would not welcome this practice either. In their reasoning, they would not pinpoint any specific suras from the Qur'an or the early Islamic tradition (*hadith*) to back up their claim. This taboo, to me, seemed to have more to do with men's hesitation to invite a figure, such as a male anthropologist, who through his mere presence, let alone questions, could hinder masculine domination at home.

did so in a secluded corner, unless they were with very close friends who already had knowledge of their secrets. And there I was, in the coffeehouse, night after night, doing exactly that.

A week later, I came back to the same coffeehouse, from where S Bey would pick me up and take me to his home, located within a five-minute drive. Normally, on a Friday night, S Bey would stay at the coffeehouse until late, almost until midnight, for he did not work every Saturday. Some nights, he, like many others, would stay in the coffeehouse past midnight, playing cards and drinking alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages. But this Friday was different, for he was taking me to his family. He was excited, anxious even, when he entered through the door of the coffeehouse, installing himself next to me to have a smoke, and then, all of a sudden, standing up in a rush, asking me if I was ready to start our journey home.

S Bey lived in a housing complex close by. The building was an HLM, but one of the big, newly built ones in Neuhof, a 3+1, where he, all proud, would later give me a tour. These new HLMs were hard to get, not only because they were handed out through a lottery system, but also because they were costlier than smaller and older HLMs. In order to rent one, the applicant had to declare three times the income that the flat costed. The problem however, had nothing to do with men earning minimum wages—for most earned more by working overtime. The problem rather had to do with how much income they declare on their *fiches de pais* (pay slips), for declaring higher incomes mean paying higher taxes. S Bey, it seemed, went the legal way in order to afford the 3+1.

The entire family was informed of my arrival, and were ready by the door when we rang the doorbell. First S Bey's wife, B Hanım, wearing a modest headscarf, greeted us, followed by their three daughters. Taking off our shoes, we walked into the living room, where the coffee table was set with tea glasses, sunflower seeds, and other snacks. S Bey complemented his wife's

skill in not only managing the house, and presenting it to him, and to the guests, in an impeccable state, always with food and tea ready, but also for taking care of their children, whom he loved dearly.

“You know, I... this assembly you see in front of you... one, two, three, four [counting his kids, and B Hanım]... this is my little world. But it is so big for me. Hence, when my wife left... when was that, girl?”

“The month of April,” B Hanım responded.

Nodding his head, S Bey continued:

I sent them to Turkey last year. They get to go every year. And this time, I stayed here. My whole world collapsed on me. This big house, you know... I could not even get myself to turn on the stove top. It was bad. I do not know. I am used to it, to my family, and I can't do without them [...] this big house, when they are in vacation, is sad. Coffee doesn't taste the same when they are in Turkey. The car doesn't feel the same. It is empty. I swear to you, empty... like a rock.

By the end of S Bey's speech, B Hanım was having a hard time holding her laughter. “Oğuzhan,” she said, “you know what. When I am home, he goes to the coffeehouse daily. When I am in Turkey, I call him, and ask him where he is. He says he is at home. He must be doing that on purpose.”

“No, no, not at all!” S Bey intervened.

“Coffee tastes sweeter when I am here. The coffeehouse means nothing when I am gone, then...” added B Hanım smiling, as if taking joy in her husband's affection for her.

B Hanım took great pride in serving her husband, telling me later in the interview that she could understand certain men who cheated on their wives, for their wives did not take care of

themselves, such as not taking care of their hygiene. “How could a woman smell bad?” she asked me, while referencing a friend. She wanted to make clear that she was not like those women.

S Bey came to Strasbourg at the age of nine, and grew up in the Neuhof neighborhood. Growing up in a *quartier*, he engaged in the kinds of things a quartier boy does—selling drugs, stealing cars, cassette tapes. But he did not get too entrenched into the quartier life to the extent that he could get jailed like others. Nobody, not even members of his own family thought that anything good would come out of him, and that he took to heart. Growing up was a battle to prove others wrong.

S Bey and B Hanım met in one of S Bey’s summer trips to Turkey. It was not him, but his uncle, who had first met B Hanım. Back then, she was working as a secretary for a construction firm in Ankara. His uncle thought that B Hanım would be a perfect fit for S Bey, but neither B Hanım, nor her parents, were interested in S Bey’s kin’s proposal. B Hanım talked about how sending a daughter to Europe was something that families feared back then, partially due to stories of domestic violence that made it into the news. But after a few more visits back to the construction firm, and later, to B Hanım’s family’s house, her family accepted the wedding offer, and the two got married in Turkey.

It took S Bey over a year to bring B Hanım to Strasbourg due to complications with the paperwork. And when she came, she had to live for the first few years at S Bey’s family’s home, which she did not like, “for there was no privacy for a married couple there.” Later, they moved into an HLM in Neuhof. That departure was tough on S Bey. It was his first time leaving the family home. “I walked back into that empty room of mine and I started crying so hard, Oğuzhan, like a kid. I no longer belonged to that home. I could no longer be next to my mom or dad. It is as if that was the moment I realized I was now a grown up.”

B Hanım intervened: “So? I left my mom and dad to come all the way here!”

Like most newly-weds, the first few years in Strasbourg were spent together. B Hanım did not deny her husband’s eagerness to spend time with her, and her children. S Bey was—and still is—a hardworking man, spending his days working in construction. But in those early years, the nights, and the weekends, he would dedicate to his wife, taking them to the castle in Haut-Koenigsbourg near the Vosges mountains, to the zoo in Mulhouse, to eat ice cream in Kehl, and most recently to eat out in Mannheim.

Despite being married for over ten years, both B Hanım and S Bey agreed that not much had changed in terms of S Bey’s affection for his home. Another thing that stayed the same was his affection for the coffeehouse, though. “There are no places to go here Oğuzhan. I work until night, no matter how hot the summer or how cold the winter, no matter the rain. I come home, eat dinner while the kids are watching a film or something. And then they ask me, daddy, won’t you go to the coffeehouse?”

One of the kids even added that they made their nighttime plans according to their dad’s coffeehouse schedule.

B Hanım tolerated S Bey’s coffeehouse excursions. And she was fine with him spending much of his time not with her, but out with his friends in the coffeehouse. This was all fine until the coffeehouse took him to the proximity of another woman, which almost led to the collapse of what both of them had described as a happy marriage.

“Kids, go to your rooms. Daughter, take your sisters to the back.”

Even if I did not ask them if all was peachy in their marriage, B Hanım, as she would later tell me, would still have brought up this topic. This was a topic the two have not discussed

in the past three months, but the pain was still fresh, as B Hanım recounted, and would likely stay that way until she brought it with her to the grave.

I trusted him so much, so much that I would not even trust my own father this way...

When S did not work, he would sometimes come back home at four or even five in the morning, and never would I demand him where he was. Never would I ask, ‘Where were you?’ Never! But he lied to me. He said, he did not know that woman. And I believed him initially. But four or five days later, I caught them exchanging messages. Allah does wonders, you know. S must have synchronized our phones by mistake, so when that woman messaged him, I got the messages too. One night, he was here, asleep on the couch after work, and I was about to heat up some water in the kettle. Out of nowhere, I received a text. I wondered whom it could be from. I opened the text, and excuse me but, all the messages that he wrote to that whore appeared.

In Strasbourg, among members of the Turkish community, it is common practice, especially among married couples, to have joint accounts—banking, Facebook, or cell phone. While one could argue that this signals a lack of trust among couples, to the extent that they demand transparency from each other via the use of new technologies, such as women tracking their fiancés and husbands using smartphone applications, most couples who use these means see it as a sign of trust, for failure to comply to such surveillance techniques would indicate one of the partners holding secrets from the other. B Hanım, apparently, already had an inkling as to the possibility of S Bey having an affair, but as she continued to recount her story, she made it clear that she had no intention of being the demanding wife, such as wanting to know his whereabouts in those long night outs he took. B Hanım continued:

He fooled me. He swore that her hand did not touch his. He swore over my little child, No he said, her hand did not touch mine. And, brother, I believed him. I forgot about it all. Up until four or five days later, when I saw those messages... My whole world collapsed. I was done for. I attempted to commit suicide, took pills, tried to throw myself out of the window... And the kinds of things they have done together... Going to the Orangerie Park. And you know what he wrote back to her [in the text]. *S'il te plait* (please), don't call me now, I am home.

As B Hanım was dealing with lonely nights, often in physical pain, S Bey, she argued, was not there. "Sometimes he was, often times he was not. He would leave home during New Years, and go to that whore. In special days, he would take the whore out for a walk. I would call him to say 'Come fast, I am dying, I am having a crisis.' He would not pick up his phone for a few hours, and then call me back, telling me he is away from home, with friends. He would say that he had forgotten his phone in the car. But he was in Belgium, with the whore."

At this point, S Bey, who was silently listening to his wife tell her story, interrupted: "Belgium, no way!"

"Baden Baden, then?"

"Oh God!"

"He took her out. They wandered around. And then, the next day, he came back in the morning. I was here [pointing to the couch], lying. He placed a rose next to me. He bought a rose for me. He chose the rose with that whore. He made me breakfast, he made me take my medication. [The night before] he was showing the messages I was sending him to her. According to her [B Hanım would later have a coffee with her without telling S Bey], she was reading the texts I sent him. You in that gambling house [referring to the

coffeehouse] again. Not that he gambles, but... wherever he is. She would tell him, go to your wife, she needs you. But he would say, no, I have had enough with her. With her sickness. It is better here. You're better. You're nice."

"Oh..." grunted S Bey.

I could see the discomfort on his face as he listened to his wife's diatribe.

"Did you come here to roast me?" S Bey shouted. He did not seem angry, but he was not pleased with the direction the conversation was going either. I needed to intervene, and if possible, change the subject. But B Hanım wanted to continue. And she did, despite various interventions by S Bey, where he refuted her claims that he had cheated on her. "I had trusted him. I had told myself, he would not do such things. He would not be interested in or look at anyone else but me. Why hold her hand and walk around with her. She had said that she would be very happy if he did hold her hand. And he did."

By this point, B Hanım was in tears.

"She is crying, moaning, and that is bothering me. It is not worth it. During those two years, the things we went through, we were at the brink of getting a divorce. She wanted a divorce. But I did not let her..." argued S Bey.

"Yes he did not let me leave," B Hanım confirmed in tears.

S Bey walked towards the window and lit a cigarette. "Oğuzhan, don't hesitate. Smoke brother, smoke."

B Hanım brought an ashtray. The three of us sat back on the couch with cigarettes in our hands.

"I don't let go. I can't. Because I like my wife too much," S Bey said.

Why did S Bey have an affair with this other woman, then?

“He asks you why you did it. Do tell!” B Hanım interjected.

“I will,” S Bey replied, and continued: “You know, in the name of this *nimet* [blessed food], I am a person who likes to help people.”

“That is obvious,” B Hanım responded.

“For God’s sake, I help people. You know, if someone falls, and is in need of help... I always liked to help people. You know. Her. She was 150, even 160 kilos. Like a cow. A person who was fed up with her capricious life. We met, and then... It is *Şeytan* [Devil’s work]. I do not want to say, *tövbe, haşaa* (God forbid) it was Allah’s doing. No marriage is perfect. They say that *Şeytan* finds a way to intervene. It is the reality. But I had a chance to help... But I am committed to my family. And now I am even more committed. Such a thing cannot happen, will not happen again. I always tried to tell her [B Hanım] that.”

B Hanım intervened again: “You take her to the Orangerie Park. You take her to play pool. But why hold her hand. Is that helping too?”

“No it is not... She asked me to. And I told her, I am a married man. You know. I asked her what would happen if I hold your hand. She said she just wanted to do it. She is 24 or 25 years old. I do not know what kind of a (movie) script she had written in her head. I told everyone that I would.... To that *kahpe* [whore], I am sorry, that is a bit too harsh, *tövbe estağfurullah* [God forbid...] I said no. She said she will hold my hand regardless. I said OK. She did. And then, you know, she [B Hanım] knows me well. I cannot deal with romanticism. I am not that type of person. I am how I appear, that’s all...”

I leave it up to the reader whether S Bey’s justification for his affair (that he likes to help people, and she was in need of help) is by any means a viable one. What is clear was that B

Hanim was convinced that S Bey had an affair. That he had met her at the coffeehouse he frequented, which was another reason why B Hanim did not want him hanging out in that coffeehouse anymore. But at the same time, she was well aware that he needed some time and space of his own, and the coffeehouse was the place he found it.

After the two tumultuous years, B Hanim's health improved, and she chose to rebuild the trust that S Bey had infringed through this affair. Today, B Hanim uses a smartphone app to track S Bey's movement. She calls him frequently when he is out, and sometimes, S Bey sends him selfies from the coffeehouse to assure that he is with his friends, and not outside with some woman. Both of them use the woman S Bey had an affair with as the culprit, and by blaming her for the rough times, they attempt to overcome a sour episode in their life.

But towards the end of our interview, B Hanim made it clear that if he were to make another mistake, it would over. That with another mistake, she would be over...

4.5 N Bey

I met N Bey at an iftar (breaking the fast during Ramadan) in a mosque association. With the exception of Friday prayers, and a *kermesse* (festival/potluck) at the same mosque, I would never encounter him there again. His son, however, attended the mosque association's activities, such as the Qur'an lessons. Sending kids, especially the male offspring, to mosque associations, and their dormitories outside of Strasbourg (in his case, Nancy) during summers was a common strategy utilized by many Turkish parents to keep their kids away from socializing in the quartiers, and hanging out with bad friends. The reasons why the quartiers, and quartier boys, have such a bad reputation is something that I delve into in one of the following chapters of this dissertation.

N Bey himself had attended these Qur'an classes while growing up. But like most kids, once he grew older, he dropped out of these programs and started to work with his brother. Work, he argued, was a distraction that kept him busy, and away from the quartier. Part of the reasons why he did not get into jail, like many quartier boys do, he argued, had to do with his older brother demanding him to come to work with him everyday. He, however, did not let go of his outside life despite his heavy work schedule.

N Bey would continue on telling me that he did not want his son to repeat the mistakes he had committed. His son's moral education was something he valued greatly, despite his continuing engagement with practices which one could consider immoral, at least in the Islamic context, such as smoking *shit* (hashish) or having an extramarital affair, which I talk about in the following pages. To make sure his son did not follow his father's path, first he enrolled him at a local gym to do fitness. But his son continued to spend time with his friends outside, mostly going to shisha cafes which N Bey did not like. He told him to smoke at home instead, with his friends, allocating them a room in one of his apartment's empty flats. The son did take the opportunity, but perhaps to another extreme where shisha smoking turned into a daily affair. N Bey did not like the fact that his son was smoking so much. Once he could not get him off this habit, he enrolled him to a boarding school in Nancy run by the Süleymancı congregation.

N Bey invited me to his home for an interview and we met, in a mid-July day, in his home's garden. He and his brother owned the apartment where they lived. Following his father's footsteps, and like most Turkish men, he worked hard most of his life and spent his savings by investing in houses in Turkey, and Strasbourg. Today, he worked for a cleaning company, and although his job was menial, it paid higher than the minimum wage. But more importantly, he knew how to save up. "We Turks don't share the French logic where you spend the money you

earned today the same day. If we did, then perhaps we would not be able to own this property,” he said in response to why much of his money earned was kept aside for future investment purposes. N Bey was no exception to many Turks, who saved money yearlong to take the month-long vacation in Turkey. This, however, also meant little money could be allocated to be spent outside with the family, a practice that is, as N Bey pointed out, common amongst the French.

Not all Turks are master-strategists when it comes to saving money though. With the exception of going to coffeehouses, a cost which can exceed a third of one’s minimum wage if visited each night, some men also gambled. N Bey gambled too back in the day, but stopped visiting casinos, with the exception of rare trips with his cousins who lived in Germany. The warning sign came to him when he lost a sum of 3000 Euros within the span of a few days. Some of that loss included the “milk money”, that is, the money the French welfare state allocates to families with children. That affair took place in Casino Sand, located 20 kilometers east of Kehl. From there, he hopped on to another casino, Rix, hoping that he could have a new bout of luck there, and recuperate the losse. But Rix was no different. Since that experience, he stopped spending money in the casinos, and instead frequented the coffeehouses in Strasbourg to kill time.

N Bey made more than the minimum wage. But that still did not suffice to take his family out and have them participate in his excursions. “Where will I take them with me? To the slot machines?” he asked. Could he not have taken them out to grab a dinner, though? No, it was not possible, for “it is not like the old days where we could go out to eat. Since the transition to Euro, everything costs more,” was his rationale. I have heard both excuses many times before. “Moreover,” he added, “my Madame (referring to his wife) does not like to go out. If I were to say, let us go to Chark (a well known restaurant in Strasbourg), and spend 50 or 60 Euros on a

meal, she would not want it.” That I heard too. “Look, for example, all of these (the pastries sitting in front of us) are made by her. They are fresh. Eat them, please.”

I wished N Bey’s wife would respond to him. But she kept her silence as she laid out plates of pastries in front of us, and quickly left the scene.

Like S Bey, N Bey came to Strasbourg as a child. His father, who had come to Germany in the early 1970s, brought his family to Strasbourg by 1980. N Bey did not think of marriage back then. He did not want to start up a family until he was 25. He wanted to “live life” as a single man, and experience the world a bit before building a family. But his father did not like the idea of his son living the life of a single man, spending his nights out despite the hard work he pulled day after day. He did not like him hanging out with other quartier boys on the streets, fearing that he could be participating in the drug trade. So, when his grandmother in Turkey, in her deathbed, requested him to marry his current wife, the family arranged the marriage right away. He was 19. He married a woman, whose name never got mentioned in our interview, and whose face only appeared for a brief moment as she brought us homemade pastries and the soft drinks. A distant kin, she was from his village in a Central Anatolian town. As an imported bride, she came to Strasbourg in the 1990s and provided him with three children—two boys and a girl.

Getting married at an early age, like enrolling children to mosque association activities, is a strategy that is prevalent among Turkish parents to deter their children, and especially the male offspring, from fooling around. While many younger men and women today marry later than their fathers did, and arranged marriages and importation of grooms and brides has become a rarer practice, marriage, still, is seen as an institution that anchors most men (and women) to the house. But often times, after a few years of married life, the same men may continue to get back

to their old habits—night outs with their male friends on the streets, in coffeehouses, or trips to casinos and brothels in Germany.

For N Bey, marriage changed little in his life. He argued that he continued his old habits, which included seeing other women. During my stay in Strasbourg, I have met many men who have engaged in extramarital affairs, and even had mistresses. But N Bey was different, in that there was still a sense of respect, and perhaps even love, in the way these other men talked about their wives. In N Bey's account, his wife appeared to me as an object, like a robot who took care of housework. Other than giving him kids, for whom he declared his affection many times during and after the interview, and other than providing him with food and a clean, tidy house, the few times his wife got mentioned included things that N Bey did not like about her. His wife had become less attractive over the years. When I asked him what had changed, he told me that after having given him three children, his wife's body had deformed. Normally, women, he argued, would do post-natal exercises to get back in shape, but N Bey did not let her enroll at a gym. "How to explain... After the three kids, and I am responsible for this too, *benim hanım* (my lady) had her belly protrude. Normally, they would do exercises and such to avoid it, but I did not let her to that. And she had two miscarriages too... So, I visit her (his mistress/girlfriend) to satisfy that which lacks in my wife [...] Would you want to have a woman who weighs 100 kilos on top of you, or one who weighs 45? Doing it the way you want it, to have pleasure..."

For N Bey, there was no pleasure in the life he shared with his wife other than the comforts of being fed and sheltered under a roof, and having children whom he argued to have loved very much. For other pleasures, such as sexual satisfaction, he had a girlfriend whom he had been seeing for almost the past ten years now. But it was not just sexual satisfaction, but also a different level of intimacy that tied N Bey to her girlfriend. She was, after all, the woman

whom he shared not only his time and money with, but also his leisure—doing things with her, like eating out, or having trips to Germany, which he did not do with his own wife. There was also a sense of dependency that N Bey spoke of when mentioning this girlfriend. The two had met through N Bey's work, but both were married. She filed for divorce. N Bey did not, because it would create too many problems at home. She then got remarried, but their affair continued on. According to N Bey, she could not do with anyone else but him. But her dependency to him, according to N Bey's account, was not of a financial type. It was an emotional link that ties the together. And he seemed to take pleasure in being the one who was emotionally desired. Here was a typical arabesk narrative unfolding in front of me.

Given N Bey's lack of interest in his wife, why did he want to keep his marriage intact? Why did he not make things official with his girlfriend? Perhaps part of the reason, I thought, had to do with his girlfriend being married too. But his explanation rather had to do with kids. There was fear that ending his marriage would have detrimental effect on the kids. He could have problems with his kids were they to find out that their father had an extramarital affair. He did not want to deal with such consequences. "There are kids, you know. It is too easy to break a family apart. I do not want that to happen. The smallest is a girl, she is 9 years old."

Soon, we would have to give a break to our interview to go pick her up from school, and walk her back home. In Strasbourg, one could see both fathers and mothers waiting for their children to come out. When they did not work, fathers like N Bey took great pride in this activity. While most of them hesitated in engaging in domestic work, this was one thing that they would rather do themselves than leave it to their wives.

The interview would be interrupted once more, after we came back, and after his daughter went inside the apartment, this time due to a phone call from his girlfriend.

N Bey would continue on telling me that his wife knew nothing of his extramarital affair. That, to me, sounded unlikely, given that he and his girlfriend had been seeing each other for almost ten years. There was a time when she had suspicions—not of his current relationship with his girlfriend, but of other women whom he had affairs with before. At one point, she broke down and accused him for cheating on him. But he had none of it. “Did you catch me? Did you see me with someone? Caught me naked? Where? Who saw it? Tell me!” he had demanded of her, and continued: “But like all women, she was crying. [imitating a crying person] I told her, look, my head is loaded, please stop bothering me. If you want to cry, go cry in that other corner. If you want to file a divorce, go do so. But my head is already full. All she had [againstme] was a phone call home, someone telling her I was with his wife...”

To this day, his wife would text him from time to time, asking him his whereabouts. Some of these texts would come when N Bey would be out with his girlfriend. “Of course she sends texts. Where are you? What time will you be back home? Where did you go? I would tell her I am at the coffeehouse, or at the...”

“The mosque?” I intervened.

“No, not that. Because I do not get the mosque involved for such affairs. I would say I am at the coffeehouse, because that is where I would hang out mostly, especially during the earlier days where I smoked lots of shit.”

N Bey hesitated in getting the God’s house involved in his lies...

Towards the end of interview, N Bey took out a paste of hashish, tore off one piece, lit it on fire to make it easier to crumble. Then he disentangled a cigarette, and after carefully mixing the tobacco with crumbles of hashish, he rolled it into one joint, which he smoked in his garden, while his wife and daughter were in the apartment next door. He offered me some too, but I felt

weird about smoking at his garden, with his wife next door tending the kids. “Thanks, I will pass.”

N Bey, it appeared, lived the best of both worlds. A home that he could be proud of, for his kids were taken care of by their mother, wherein lived a wife who submitted to his requests without challenging him. And if she were to, N Bey would refute all her claims, telling her that she was making things up. Perhaps, he beat her up too, from time to time, but that was not something that came up in the interview. He could lie to his wife, of course, and he did. But would be able to lie to Allah, too?

I wanted to know more about not only how he continued on living this life while being married, not only having the fear of having other keeping him accountable for his affairs (he would tell me that he would choose places, shopping malls and hotels, outside of Strasbourg, often during work hours, so that they could avoid being seen by others in the community), but of keeping himself accountable, as a Muslim—though certainly not much of a practicing one—to Allah while he continued living a sinful life. He may have felt content facing his wife day after day while seeing another woman, or coming home to his kids and kissing them after being away on excursions with his girlfriend... But Allah, the all-seeing, and all-knowing, saw it all, and knew it all, no? After all, he said it himself, that he feared no one but Allah. I needed answers: “You know, in mosques, the hocas (religious teachers/imams), in their hutbes talk about doing this and that to be a better Muslim man. You do that partially. When it comes to choosing where to eat meat, you seek halal meat for example. But when it comes *to kaçak et* [blackmarket meat, which is the vernacular for women such as sex workers and mistresses], there, you seem to fail a bit...”

N Bey threw a wholehearted laughter when I used the term black market meat. “Yes, but I was not interested in that kind of meat before. That happened later...”

“But other things too, like smoking shit,” I interjected. “These are, after all, things that a Muslim should not do. Both written in the book and preached by the hocas. What do you think about it. Do you face yourself, or ask yourself, what am I doing?”

“Sometimes I do ask myself. But all I do is ask, and nothing else.”

“So this life you live, will it continue on till you die?”

“I need to end it somewhere. But where and how, I do not know.”

Most of the men whose stories I convey in this dissertation deal with moral reservations. They do not need an anthropologist challenging them, for they are well aware that there would be consequences, either in this world, or in the hereafter. They are all, after all, raised with the fear of Allah, and the pains of the Hellfire. Most feel at unease for sinning, for not being responsible with their time and money, or for spending it all away in places and practices that are morally polluting, and sinful. Some visit the mosques, sometimes even starting to pray five times a day, growing out their beards, putting on the Islamic garb, the longer, baggy pants and even the long gown, and attending sohbet. They use, or at least attempt to use, Islam as an anchor to put their lives back in order. Few I have met were successful in doing so though. N Bey, however, did not even seek help from the imams or the mosques. “Now is not the right time. Because if I try, things would get hectic. By that, I mean, those guys... how can I put it.... Let them know me the way I am. Let me be the way I am in their eyes. If I try to explain to them, I mean, if I seek help, that will not work. It is not that the hocas will start gossiping about me. I fear no one but Allah, after all. But I stay the way I am... There are kids, you know...”

N Bey was content with the way things were. Choosing a pious life meant, first, having to come clean, which he was not ready for. It also meant ending his extramarital affair, which he did not want. It was as much his affection for his girlfriend as the fear that coming clean could end in a divorce, which would affect his relationship with his kids. He did not want his son growing up hating him. So, it was better keeping some things secret. For those which he could not under Allah's gaze... that was another story. Becoming a better Muslim had its costs, of course. But for N Bey there was still much to live in life, at least for now.

Part IV: Outside

Chapter 5: The Mosque

“O you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance. Perhaps your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow [on] the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him.”
Surah at-Tahrim [The Verse on Forbiddance] 66:8, *The Holy Qur'an*

“Büsbütün başka bir hayat, daha az gülünç ve daha çok manalı bir hayat istiyorum. Belki bunu arayıp bulmak da mümkün... Fakat içimde öyle bir şeytan var ki... bana her zaman istediğimden büsbütün başka şeyler yaptırıyor. Onun elinden kurtulmaya çalışmak boş... Yalnız ben değil, hepimiz onun elinde bir oyuncağız... Senin dünyaya hâkimiyet planların bile eminim ki onun mahsulü...”
Sabahattin Ali, *İçimizdeki Şeytan [The Devil Within]*, p. 42⁴²

When I first arrived Strasbourg in the summer of 2013, I did what most researchers who study the Turkish diaspora in Europe do. I visited the nearest Milli Görüş mosque association. It was not that I was interested in studying Islamic institutions in Europe. And as the reader of this dissertation will soon realize, although the men whose stories I share in this chapter do spend a good share of their times in mosque associations, for they are in some ways trying to reorient their lives around the mosque, either because they are on the verge of getting married like Y, or are already married and trying to forget their past deeds, like C, or B and S Beys, my interviews with them actually took place in spaces other than the mosque: at an indoor soccer venue and the automobile with Y, an open-air marketplace in Hautepierre with C, and a restaurant in Kehl with B and S Beys. Yet, upon my initial arrival to Strasbourg, as preliminary research conventions go, I needed to reach out to as many Turks as possible to figure out what I wanted to study, and keep my eyes open, as my advisor had told me prior to my departure from St. Louis.

⁴² I want a new life altogether, a life that is less laughable, and more meaningful. Maybe it is possible to search and find it... But I have such a Devil in me... one which makes me do things altogether different than what I want. It is futile to try to escape it. Not just me, we all are little toys in his hands. Even your plans to conquer the world, I am sure, are products of his...” Sabahattin Ali (1907-1948) was a Turkish essayist, poet and novelist. Educated in Germany, his prose was shaped by social realism.

Having arrived Strasbourg, what I had in mind was a study of national belonging through burial practices, which after a few days in the city, and with men taking me in their cars for trips in Strasbourg, and across the border to Kehl, turned into a study of morality and migrant male leisure in Europe. I thought that, like in Turkey, most of these Turkish men, no matter how much or little they practiced Islam, would eventually be going to the Friday prayer to attend the communal salat. I could encounter them in the mosque, and after the salat, exchange contact information with a few. And from there, I would gradually expand my network to include new spaces where Turkish men socialized.

Looking back to those early days, I can say that this was not a bad strategy, after all. In fact, many of the men whose stories I recount in the following chapters have presented their faces in some capacity in one of Strasbourg's many mosques by coming to salats, attending other rituals such as funerals, or community events.

Finding Milli Görüş was no big deal. A quick Google search would bring to my attention la mosquée Eyyüb Sultan, the Eyyüb Sultan Mosque, which is run by CIGM, Confédération Islamique Milli Görüş, the Milli Görüş Islamic Confederation, whose eastern France headquarters was also located adjacent to the mosque. I knew about Milli Görüş, but given my relatively secular upbringing I had never participated in any Milli Görüş related activity in Turkey.⁴³ And in the US, the Milli Görüş community, as far as I was aware, did not exist—at least not in any institutional form like in Europe.

To me, Milli Görüş always appeared to be a political movement with a troubled history. They were seen as anti-secular, and it was often under this assertion that Milli Görüş backed political parties were closed down. In contrast to Turkey, however, Milli Görüş was highly

⁴³ I say relatively because I did in fact go to Qur'an lessons and learn to read the Qur'an, as well as Friday salats with my dad and uncle.

visible in Europe. Hence the reason why Milli Görüş mosques provided the first stop not just for scholars like myself, who embark on new research, but also, as I was told by one of the employees of Milli Görüş later that day, by many migrant men who would have recently arrived to Strasbourg for marriage or work, and who needed help with finding a job, translating an official document, seeking prayer space, among other requests.

Milli Görüş was more than a mosque association. It was a sociocultural institution, like the French state run *centres socioculturels*, sociocultural centers strategically located in migrant populated neighborhoods, whose function exceeded religious matters alone. And this is something that I would like the readers to keep in mind as they are reading this chapter. The mosques in Europe, no matter which religious congregation they belong to, are more than prayer spaces. They are primarily gathering spaces for men, who do want to learn more about Islam, but in doing so, also want to be with likeminded friends who are looking for someone to chat with, while sharing a cigarette and sipping on a cup of coffee or tea. In speaking about the mosque, like the other spaces that the proceeding chapters focus on, my primary aim is to provide a narrative on the kind of intimacies that men seek and perhaps even find. Within the context of the mosque, the question that I will be answering in this chapter pertains to the kind of intimacies the mosque enables, and how coming to the mosque helps men not just in their quest to become better Muslims, but also better men.

5.1 Welcome to the Eyyüb Sultan Mosque

The day after my arrival to Strasbourg was a Friday, the day of the communal Friday salat. While waiting for the tram to take me down to Meinau, I spotted at the Etoile-Bourse stop a man with long white beard. He looked like a man in his late 50s. He was wearing baggy cotton trousers, a white button-down shirt, untucked, and a green skull cap. Everything about him gave

away his Turkishness, I thought. So I went to greet him with a *Selamın Aleyküm*, peace be upon you. A suspicious *Aleyküm Selam*, upon you too, was thrown back at me. Suspicious because he likely did not take me as a Turk, or a Muslim, at that initial encounter. After a brief introduction, I asked him if he was on his way to the mosque. He was, indeed. Could I join him, so that they could lead the way for me? He certainly could. So, this old man, his Afghan friend and I, took the tram down to Meinau which took about five minutes, and upon our descent, followed by another ten-minute walk westward, we finally saw the Eyyüb Sultan mosque. A one floor large complex which on its outer walls had the moon painted in its various lunar phases.

Eyyüb Sultan is located in what was once a big factory and storage space, right next to the city's vocational high school, Lycee Louis Coffignal where many young Turks attend. It is accessible by trams A and E, and one could follow the street signs on Avenue de Colmar to reach it. Up until the more recently built architectural masterpiece, la grande mosquée de Strasbourg, the Strasbourg Great Mosque (est. 2012), which was financed by the French state⁴⁴ as well as the states of Morocco, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Eyyüb Sultan offered the largest prayer space in Strasbourg. The Turks rarely visited the Grand Mosque, and instead opted for Eyyüb Sultan, as well as the city's various other Turkish mosques, including the DITIB-run Kehl Central Mosque. The mosque in Kehl had a novel feature that did not exist in France: the minarets.⁴⁵ Its interior was also beautifully designed—with stained glasses and calligraphy plates, which are common

⁴⁴ Whereas in the rest of France the public funding of religious establishments is forbidden under the law of laïcité (loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État), a policy that was implemented in the 1905 law, the territories of Alsace and Moselle (which encompass three French departments, Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin—which Strasbourg is a part of—and Moselle) were annexed by Germany back then, and followed the local law based on the 1801 Concordat signed between the Pope and Napoleon. Although these territories acknowledge laïcité today, they receive certain exemptions, such as public support for religious institutions, selective religious education in public schools, and faculties of theology in universities. While the Concordat does not cover Islam, such that the imam's salaries are not paid by the French state, the municipality did contribute upwards of 1.6 million Euros in the financing of the Strasbourg Great Mosque.

⁴⁵ The ongoing construction of a new Milli Görüş mosque which will replace the Eyyüb Sultan mosque will feature the minarets.

features in mosques in Turkey, but not in their counterparts in France. Hence, some Turks decided to cross the bridge each Friday to pray in the Kehl Central Mosque and to be reminiscent of the mosques in the hometowns that they left behind.

Coming to Turkish mosques had other benefits too. In Turkish mosques the Friday *hutbe* would normally be given in Turkish since most of these mosques would employ imams imported from Turkey for temporary periods (another hotly debated matter in France), and the congregation, too, would consist of men of Turkish origin, including *ithal damats*, or imported grooms, whose command of the French language is usually inferior to those born in France. Some mosques, like the DITIB mosque in the Hautepierre neighborhood located west of Strasbourg, or Turkish mosques where non-Turkish Muslims gather, like the city's first *masjid* (prayer space) in the Esplanade neighborhood near the Strasbourg University Campus, the Fatih Mosque (est 1976, also run by Milli Görüş), would also offer the sermons in French. And finally, yet another reason the Turks gathered in Turkish mosques was that their Turkish friends gathered in them. The mosque was a social space, after all. After the prayer, one could normally see men hanging out in groups with tea or an espresso in one hand, and a cigarette in the other, chatting away whatever is left of their lunch breaks.

Entering Eyyüb Sultan made me realize why Milli Görüş was one of the most studied religious institutions in Europe. It represents arguably the oldest, and the most established Turkish mosque community in Europe. Hence, for researchers interested in studying the impact of mosque-based movements in Europe, including numerous anthropologists (Cesari 2005b; Jonker 2005; Sunier 2006; Schiffauer 2010; Yükleyn 2012; Kuppinger 2015; Ehrkamp 2016, among many others), Milli Görüş continues to provide a fertile ground.⁴⁶ For me, too, Milli

⁴⁶ This, I must add, is both blessing and a curse, for Milli Görüş represents only one interpretation of Turkish Islam, and researchers sometimes fall into the trap of reducing interpretations of Islam amongst the Turkish diaspora to

Görüş' presence was foundational. Not only was the Eyyüb Sultan mosque the first place I visited in Strasbourg, it was also my first location for meeting new interlocutors especially during long Ramadan nights that coincided with my initial visit in 2013. Milli Görüş was one of the mosque associations that held a soup kitchen each night of the Ramadan. And it was not just Muslims, or Turks, but people from all walks of life, including the *clochards*, or drunkards/homeless, that attended the soup kitchens.⁴⁷

It was during these long nights that the men I met at the mosque took me to Kehl to grab ice cream, or to other mosque associations in Strasbourg to meet their friends there. Contrary to most other studies on Turkish Muslims or Islam in Europe, however, Milli Görüş was not my only stop during fieldwork. Conversations with men hanging out in the mosque courtyard brought to my attention that the Eyyüb Sultan mosque was one of their many stops for the day or the night. There were numerous other mosques in the city, each representing a different interpretation of Turkish Islam. Some were affiliated with certain religious paths, or *tariqas* in Turkey, like the Menzil tariqa of Adıyaman located just a few block south of Eyyüb Sultan; or that of Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi who gathered in the Hüdayi Foundation, located north of the city

their observations in Milli Görüş mosques alone. While multi-sited ethnography may have its shortcomings, my frequent visits to various mosque associations and congregations in Strasbourg has brought to my attention that rather than stick with one mosque community alone, many of my interlocutors move between different mosques, attending activities, such as religious conversation circles, or *sobhets*, in multiple venues. While their decisions at times may be politically motivated, reflecting political party allegiances in Turkey which are constantly in flux, they may also have to do with the employment of a new, charismatic imam in a mosque, or activities in which the members of the Turkish community can participate, such as potlucks, or *kermesses*. Each mosque draws on similar repertoires to speak of ethical cultivation or leisurely socialization, though there can some be differences, like one tariqa following more orthodox teachings when it comes to women's employment while another taking a more reformist approach. And those who frequent these different congregations seldom stick with just one repertoire, but rather chose one that speaks to their lifestyles at a given time in their life cycle. For example, a man who feels remorseful for his past gambling habits may chose a tariqa that demands his total submission, hence pushing him to spend all his free time in the mosque, either praying, or volunteering. Needless to say, amongst those who are loyal to one mosque and one mosque alone, these wanderers can sometimes be considered sellouts. A case in point is those who moved their memberships from the Milli Görüş mosque to the Turkish state-sponsored DITIB mosque after the AKP came to power in Turkey in 2002.

⁴⁷ I kept a three-week blog about my Ramadan experience for the then *Savage Minds*, now *Anthrodendum*. Here is the post on the soup kitchens: <https://savageminds.org/2016/06/21/ramadan-diaries-week-two/>

in Schiltigheim; or followers of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan, known as the Suleymancıs, who gathered in Koenigshoffen, a neighborhood south of the DITIB mosque in Hautepierre; or the followers of Said Nursi, known as the Nurcus, including their Gülenists offshoot, who did not have a mosque, but had a dormitory (Dialogue) where they also held sohbet, and a private college—famous for its high placement rates, and of course, allowing girls in headscarves to attend. Since the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, however, most of Dialogue’s activities had either been ceased or were conducted underground. There were other mosques in the city attached to multifarious political movements and parties in Turkey, like the teşkilat of the Nationalist Action Party/Grey Wolves, gathering in AFTS’s Selimiye Mosque in the Neudorf neighborhood, or DITIB (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği, the Diyanet Turkish Islamic Union), the Turkish state sponsored Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) affiliate in Europe.

Despite this variety, Milli Görüş held a special place in many Turks’ hearts. It had, first and foremost, a symbolic value as this mosque community was the first to open in Strasbourg. With time, however, new religious groups formed in Strasbourg, challenging Milli Görüş’ position as the religious authority in the city. The big contender was DITIB, which receive considerable funding from the Turkish state to this day, and organizes widely attended events, including the Holy Birth Week commemorating the birth of Prophet Mohammed (*Kutlu Doğum Haftası*) that I had a chance to attend in 2016, which featured the then-Director of Diyanet, Mehmet Görmez speaking to Strasbourg’s largest auditorium, the Zenith, filled with thousands of Turks for that special event.

While it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive historical overview of Turkish/religious institutionalization in France or Europe, as there already is ample scholarship that addresses this gap (**Yalçın-Heckmann 1997; Amiraux 1997**; Ewing 2000; Ostergaard-

Nielsen 2003; **Amiriaux 2003; Akgönül 2005; Akgönül and de Tapia 2006;** Yurdakul 2006; Sezgin 2008; **Kuru 2009; Çıtak 2010;** Yanaşmayan 2010; Yükleyen 2012; Friedrichs et al. 2012; **Akgönül 2014;** Sunier and Landman 2015; Ehrkamp 2016; Öztürk and Sözeri 2018, those bolded specifically deal with France) I find it necessary to provide a brief overview. This, I believe, will help me contextualize for readers who are unfamiliar with Turkish politics and Islamist mobilization the proceeding four stories, each of which track my interlocutors' journey in an out of various mosque associations as they search for redemption.

5.2 A Brief Overview of Milli Görüş and Turkish Religious Institutionalization in Strasbourg

It would not be an overstatement to assert that the story of Turkish institutionalization in Strasbourg, as elsewhere in France and Europe starts with Milli Görüş. Even those who today do not associate themselves with this congregation, for they are at odds with the movement's sour relations with the AKP (Justice and Development Party), the current political party in power in Turkey, this remains an undeniable fact. While there were other institutions when Milli Görüş came into the French scene, and started worker's groups/unions in mid to late 1970s, such as ASTU (Association de Solidarite avec les travailleurs Turks/Association for Solidarity with Turkish laborers), their mission differed from Milli Görüş. ASTU, for example, was founded with the vision to address the legal problems that Turkish and Kurdish migrants, and in particular, asylum seekers had, especially following Turkey's 1980 coup d'etat. Milli Görüş, on the other hand, was first and foremost a religious association.

Milli Görüş, which translates to National Vision or Outlook, was founded in Turkey in 1969 by the charismatic leader of Turkey's Islamic movement, Necmeddin Erbakan, to address what he considered to be an imminent need for moral education for Turks in Turkey and Europe. Rapid urbanization in Turkey, which led to mass movement of people from the rural peripheries

to urban centers first in Turkey, and starting in the early 1960s, in Europe, had created what Erbakan, and those who were inspired by his Islamic vision, considered to be a moral void. Often times, secularization and modernization—values oft-associated with the West/Europe⁴⁸—were seen as threatening to Islamic, and conservative values which ought to shape public and private life.⁴⁹ This, of course was a fear shared not by Turks in Europe alone. Similar concerns were raised by pious men and women all around the world: in Cairo (Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006), Aceh (Bowen 1993; Kloos 2017), Paris (Silverstein 2005; Bowen 2008; Bowen 2009); Berlin (Mandel 2008); Beirut (Deeb and Harb 2013); Amsterdam (Sunier et al. 2010); Istanbul (White 2002; Silverstein 2011) to name a few.

Excellent works by prominent sociologists of religion, modernity, and public life bring to our attention a notion that Durkheim pointed out in his doctoral dissertation, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893). That is, all around world, regardless of their religion affiliation, pious men and women who feel threatened by modernity seek ways to preserve values—such as social roles within the ideal family—that they consider central to their moral universe (Giddens 1990; Bellah 1991; Beck 1992; Lakoff 1997; Bauman 2000). For labor migrants who left their villages in central and eastern Anatolia to come to urban centers in Turkey and Europe, the threat was particularly visceral. I can only think and write of this threat retroactively as it appeared less nuanced for the labor migrants of the 1960s and 1970s, who expected their stay (and sins) in Western Europe to be temporary (White 1997; Kastoryano 2002; Soysal 2003; Abadan-Unat

⁴⁸ A literary figure who was often cited to me was the Paris-educated poet and novelist Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. After many years of debauchery in France, Kısakürek returned to Turkey in 1934 and became a staunch critic of Western lifestyle. In his work, *Lie in the Mirror* (1980), Kısakürek describes his journey into rejecting Westernization and finding Allah.

⁴⁹ One could argue that the demographic shifts starting the 1950s in Turkey have resuscitated an age-old question of the Turkish subject's location in the Western world. For similar conversations taking place in post-Tanzimat Ottoman Empire and in post-Independence Turkey, see two foundational texts, Akçura 1904 and Gökalp 1923. For more recent scholarly works revisiting the same question, see Berkes 1964; Mardin 1969; Parla 1985; Mardin 1989.

2011). But as the homeland grew more and more distant to them, for there was more money to be made in Europe, they prolonged their stay, and eventually brought their wives, with whom they fostered a new generation that was born, and raised in Europe. Their kids would go to kindergarten starting the age of four in the case of France, socialize in crime ridden quarters, and receive not only French education, but also customs and tastes that were neither fully French, nor Turkish ... but rather an interesting amalgam that was present in the segregated and neglected migrant neighborhoods. This, which I talk in length in the chapter on the quarters, bothered the Turks. They wanted their kids to be educated, and find white collar jobs if possible, while at the same time maintaining their ties to the homeland, as well as its customs. The migrant workers of those early days feared raising an offspring who would have no clue of their past, and of their national and religious identity. And they do to this day.

The fear of moral loss, and transmitting it to future generations, was quite evident in my conversations with first generation migrants who came to Strasbourg starting the mid 1960s. These men spoke of those earlier days when they left their villages, which they identified as Muslim lands (*dar-ul-Islam*) and came to non-Muslims lands, the *dar-al-harb* (Yapp 1992), with discontent. Like starved animals, some argued, they were thrown into a land of food. And like starved animals, they devoured whatever they could find without thinking much about the moral consequences of their actions. Here by drawing on the analogy of the animal (often a dog) and food, they would refer to the primal instincts, and primarily lust, and greed, which they argued were hard to control. These are instincts that are driven by the self filled with temptations, or the *nefs*. The men I spoke to would readily recognize how strong the *nefs* is, especially when it comes to their longing for women. I have heard numerous times the phrase, *uçkuruna düşkün*, (preoccupied with the belt), to refer to Turkish men's preoccupation with that which the belt

holds—their pants, and therefore, their penises.⁵⁰ With everything—but especially cars and women—within reach for a price that they could now pay with their wages, and no religious authority to be accountable to, many of these young laborers caved into a world of sins, and lost their moral route. In talking to me in mosque tea houses, these now old men acknowledged how lost they were and how they had become borderline infidels in those early days. But, like Kehl in Chapter 2 of this dissertation which takes the blame for Muslims’ sins, it was the non-Muslim individuals, or what many considered to be the *gavurs*, that is the non-Muslim (but often with a non-believers, immorals, or infidels connotation) who were to blame for their misdeeds.⁵¹ I have vivid memories of my conversations with these men, many in their mid 70s now and suffering from work-and stress-related illnesses, taking long pauses between sentences to catch their breath, as they described to me their days of *cahiliye* (often used by its Arabic pronunciation, *jahiliyyah*), ignorance or darkness, and savagery void of Islam (Fadl 2014). Those who would open up to me—and some did not want to, for they did not want to be reminded of a sinful past, and expected sins to be kept between themselves and Allah⁵²—would describe how they first became accustomed to skipping prayers, and gradually participating in Europe’s nightlife;

⁵⁰ Another phrase used in Turkish is *uçkuru çözmek*, which is colloquial to commit adultery.

⁵¹ The word, *gavur*, comes up in writings of various anthropologists and scholars of migration. See, for example, Mandel 1989; Delaney 1990; Mandel 1996; Kaya 2010.

⁵² Here, my interlocutors would resort to an understanding where the act of confessing sins prior to one’s death to another (for confession is an act that one will have to undertake upon Allah’s presence in the Day of Judgment) is taken as a sinful act in itself. Those who would assert this argument would often inform me of various suras and hadiths to reaffirm this belief, yet usually without the proper citation. Both the Qur’an, and hadith collections do in fact forbid Muslims to doubt each other’s faith, or to blame them for their sins. Some examples include: “O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.” (Sura in the Qur’an, Hucurat 49: 12); “Do not inquire other’s private [*mahrem*] lives” (hadith cited in Muslim, Birr ve Sila 30); “A believer will be brought close to his Rubb on the Day of Resurrection and enveloping him in His Mercy, He will make him confess his sins by saying: ‘Do you remember (doing) this sin and this sin?’ He will reply: ‘My Rubb, I remember.’ Then He will say: ‘I covered it up for you in the life of world, and I forgive it for you today.’ Then the record of his good deeds will be handed to him”. (hadith conveyed by al-Bukhari and Muslim, cited in Tirmizi, Riyad-us Saliheen 433). An anthropologist of religion, and in particular, sins, could be seen as one who engages in a transgressive practice by forcing one to reveal his sins. For the use of ethnography as a confessional, see Inhorn (2018).

frequenting cafes and bars, getting high and drunk, and hooking up with female companions. It is not that they were proper Muslims back in Turkey. They would tell me that sins existed everywhere, not just in Europe. But in Europe, it seemed, the obstacles (and possible repercussions) to moral transgressions were limited. And in Europe, they had more money to spend on leisure. In addition to blaming the West for its immorality, or *Batının ahlaksızlığı*, a trope that any Turk today would well be familiar with⁵³, and the Westerners for their immoral practices, many blamed the secular Turkish governments for having deserted them in the diaspora, too. With no religious authority there to lead them, their transgressions had no limits.

Them sinning was not spoken favorably, but it was something they could come to terms with. But raising a sinful offspring... that was too much to tolerate.

When Erbakan came into the scene with an Islamic manifesto, he was seen as a savior. One old man recounted while surrounded by his friends in the Milli Görüş teahouse that “thanks to Milli Görüş, our kids were able to learn our religion. Otherwise, most of us would become wine-drinkers (*şarapçı*).” On the wall across us was pictures from Eyyub Sultan’s old days, including various portraits of Erbakan. Erbakan spoke of the presence of a strong, independent state that had a moral anchor in Islam, and not Western morals. This state would need an agenda which required Muslims to stand up to the *gavur* states of the West. For Erbakan, the existing governments in Turkey were no different than their counterparts in Western Europe. They lacked the pious roots necessary to provide their citizens with moral guidance, hence making both the Turkish state, and Turks in Turkey and elsewhere around the world complicit in perpetuating

⁵³ This is a trope that is skillfully used by politicians, such as the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. See, for example, his advice to university students in a Ministry of Education sponsored event, where he states: “It is not art or science that we took from the West. Unfortunately, it is its immorality that contradicts our values. We should compete with them by taking over their arts and sciences.” “Batının Ahlaksızlığını Aldık.” [We Took from the West its Immorality] *Hürriyet*. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/batinin-ahlaksizligini-aldik-8092765>

capitalism and rendering them subservient to cultural imperialism. For Erbakan, economic development could not come at the expense of moral development. To that end, in 1974, he proposed to the Parliament a moral development plan as part of the government's five-year development plan. "If our offspring is spiritual, then brothers will stop killing each other, they will stop envying each other's property, and stop chasing illicit [*haram*] things," he famously argued in a talk show aired on TV back then.

Erbakan's words mattered to the urban poor in Turkey and Europe who agreed that their discontent with life must have had to do with having lost their moral compass. That in exchange for the money they earned, they provided not just their labor but also their very religion (and nationality, for the two are almost always spoken as two integral parts of the same whole), and therefore their soul. Erbakan provided them with a path for redemption, that is, to redeem them of their sinful past by engaging in a Islamo-political movement known as the Milli Görüş. Moreover, Erbakan himself was educated in Germany. He had received his PhD in Aachen in 1953. Although he came from a different social milieu (wearing Versace scarves while preaching about social injustices), he had a skill for addressing both the working-class masses, and the secular, white-collar Turks.

Starting mid-1970s, Erbakan paid many visits to Turkish migrant workers in Western Europe. Some of the old men that I talked to would have a spark in their eyes as they spoke of the enthusiasm that they shared in renting out buses to make it to his rallies in Germany. Even for those who today do not participate in the Milli Görüş movement, or do not vote for the political party that is seen as the flag holder of Milli Görüş ideology⁵⁴, Erbakan is nonetheless a

⁵⁴ Necmettin Erbakan was the leader of three consecutive political parties, each of which have been banned from the Turkish Parliament by the Constitutional Court and the Turkish Armed Forces. He served as the Deputy Prime Minister for a number of coalition governments, and served as the Prime Minister in 1996-1997 before his political party (like its predecessors) was closed down by what in Turkey is considered a "soft" or "postmodern" coup. The

revered figure, to the extent that some speak of him in tears, as he was the first person to come from Turkey to listen to their needs. To them, Erbakan was more than a politician. He was an older brother, or perhaps even a father figure, one which they themselves lacked in their own lives but found in Erbakan's presence. Needless to say, almost all of these men who have gone through this migratory journey starting the 1960s speak of Turkey's current President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with the same paternal intimacy.

Four decades have passed since Erbakan's call for raising a pious offspring. In these four decades, Turks have built many institutions to deal with the moral void they have experienced. Today, in Strasbourg, there are six prayer spaces owned by Turks alone, and some of them, like the Eyyüb Sultan mosque and the DITIB mosque, are venues big enough to accommodate hundreds (and in the case of Eyyüb Sultan easily a thousand) of Muslims for the salat.⁵⁵ In addition to providing prayer services, these mosque associations undertake a number of other amenities, including funeral arrangements and insurance/funds, weekend schools, winter and summer camps for children and teenagers, weekly religious conversation circles, or *sohbets* led by imams and guest speakers, pilgrimage (*hajj* and *ümre*) arrangements, Ramadan events and festivities, community activities such as potlucks (*kermes*) or organized trips to Turkey and Eastern Europe (especially Bosnia), and religious services in hospitals and prisons to name a few. In the following pages, a young man with a troubled past will recount us how his encounter

current party that carries the Milli Görüş banner is the the Felicity Party [Saadet Partisi]. The Felicity Party has their headquarters across the street from the Eyyüb Sultan Mosque, and they regularly bring in politicians for a meet and greet with their constituents in Strasbourg. In the most recent (2018) national elections, the Felicity Part got 1.34 percent of the vote.

⁵⁵ Milli Görüş alone has over 518 mosques in Europe, 304 of which are located in Germany. Whereas Milli Görüş owns the mosques that it operates in Europe, DITIB works as an umbrella organization which supports local associations, by providing finances to undertake activities, and sending DITIB imams. A rough estimate would put the number of associations supported by the DITIB at 896 in Germany alone. In France, DITIB is operational in four regions (Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg and Bordeaux). In East France, whose headquarters is in Strasbourg, DITIB supports 22 local associations. In Central France, whose headquarters is in Paris, DITIB supports 92 local associations. In southeast France, whose headquarters is in Lyon, DITIB supports 103 local associations.

with a charismatic religious leader who invited him to come to the sohbet at Hüdayi Vakfi has helped him transform himself into a better Muslim, and a better man.

Some mosque associations also offer non-religious services, such as private tutoring for middle and high schoolers or classes to obtain a driver's licence. Many have barbershops, grocery stores, butcher shops, and restaurants. By coming to a mosque association alone, one can get cheaper haircut, groceries or a meal, and buy halal meat. In most mosque associations, there are women's branches and youth branches responsible for organizing community-based activities oriented towards women and youth.

And finally, all mosque associations have teahouses, which are usually found in or attached to spaces designated for youth branches, and are open usually starting late afternoons. Almost all teahouses have televisions where they screen live soccer matches from Turkey, or display Turkish soaps. Some also have pool tables, ping pong tables, darts, and Playstations, which are normally used by children who come to the mosque to participate in the weekend classes or other activities. Usually after work, young and middle-aged men who would want to avoid going to coffeehouses can be found in these teahouses in groups. The close friends A and H, whose story I share in the following pages, usually preferred spending time in the courtyard of Semerkand, the mosque association owned by the Menzil tariqa. In addition to younger men, one could also see older men spending much of their time in mosques, usually gathering in groups in a separate corner, or if the weather permitted, sitting outside waiting for the next salat.

Once again, the reason why I find it necessary to provide an overview of the many functions of mosque associations in Europe is to point out their function as more than religious institutions alone. In Turkey, mosques are state-owned and funded. They are used primarily for salats, and during school breaks, they offer Qur'an classes for children. Since, with the exception

of two *rakaats* of the Friday prayer, praying communal prayer is not *farz*, or a requirement (but is still highly encouraged), most mosques remain empty outside prayer times. For those interested in socializing in religious spaces, various tariqas hold activities such as conversation circles or other rituals like dhikrs (*zikir*) in their premises. In contrast to Turkey, Turkish mosques in Europe are run and largely financed by religious congregations. Depending on the country, some also receive state aid for events that they organize. While most of these congregations follow Naqshbandi (a major Sunni spiritual order) teachings, they do differ in terms of their leadership, as well as influence in Turkish politics. There are also minute differences in terms of the ways they pray the salats, or organize the dhikrs (silent or vocal, with or without musical instruments, etc.). Also in contrast to Turkey, mosque associations in Europe serve more as cultural centers (some are even called sociocultural centers) where the congregation gathers for purposes other than prayers, too (Bowen 2004; Göle 2011; Kuppinger 2014). Mosques in Europe have educational, political, cultural and economic functions. For this reason, they serve as important nodes to study community dynamics. Hence, many scholars who work in migratory settings highlight in their works the role of mosque associations in shaping how migrants think about physical (Inhorn and Sargent 2006; Sargent and Larchanche 2007; Ghaly 2011) or mental (Çiftçi et al. 2012; al-Krenawi 2016) health.

5.3 Moral Education and Its Shortcomings

For migrant men and women who define themselves as Muslims, mosque associations in Europe constitute important cultural centers. Even for Muslims who skip the obligatory five-time-a-day salats, consume alcohol, or engage in other transgressive practices, visiting the mosque for Friday prayers is an integral part of the weekly routine to not just pray, but also socialize with their friends. Imams and other members of the community who take on leadership

roles in mosque associations would usually argue that a good Muslim should spend a good chunk of his day at the mosque, and dedicate his free time to ethical cultivation and volunteer activities, albeit acknowledging that in reality, mosque attendance remains low. This they would usually explain is a test of times, which puts higher restraint on one's piety. While they would agree that life (such as tight work schedules or problems in the family) challenges Muslims in such ways that they may put aside their religious obligations and fiddle around in the mortal needs of the material world, they still advise them that what matters is the investments made for the otherworld, or *ahiret*. Work, arguably, is a type of religious service, or *ibadet*, one which the pupil dedicates (like all his other practices) to Allah. But work should also not come at the expense of one's services to his fellow Muslims, such as volunteering in mosques or attending religious rituals. And if it does, it should be compensated by giving more alms. One should, in short, not live Islam in accordance with the demands of the day, but evaluate the demands of the day in accordance with Islam. In these taxing times, it is not just the imams, but most of my interlocutors, who nonetheless maintain the belief that no matter how much astray one goes in life, for those who have a strong Islamic foundation, the mosque will always constitute a point of return, where a Muslim will reflect on his life choices, and repent.⁵⁶ And to establish that foundation, providing children and youth with a moral teaching is considered a top priority.

Yet, having a moral foundation does not necessarily create pious subjects in practice. After all, many of the young Muslim men who frequent nightclubs, consume hashish, or skip out on going to the mosque for salats and other events have this moral foundation. Having participated in mosque association summer camps, having learned to read the Qur'an in Arabic, and to pray, and even lead prayers at an early age, these young Turks are surely better educated

⁵⁶ When and where that will happen is open to question, of course, and imams encourage Muslims through their sermons and consultations to embrace Islamic rituals sooner than later, for one always risks dying a sinner.

than their fathers and grandfathers, whose religious education was mostly limited to knowledge transmitted from parents to children.⁵⁷ The problem, however, lies in putting piety into practice. In other words, the problem has to do with how universals defining moral conduct come to be interpreted and negotiated in different localities.

Scholars of Islam have long brought attention the tensions that rise from different interpretations of the scripture, and negotiations and tensions that follow the heterodoxy of practices (Lambek 1990; Bowen 1993; Lambek 1993; Schielke and Debevec 2012; Hart 2013). It should be no surprise to any scholar of religion that what the scripture commands and how the command is interpreted by the followers of such scripture, and put into practice differ. To perfect their ethical conduct, in addition to the mandatory prayers, many Muslims in Europe as elsewhere attend religious conversations groups where they get to hear an imam's interpretation, or *tafsir*, of the Qur'an, often supported by various hadiths. These sohbetts offer more than just a means of knowledge transmission, but also instill in the pupils a sense of belonging to a religious path, and to the larger Muslim community, thereby helping refashion Islamic subjects and providing them (especially women) new means of visibility in public life (Silverstein 2008; Jassal 2014). The sohbetts, in other words, offer not just a platform to learn more about Islam, but also to come together under a platform that demands their presence, humility, and submission. It demands their free will to be limited so that they will not chase what their heart (or their uçkur, the belt) desires.

⁵⁷ There is growing literature on religious acculturation of Muslim youth in Europe. See, for example, Gungor et. al's (2011; 2013) quantitative studies on religious acculturation across multiple Western European countries; Maliepaard's (2013) research on Dutch Muslims, Fuess (2007) research on Islamic education in state schools in Germany; Lukens Bull (2001) on Islamic education in Indonesia; as well as edited volumes by Hefner and Qasim (2007) and van Bruinessen and Allievi (2011).

Based on similar religious conversation (and music) circles she attended, Gill writes that participation in such communal gatherings where listening and silentness is prioritized over each participant's verbal contribution to the debate provides an alternative form of performing morality and masculinity (Gill 2018). Men learn to become better men by their silent submission to the imams, and through their listening to his teachings. As I am more attentive to the spatial dynamics at play in these sohbet, my observations focus on how these sohbet help not only to renew one's faith in religion, but also to deter him from spending time in venues other than wherever the sohbet takes place: home or the mosque. As an imam would remind me in one such gathering, it is important to keep the heart fully charged with faith at all times. "For what happens to a gadget when it is not charged? It depletes. The heart is the same. And the Şeytan is always looking for opportunities to fill an empty heart with *vesvese* (delusional thoughts), and tempts a Muslim to sin." By coming to the mosque, and attending the weekly sohbet, then, a Muslim is constantly reminded of Allah's greatness, gets to fill the heart's crevices with His presence, and thinks twice before transgressing the boundaries He set in the Qur'an. He is also in a place where sinning is not readily present, and with people who aspire to avoid sins. It is no coincidence that most sohbet (including those organized at private homes in different neighborhoods) are Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, as these nights tend to be ones where men may be off from work the next morning, and have more time in hand than usual to kill.

And that is what makes the function of these events particularly relevant to the men that I study. These men who come to the mosque are not there solely to comply with religious dictates (like the mandatory prayers) or to learn what is halal or what is haram (they are all aware that practices like gambling, consumption of intoxicants, or engaging in *zina*, that is, premarital or extramarital sex/adultery is strictly forbidden). But they are there rather to remind themselves that

there is an alternative to the lives they live, one which can be realized through more frequent engagement with a religious community/mosque association.

Yet, even coming to the mosque to renew one's faith has its limits. A man who orients his daily schedule around mosque-related activities today still risks giving into mortal desires the next day. Şeytan is everywhere, after all. Like Allah, It is present in all spaces. And, as one of my favorite Turkish essayist/novelist, Sabahattin Ali reminds us, Şeytan is in us, at all times.⁵⁸ For that is how He works. He knows the weakness of the humankind. He targets the nefes, and makes believers desire things that are forbidden to them. The shiny, the fleshy, the mortal... Hence it is no surprise that those who may frequent the sohbetes today may one day disappear. Stories of men going astray are commonly heard among friends in mosque associations. These are testing times, they say. They test a man's battle with his nefes. While the imams and other religious leaders who run the sohbetes I attended inquire the whereabouts of those who stopped coming to the sohbetes (for example, they ask them where they have been after a long hiatus, or ask their friends his whereabouts), they also remind those who frequent the sohbetes to check on each other, for it is a Muslim's duty to be mindful of his brother's well-being.

The following three stories are based on my conversations with men whom I met at mosque associations. Some I encountered at youth branches, and others after a Friday prayer or at a weekly sohbet. While they now spend much of their time in mosque associations, all have troubled pasts. Troubled in the sense that even speaking about it seems to disturb them. It is a past that had to be lived, they say. Rather than being stuck on it, they chose to move forward, and the mosque gives them a means to do exactly that. The mosque, for them, is not just a space to better learn their religion. It is also a space of distraction that gives them an alternative to not

⁵⁸ Ali, Sabahattin. 1940. *İçimizdeki Şeytan* [The Devil Within]. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

return to their old habits which include going to nightclubs, casinos, and coffeehouses. Listening to stories about the lives of the Prophet, or his companions, the *sahabes*, gives them the courage that no matter how sinful they consider themselves to be, they can always start anew, and live their remaining lives in tranquility. They are all confident that they can pull it off, but are also aware that their temptations are still strong, and that the only way they can tame these temptations is through greater involvement with mosque activities. Hence, they volunteer much of their empty time not in coffeehouses, but in mosques.

5.4 Y: The Bad Boy of the Past, Soon to be Married

My return to Strasbourg in 2016 followed the same routine as 2013. Eyyüb Sultan Mosque was my first stop, and my first attempt to let people know that I was back in the city to resume the research I had started a few years ago. During those first few weeks, I kept myself busy frequenting the various mosque associations in the city, and hanging out with men at their teahouses in search of interlocutors who would entertain the idea of sharing with me their leisurely routines, and preferably invite me to their night outs. I also wanted to know about those who chose to limit their night outs to mosques alone, while their peers socialized in coffeehouses, shisha bars, the quartier courtyards or elsewhere after work in the borderland.

I apparently had met Y in 2013. He swore that we did meet back then, despite my absent recollection of our encounter. Though I am usually bad with names, I do a better job with faces, but alas... I still could not remember this young man who was generous enough to share with me a part of his life—a part that he now chose to forgo. I spotted him next to his uncle-in-law, another person who remembered my face from 2013 (and his face seemed more familiar), at the Milli Görüş youth locale, standing by the wall and waiting. Idleness is a part of daily life for most of the men whose stories I convey in this dissertation. It is almost as if their work consumes

all there is to life in them, and that after work, one often finds them sitting at a table, leaning on a column, sipping on tea or coffee, and taking long drags from cigarettes while staring at the distance without any evident purpose. That was the state Y and Z were at when I bumped into them that late January night.

They told me that they soon would be on their way out to Le Five, an indoor soccer field near Souffleweyersheim. They did not have much to do at the youth locale anymore for the friends whom Y grew up with, and whom his uncle, Z, knew well as they all volunteered at the Eyyüb Sultan mosque, stopped frequenting the association lately. Since 2013, things had changed, and the reasons, I was told, were numerous. For one, they grew older and the mosque stopped offering activities for adults like them, other than a pool table and darts. Some youth, I would later be told, felt deserted because with no activity to attend other than the weekly youth sohbet, they could not justify their presence there. They expected to contribute to the mosque by taking initiatives like serving in the mosque's board... But the board was full of older men who had no intention to giving away their positions. Many youth also left Milli Görüş to go to other mosques like DITIB. My sense was that the divide was politically motivated. That it reflected the rift between those who supported the AKP, and those who supported the Milli Görüş affiliated Saadet Party in Turkey. Z Bey was actively involved in the Saadet Party cadres, volunteering at the Saadet branch in Strasbourg located across the street from the mosque. What brought Y and Z to the youth lounge that night was not a specific activity, but their continuing commitment to the Milli Görüş ideology. In fact, Z Bey would attend almost all youth sohbets at the mosque, dragging Y with him too.

Y was a youth proud of carrying the Milli Görüş youth label. But he was also well aware that his nightlife did not reflect what Milli Görüş stood for, or the moral youth that Erbakan

envisioned his movement to represent. Born and raised into a Milli Görüş family, his childhood, like many other children in Strasbourg, was spent at the Eyyüb Sultan mosque. As many of his childhood friends also socialized in the mosque, they still hung out together—both in the mosque, and outside, in shisha bars and cafés. In fact, one of my outings with the Milli Görüş youth was at a hometown association-cum-shisha lounge in the Hautepierre neighborhood. We had decided to grab a coffee after a Saadet organized event, and got in cars looking for a place to sit. After a long discussion as to where to sit for a cup of coffee, the six men in three cars, all self-proclaimed Milli Görüş youth, decided to not sit that night at L’Atlantico, one of the boats by Gallia that serves alcohol, not because of the alcohol, but because it was crowded with young men and women, many scantily dressed and drunk, as they would argue. They thought it would not be appropriate for them to be seen in such an environment that night. Y did not join us for that outing. In fact, he had not been attending many outings with other Milli Görüş youth lately because he was too busy working with his dad in his construction firm, trying to make more money for his upcoming wedding in fall. I would later get to know him better as he would invite me for a car ride around Strasbourg where he would tell me his story.

Unlike Z Bey, his in-law, who was an ithal who came to Strasbourg only a few years back, Y was born and raised in Strasbourg. And like most of his peers, his teenage years, no matter the “Milli Görüş youth” label he carried as part of his upbringing in the Eyyüb Sultan mosque, were adventurous to say the least. During our car ride, he would describe to me how he continued on going to the mosque up until his close friend, who would come with him to the mosque regularly, left for Turkey. Sure, he had other friends, but with his childhood friend gone, the mosque seemed to have lost its appeal. And soon after, he started frequenting places other than the mosque each night, a process he described as “going out,” *dışarı çıkmak*, which is

different than going to a mosque, or *camiiye gitmek*. Before, with his friend, he was going to the mosque. Now he started crossing the border to Kehl, and making new friends in the quartier he grew up. He would argue that he was not the only one doing that either. 90 percent of the mosque youth, he asserted, was like him... going out. “Here, it is hard to tell what one will end up doing [with his time/life]. If you have no branch to hold onto, you’re done for (*bittin*).”

With the branch, that being the mosque, which he held onto through his close friend lost, Y had been drifting for some time.

Those were years where he acted completely nuts, like a *zirdele*, as he recounted, neither with pride, nor with regret. Once he was old enough (17) to get a car, he started to disregard his father’s authority. His father, who actively volunteered in the Eyyüb Sultan Mosque, was a strict man who demanded of his children to stay at home and focus on their studies, religious and academic alike. His older brother abided by what the father asked, like the oldest sons usually would. He even went to college, *la fac*. Y being the younger brother did not. He chose to work at his father’s construction business, learned the art of plaster, which is how he makes a living to this day. With the money he earned, the first thing he did was to get himself a second-hand sports car. An Audi. “And stylish round glasses, like yours, to show off...” he smiled while nodding to my glasses. The Audi was also the first place where he first made out with a girl—a Turkish girl, to my surprise, and one from the mosque association too, also to my surprise. He met her through Badoo, a dating app. “Take us to a place where no one can see us,” she said, and so he did. She put on a pornographic film on her phone, and they tried to imitate what they watched.

It is hard to tell if Y was making up this story, for the chances of a Milli Görüş girl making out with a young man, also from Milli Görüş, while putting on a pornographic movie on her phone seemed a bit too surreal to me. I had often been told by my interlocutors that people

here were not what they seemed, and that there were many secrets that people were afraid to share. Women, especially, they would add. When the husbands are at work, do you know what their wives do, a man once asked me in a coffeehouse while we were sipping on Heinekens. His friends must have heard this story numerous times for they did not even bother to respond. His answer to the riddle: “Screwing the handyman.” This man would then continue with a detailed depiction of his day time affairs with one such married woman who was covered (wearing a headscarf). Having spent long enough in Strasbourg, and having participated in men’s sins, I can see lustful men, no matter how religious their upbringing, engaging in similar practices. But a young woman with a conservative upbringing engaging in similar transgressions? How? Y must have picked up on my mimics of disbelief... or my eyes rolling. He turned to me, and with his foot still on the pedal of his work van, which was taking us around Strasbourg, he continued: “Everyone is afraid to talk about these things. For all Turks know each other. They are all tied to one another [through kinship ties]. So, what you tell whom is a dangerous affair.”

My field notes from that day indicate my continuing surprise at this story, as well as his nonchalance in sharing it with me. “Why, then was it me that he was telling these stories knowing that it would put him in danger?” I asked myself in those notes, and continued with the following analysis, which I agree with to this day:

Telling these stories, no matter how real or fake, is part of how men craft life narratives—real or fantasy—to define themselves, and perhaps, to be proud of themselves.

Transgressions, in other words, are a necessary part of male (and female too) identity.

What matters is to control the narrative on these transgressions, rather than let them loose. By telling their own stories, men are in control of such transgressions... Until, of course, the narrative starts traveling from ear to ear, and morphing in the process. Men, of

course, are aware of the dangers of gossip. But rather than the danger silence them, they choose to talk, and to argue that only Allah can judge them. (Fieldnotes, March 13, 2016)

With the Audi also came the night outs, often to the discotheques in Kehl and other border towns, as well as his “Karlsruhe adventures,” that is, his trips to the brothels. To deter him from going out, his mom refused to iron his shirts. For she knew that a young man asking his shirts to be ironed at night had one place to go—clubbing. And his father locked the door behind him many times, so that Y would have no place to sleep when he returned after a night of drinking, engaging in fights at the nightclubs, and sleeping with women.

“I still have numbers of those one-night stands,” said Y.

Y’s crazy years continued on with him leaving the house, and moving in a place on his own with a French man of North African origin, a friend from his quartier. Living in his own flat allowed him the freedom he lacked at home to engage in a long-term relationship with his then girlfriend, who, he recounted, eventually cheated on him.

I have listened similar stories from men like Y. They grew up going to the mosques, and attending mosque organized activities including summer and winter camps, often forced by their dads. A little after they reached puberty, and with the mosques no longer offering any activities of interest, they started going out to other venues in the borderland. Few continued on going to the mosques, or refrained from drinking alcohol, smoking shit, or hooking up with women. And few continued on with their education after high school. Even before finishing vocational school, they started working at construction firms owned by their parents or kin, auto-repair shops, or bakeries and snack döners, the latter often the last resort due to harsh working conditions. And once they started making some money, they usually stopped abiding by their parents’ requests to stay home. But most young men like Y also had moments of self-reflection, where after those

wild years, they decided to sober up. And marriage, often, provided an opportunity to do exactly that.

For Y, finding the right path had nothing to do with his dad's disciplinarian measures. Despite all the beating he took from him, and despite his sisters' frustration at his life choices, he continued going out. The pattern continued until he met his then-fiancée, a young France-born Turkish woman from a neighboring town. The early days when he met her, he continued on being the cool guy he was, driving her around his Audi. He thought he could be the same old cocky man he was in treating her, but she had none of it. "Normally I would demand women to do things the way I want, and if they did not do it, I'd say fuck off." But with her, he could not. He was in love. "I could no longer be so merciless. The cockiness did not work. It earned me nothing. One day she exploded. She was really pissed at me. And thereafter I decided to get to my senses, and to revisit my morals." From that day on, Y was a changed man. First, he had to stop his nightouts, for his fiancée did not want him out late at night. She even demanded of him to share with him his location via a smartphone application so that she could track her when he was out driving, and send her texts demanding his whereabouts. Then, once things got serious between them, and they decided to tie the knot, he had to save up money, which meant working longer hours, and not spending time in venues outside.

No wonder when I met him that night before he drove, he came to pick me up in his work van, and took me to a cheap pasta place to grab some dinner. He had said that he knew the owner, a young man, like him, of North African descent. And this was one of the few places where he could trust that the food was halal.

Back to Le Five, the indoor soccer field in Souffelweyersheim. What were we doing there, Z Bey, Y and I, watching a bunch of young men from Milli Görüş youth playing soccer?

Mind you, at Le Five, I still had no clue about the intricacies of being a Milli Görüş youth. I had no clue about Y's past either. To me, as a Milli Görüş youth, Y must have frequented the mosques in Strasbourg, and not the discotheques in Kehl. And places like Le Five, apparently, to socialize in a manner that does not invite moral transgressions. In that state of naiveté, I returned to Z to congratulate him for all his ambitious work keeping these young kids in the Milli Görüş youth locale, and keeping an eye on them, thereby helping them avoid engaging in moral transgressions elsewhere in the borderland. After all, being young was hard, and keeping young men together in a moral path which required them to tame their desires, even harder. It seemed that he was doing a great job at that.

Z Bey looked at me with a grin on his face. "Whatever we can salvage, we salvage. Saving others is not something expected of us. But we are responsible for [initiating] the trial. Not the triumph," he said. What he meant, as he would continue to explain, was that the gains were miniscule right now. Most kids, including those who came to the sohbet, lived other lives where they engaged in sins. They went to Kehl to play the slot machines, to bet on soccer matches, to drink and dance in nightclubs, and to hook up. They were out in Strasbourg's quartiers smoking shit, dealing drugs, stealing car tapes... Z Bey was well aware of the realities. But he saw his volunteerism as an investment which would eventually pay off. Mistakes were to be made when young. Sins were to be committed. But in ten years' time, these kids who would receive the religious foundations at Milli Görüş but would have also gone astray, would eventually come to their senses, and start to live a moral life. They would return where they started. "More should be done by parents than beat up their kids for their mistakes. The problem has to do with their upbringing as youths," Z Bey said to reaffirm his faith in what he did through his volunteerism at Milli Görüş.

His nephew, Y, for him was a case in point. Z Bey knew of Y's outings. He knew of his mischiefs. But he also had faith in him that one day he would eventually find the right path. For no matter how hard Y tried to get off the track, and no matter how much he sinned, he would eventually return to the right path. If not today, than in ten years time.

5.5 E: The Young Man Who Contemplates Selling His BMW

Looking at him, looking at those pale green eyes of his, never in a life time would I have guessed that this young man came from a troubled past. For all they radiated was sincerity and tranquility. C was a beast compared to me, easily a meter 90 centimeters in height, broad shoulders, enormous hands, a thick neck and a large shaved head. But the way he extended those strong, big hands to shake mine softly, and to listen to me speak, silently, respectfully, and without a single interruption... never in a life time would I have guessed that this young man was once a quartier boy.

The story of his quartier years was one which he never fully disclosed to me, for he was not proud of his past. Though he acknowledged like most Turkish men I met in Strasbourg that the past had to be lived to learn from mistakes, which had to be committed when young. And sins were there to repent, and necessary even, for one to come to his senses, or to become who he now was. What happened? What had changed? Why was he not out in the quartiers doing what other quartier boys do regularly, stealing tapes from cars, going to jail, coming out of jail, dealing drugs, smoking shit, beating up other quartier boys, going to jail again? Why did I not meet him in some corner, perched with other boys sitting in Schiltigheim? Or in Kehl playing the slot machines? Or the brothels.... You name it. Many men of his age, married or single, did all those things. They gave into greed and lust. "They lived their youth," as they called it. They sinned. They destroyed their friendships, marriages, and eventually their lives. Few sobered up,

and started questioning their life choices. C was, indeed, one of the few. And mind you, even those who came to their senses, and argued to have experienced their moral awakening... when they did, theirs was of a temporary type. Once they realized the responsibilities that a sober life brought, like working hard for little money, and certainly for little respect, and with little hope for future, they soon returned to their old friends and old habits. They opted for the fantasies. For E, though, change was not temporary. He would remind me repeatedly that only Allah would know what would become of one. But when he said like these, I often gave it to his humble nature. Yet he was well aware of his past, and swore not to commit the same mistakes again.

To that end, he took a number of strict measures.

It has been over two years since C sobered up. Two years since he said goodbye to the quartier life. His moral awakening was brought to him by a young charismatic preacher. One day, this preacher extended him an invitation to come join him at the weekly *sohbet* in Schiltigheim's Hüdayi Vakfi. "One thing he [the preacher] said back then still resonates with me to this day," he argued, and continued: "In this life, we live under a divine camera.' I would either have to continue living the way I did, and pay for my sins, or change myself. As the hadith goes, "God leaves it up to you to face your nef's." Rather than paying for his sins by burning in Hell, he chose to change himself, and appear as a Muslim who avoided sins under Allah's divine camera. He then participated in the lesser pilgrimage, the *ümre*, which was yet another step towards his moral awakening.

As he was going through his moral journey, he also met a young Turkish woman. France-born like him, this woman, and particularly her family, were a bit drawn back given E's reputation as a quartier boy. "His dad had heard of my previous affairs, and he did not want me to marry his daughter. I told him, 'OK, if it is God's will/wished for (*nasipse*), it would happen."

E's earlier dating with his now-wife may appear rather strange to those of us who are more accustomed to contemporary conventions of dating, which involve going out for dinners, drinking or dancing. The old C would do all those things too. But the new one wanted things to remain unspoiled by such contemporary conventions. He, moreover, wanted to marry someone whom he treated with proper Islamic conduct. "The way I see marriage is like the salat. The way you begin is the way you will continue it." What he meant was that he wanted to marry someone whom he treated in a manner that was proper, and different than the ways he had treated other women in his life. It was almost as if he wanted this relationship to retain its purity. To that end, he limited spending time with her alone, and instead, exchanged texts on the phone. The texts he sent would often build on the Sufi poems he read which spoke of love for the Beloved (both signifying Allah and the individual). He would text her lines from these poems, as well as lines from hadiths and other religious texts, every night, which, as he recalled, perpetuated his relationship with her, and instilled in her Islamic sensibilities too. As he recalled, when they first met, she did not wear a hijab. But by the time things got serious between them, she did put on the hijab. This was something that made E very happy.

The attentive reader may already be drawing parallels between E's story and that of Y's. Both entail a young man falling in love with a young Turkish woman, enchanted with dreams of a future marriage even... And dreams to get their lives back in shape, and to start anew which demands of them to give up their old lives. Unlike Y, however, E does not come from a Milli Görüş family. This does not mean, of course, that his parents are not Allah-abiding Muslims. But compared to Y, the mosque was not the primary location of socialization as E was growing up. His father and mother got a divorce at an early age, leaving him and his brother with a great more deal of independence. When Y came home late, there was a father who would beat him up,

or not let him in. For E, that was not the case. Her mother was a pious woman, and attended weekly sohbets in her friends' houses, but she did not have the authority to deter E from going out at night to meet with his friends in the quartier. E would come to appreciate his mom's struggles much later, after he chose to give up his old habits.

E's family was also better off. They owned their own construction business, as well as the house they lived in. They did not hesitate providing their children with the luxuries that young men demanded. Young migrant men with money in Strasbourg liked to show off their wealth by putting on Gucci hats, expensive sneakers and soccer sweat kits. They also liked to put on thick silver chains, designer watches with large shiny crowns and cruise around in their fancy cars. E, after all, was that young man of the quartier. Back in those days, he, too, adopted the quartier aesthetics and manners. Never in a lifetime would I have thought of the E I have met at the Hautepierre open air market wearing a 200 Euro Gucci hat. Or a 100 some Euro Emporio Armani t-shirt. Not a single thing he wore carried a designer label today. But E, as he would argue, was a different man in the past.

There was one thing though that still gave away his past. E drove a sports BMW, a car that had brought a lot of attention to him in his neighborhood. I have never seen him drive this car because, for the most part, we encountered each other in the open-air market in Hautepierre, where he would be every Saturday selling roasted chicken from a minivan, or at the Thursday night sohbets at Hüdayi Vakfi. There were also times when he missed the weekly sohbets. And he felt horrible about it. But his work schedule took much of his time. When I met E, he was already a married man. But his wife was expecting a child, which meant that he had to work harder to save money for the additional expenses that this new addition to their life would bring. While he despised skipping the sohbets due to work, and work-related fatigue, he made sure to

never skip a prayer despite his hectic work schedule, and to volunteer whatever free time he had outside work at Hüdayi Vakfı—helping with the construction of the new cultural center, paying his *sadaka* and *zakat* on time and handsomely, spending time with the youth, and more recently, organizing sohbet for the youth.

E's regular job was a mechanic. He installed and fixed elevators. Normally he would be on call 24/7 for repairs which meant that his schedule was never predictable, making regular appearances at sohbet and other events a challenge. On Saturdays, he would take care of his father's roasted chicken vendor business. This was only a weekend thing that his father had set up for his kids to make additional income. Each Saturday morning, he would get up around 3:30am to load up the minivan with frozen halal chicken, drive the van to the Hautepierre open air market by 7am the latest so that they could get a good location, stay there until the market closed at 1:30pm, clean up the van, and return it to his dad. Often times, he would go home and take a nap after work. His father paid him 100 Euros for the day's work. Normally he would be accompanied by his brother, who would also get 100 Euros. A few times I have also seen him invite other kids whom he knew from his neighborhood, and who sometimes came to the sohbet at Hüdayi, as well as the additional ones he organized which were more oriented towards the youth, and delivered in French. This way, he ensured that these kids did not waste away their time like he did back in the day, such as going out partying on a Friday night. Instead, they would get to spend it at the marketplace with him from early morning until late afternoon. This way, he also hoped that they would not look for other means of earning cash, such as selling shit.

E was keen about not just his own ethical cultivation, but also that of the youth in the neighborhood he grew up, Souffleweyersheim. He knew what it meant to be young and restless, and he knew the ways one could easily go astray growing up in the quartiers. And despite his

humble nature when it came to all other matters, this was a quality that he valued greatly in himself, and brought up several times in our conversations. Most religious leaders in the community were old. As he would explain, they did not know the quirks of being a young, France-born Turk in Strasbourg. They did not know the realities of the quartiers. They had little knowledge why many young men chose to hang out in the quartier courtyards, or, when they had the means, to get in their cars to go cruising in Kehl. Most of these older preachers did not even speak French, which was particularly important for France-born Turkish youth, for the words they used were at times incomprehensible even to a Turkey-born and raised man like myself. It is, therefore, no coincidence that many young France-born youth who came to the Friday prayers chose to play with their smartphones while the older, Turkish imams were delivering the hutbes. The youth would lose interest in listening to an old man preach using old man's terms. They needed young men who could speak their language, both literally and figuratively. They needed people like E, who was cool for he drove a nice car, and was fine sharing his past mistakes with them, only to guide them to what he considered to be a moral path. "If one delivers the message through the heart, if he uses empathy, then the outcomes are different," he argued. Who else but E would have such empathy, really? A quartier boy was needed to address other quartier boys. One who was a success story, for he was able to push himself out of the streets, and push aside the demands of his nefs in exchange for Eternal happiness and tranquility in *Cennet*, the Heaven.

The car was both a blessing and a curse. In a sense, E used the BMW as a bait for catching the youth's interest. The car played a role in his efforts to bring the quartier boys to the sohbet. Religion was not the first topic of conversations with these boys. It was not the talk about what is halal or haram, or what is sinful or not that grabbed their imagination. Instead, he hung out with them, smoking cigarettes, talking about girls, and letting them take his car for a

ride. “I have a nice car, and they like that,” E said with a smile that rarely left his face, and he continued: “The way to bring a group of these boys to the sohbet is by capturing the attention of the one who is most stern among them.” And the car played a role in capturing these bad boys’ interest.

While the BMW was a good way to attract other quartier boys’ attention, E had ambivalent feelings about keeping it. He felt that owning a fancy sports car did not reflect the life style he wanted to portray to the kids. To him, it appeared as double talk: speaking of modesty, and charity, while driving an expensive car. Earlier in our conversations, he would bring up how uncomfortable that made him feel. And how he was considering selling the car to get a cheaper one. What mattered, after all, was its utilitarian value. And with the money he got for it, he could take his wife to the pilgrimage. And use the rest for other expenses, including charity.

He would explain to me, usually during Saturdays, during cigarette breaks, how he was able to change his life trajectory from one where his faith was just something he talked about (as a Muslim) to one where he took the initiative to act on it, and to reorient his life according to Islamic teachings. To that end, he did not only participate in sohbet, and volunteer at Hüdayi Vakfi, but also took classes in the Arabic from another young man who also volunteered at association. He wanted to be able to read the Qur’an in Arabic, the language that it was sent to Prophet Mohammed.

I have already mentioned that for E, the path to Islam was paved through two encounters: his current wife, and the charismatic preacher of Hüdayi Vakfi, who had invited him to come to the sohbet, and eventually gave him more responsibility at the mosque association, such as allowing him to organize sohbet for the youth. And the latter, he took very seriously. In fact, a quick glance at his weekly schedule shows how C has chosen to devote almost all of his time

outside of work to his own ethical cultivation. Mondays, he would join a friend to hold sohbet for 9-13 year old kids. Tuesdays, in a neighboring quartier, he would hold sohbet for 17-21 year olds. Wednesdays, with another peer at Hüdayi, they would hold sohbet for about a dozen youth. Thursdays he would try to come to the Hüdayi sohbet which were open for all and listen to his charismatic teacher preach. Fridays he would hold sohbet too, for the youth in another neighboring quartier, Schiltighem. And Saturdays, he would seek more religious knowledge by attending sohbet wherever he could find them, such as the Fatih mosque in Esplanade. With the exception of the Thursday sohbet, most of the sohbet he attended would be in French. He would also deliver his own sohbet in French as he addressed mostly a younger crowd who happened to be France-born.

One thing that the reader might be wondering is how E, and young men like E, chose to shift their life trajectories in such a short time frame. And how they find the motivation to do that. And as E's schedule makes clear, the change may entail a complete overhaul of the way he manages his time. While these changes in piety and leisure may seem sudden to an outsider, and they often are for many of the young men I met in Strasbourg, my sense from numerous conversations with E and others is that they also reflect a growing lack of satisfaction with the old lives they live. While some might argue that they need to live their youth, and make mistakes, for which they would later repent and eventually opt for a pious life, there certainly is a sense of regret for the sins that these young men commit. In other words, the fun that these young men seek brings with it a moral burden. And when that burden becomes unbearable, they start going to the mosques and to participate more frequently in rituals in these associations.

But the reason why men choose to change life trajectories has to do more than this moral burden. It is also that going out every night to socialize in the quartier courtyards, or going to the

discotheques and shisha bars in Kehl loses its appeal after a while. Once such leisure is routinized, the fun it used to bring become banal. Also, with their friends gradually getting married, or pushed into marriage by their parents, these men start to feel singled out. There is a reason why most of the men who socialize in the quarters, whose stories I will be telling in one of the following chapters tend to be young. Those over the age of 25 are most likely engaged and married, and they can no longer spend prolonged periods of time outside. Responsibilities at home include visiting the kin and the in-laws, as well as the bringing home more money, which means working longer hours, and coming home tired.

Moreover, for many young men, starting up a family provides an escape they seek. The dream of such new beginnings in life, one where they can put aside their old habits, be morally cleansed by going to the pilgrimage, and then start anew. While this all sounds like a proper strategy, I must also note that some of these marriages do end in divorces, which is an issue the imams, as well as older men in the community often bring up in conversations. They argue that the youth today see marriage as a game, and even a spectacle that would give them the social capital that they seek otherwise. Like a car that they can boast about, marriage becomes a spectacle that helps them to show off. No wonder why each marriage costs upwards of 30,000 Euros in Europe.

These are things that E was well aware of. And things that he feared. For that reason, he reflected on his transformation as not a temporary endeavor, but one which he should strive to keep a lifetime. Also for that reason, he did more than get married, or start showing up in the mosque for salats, and at the association for the sohbet. He tried to extend his transformation to all aspects of his life. Often in my conversations with religious leaders, I would be told that one should live life in accordance with Islam, and not vice versa. That was exactly what E aspired to

do. To live a life that would be shape by Islamic ideals. What would that entail? These ideals certainly depend on who preaches them, and/or how one interprets the Qur'an and the hadiths (Lambek 1990; Bowen 1993; Bowen 2003; Bowen 2012; Lukens Bull 2016), that is, both on text and context (Martin 1982). For E, the teachings reflected what he listened to at Hüdai Vakfi, which followed the teachings of its spiritual leader, Aziz (Saint) Mahmud Hüdai, as interpreted in the editorial published by its current representative in Üsküdar, Istanbul, Osman Nuri Topbaş. Like any other Sufi tariqa, Hüdai Vakfi also prioritized the taming of one's nefs through dhikrs, volunteerism and charity. For E, that meant avoiding the worldly temptations such as lust or greed.

In our conversations at the open air market in Hautespierre, E would speak of how he did not like working in the marketplace. "I want to quit this job because the *Şeytan* keeps on probing me," he would content. These probes included engaging in monetary exchange with women, looking at them in the eye, having to touch their hands, and exchange glances, some of which, he felt, was of sexual nature. He would even take an issue with having to hear a woman's gentler voice, which was seductive for the nefs, and therefore needed to be avoided if possible. On the contrary, he did not have to interact with women during his weekday job. "My regular weekday job in the elevator company is nice. I can pray in the mosque, and for that, I work an additional half an hour." But he needed the money coming from working at the marketplace. The cost of living in France was high. "There is tax for TV (in your house), an annual fee of 130 Euros. Have you ever encountered such stupidity! Then there is money to pay for garbage, and if you have a private house, that is an additional 100 Euros you pay annually. My rent is 720 Euros, 380 of which is subsidized. I declare my income in the bazaar as zero. But then, you need to have an

income equivalent to three times the amount you pay for rent. And if you run your own company, you cannot be on unemployment benefits.”

Life, as E understood, was a test that Allah puts His pupils through. The challenges he encountered at work were a part of that test too. But he also knew that given the option, he could find some other weekend job—one which did not expose his nefis to temptations. Also, he was aware that by engaging himself in an economy that prioritized profit-making over charity, he was pushed into finding loopholes in the system. “If I can make enough money, maybe I can return to Turkey and start up a business more in line with Islamic standards,” he argued, while also contradicting himself later, when he argued that Turkey was not that different from France when it came to business ethics and practices. He did not feel good about exploiting such loopholes, like showing zero income for his Saturday labor at the marketplace. By not paying taxes on the income he earned, he was aware that he was basically taking someone else’s money away, or as the Turkish saying goes, he was eating that which belonged to another pupil, *kul hakkı yemek*. This was a grave sin, one which, he acknowledged, many Muslims today engaged with on a daily basis. To compensate for the moral burden caused by his practice, he chose to do something that I have never heard anyone else do in the community. He paid his taxes late, so that he would pay a penalty, which he hoped would at least compensate a fragment of the money he made from his undeclared work. “This is my way of paying taxes for that work. Others can call me stupid for doing so...”

Prior to my departure from Strasbourg, in one of our final encounters, E had shared with me the good news: He had finally sold his BMW and opted for something not so flashy instead. He was happy about this decision. Now he could start preparing for that *hajj* trip he wanted to take his wife to and spend more money on charity work. Now, he could finally live the life style

he preached to youth in his weekly sohbet. Yet another obstacle overcome in his path towards a better Muslim man.

5.6 B and S Beys: The Gambling Buddies of the Past Seek a Way Out

Every night, but especially on Saturdays when the Menzil tekke (lodge) of Strasbourg, Semerkand, located a few blocks south of the Eyyüb Sultan mosque in Meinau, held sohbet, men would gather in the tekke's courtyard, sitting on long wooden benches and tables while consuming copious amounts of tea and cigarettes. The tekke, I was told, is known for its cigarette consumption. Even some of the imams that serve here smoked with the congregation, which is quite unusual as there is an ongoing debate in Islam whether tobacco consumption is *haram* or *ayip* (Arabic *ayb*, inappropriate) and *mekruh* (Arabic *makruh*, not welcomed, disliked) (Vom Bruck 2005; Sucaklı et al 2011; Alzyoud et al 2015). In some other mosque associations, for example, I have seen men, and often young men, hide away their cigarettes each time the imam would step in to the tea house. Not here, though. The tekke, like most other mosque associations in the city, was in a sense a playground for men, one in which men socialized for long hours after work. Here, they argued, they found the sympathy and warmth lacking in other places. Here, they also added, they found a purpose in life by not just sitting and smoking, but also helping others through their volunteerism.

Many of the men of the tekke were grooms imported from Turkey for marriage purposes. It was in the tekke's courtyard, sitting on one of the wooden benches back in 2013 after a communal iftar that one such man had opened up to me, asking me—after I had opened up to him about coming from a family that went through divorce—whether it was hard on me, as a child, dealing with the consequences of my family's divorce. He wanted assurance that his child would not grow up having problems because of having to go through the experience of living in

a broken family, for which he partially blamed himself. I told him it was not easy growing up. But he could be a responsible father, and make sure that he was present for his kid whenever he needed him. I was to later realize that he was not the only one here seeking comfort in the company of other men going through similar problems which to a large extent emanates from their transition into living in a new country and a new culture. Not that family problems, as far as I could tell, were something that they talked to each other about. For there seems to be a limit as to how vulnerable one seeks to make himself to others. And only close friends would unveil their *mahrem* (Arabic *mahram*, or private) to one another. But it was common knowledge that family problems constituted one of the most pressing issues for men who felt stuck between two different cultures—that of Turkey, and Turks in France. The process of getting accustomed to France, and finding a common platform to communicate with their wives, as well as other members of their distant kin in France, was one that they found hard to accommodate. In return, they sought spaces where they felt most welcomed, and in proximity of peers who dealt with similar quandaries—problems at home and at work, as well as outside pertaining their lack of control over their nefs. The tekke was one such space.

Semer kand, in particular, was known in Strasbourg as a place for men who had hit rock bottom. A place for men who had lost their path, and sought a way out of the coffeehouses in Strasbourg or the slot machines in Kehl. The Menzil tekke of Adıyaman, Turkey, also has the same reputation as a place of last resort. Not having found the comforts they sought in life, some men in Strasbourg came to Semer kand as the final stop.

Semer kand was a final stop for many because it has a reputation for expecting strict adherence to sufi rituals. All were welcomed, of course, but those who frequented here were asked to go through a process of repentance, or *tövbe*. The ritual, I was told, involves ritual

cleansing, prayers, and taking the blessing (often in the form of kissing the hand) of the imam in charge of the tekke, who acts as an ambassador to its *şeyh* (Arabic, *sheikh*), the spiritual leader in Menzil, Adıyaman. Most men also took a trip to Menzil to visit the *şeyh*, and to spend time living, eating, and praying communally at its mosque. Only through undergoing this ritual, they were able to participate in the tekke's more private and invite only events, like the silent dhikr. By coming here, these men hoped to find refuge in a particular interpretation of Islam that demanded of them to be watchful of their nefes at all times. By being in Semerkand, participating in salats, attending sohbetes and *zikirs* and hanging out with other men in the tekke's courtyard, as well as volunteering in the form of participating in the construction or renovation of a new building, spending their money, time or manpower, they aspired to come to terms with their moral transgressions, repent, and if possible, start anew.

The following few pages portray the life histories of two men who chose this path. My aim is neither to provide an elaborate description of Semerkand, nor to go in depths to the religious teachings and rituals unique to this tariqa. The Naqshibandi tariqa of Menzil has a long history in Turkey (Çakır 1990; Tekdemir 2018), and there is at least one recent ethnography, a PhD dissertation, written on Menzil's role especially amongst Kurdish migrants in Istanbul (Günay 2017). What I am interested in, rather, is what attachment to this religious space entails. In other words, I want to know why it is the case that the two men whose stories I convey in the proceeding pages chose to give up their previous practices in exchange for a rigid submission to a tariqa. And the answer, as I hope to show, has to do with more than just learning about Islam or personal ethical cultivation.

I met B Bey not at the tekke, but at Hüdayi Vakfı, which was central to E's moral journey presented in the previous section, at its weekly Thursday sohbet. B Bey had recently grown an

appetite for Islamic knowledge, for reasons which I explain below, and sought Islamic teaching in wherever he could find it. Prior to his involvement in the tekke, his religious knowledge was next to nothing, as he would argue, for, while growing up in Turkey, he did not have the opportunity to attend sohbet. Moreover, he had no interest in his own ethical cultivation, let alone the paths offered by tariqas in Turkey. Having chosen to set aside his previous life in which he was a gambling addict, nowadays, he moved from one sohbet to another, trying to distract himself from crossing to casinos in Kehl by filling his heart with Islam. Sometimes, after the sohbet at Hüdayi, I would sit with B Bey and his friends at the McDo across the street, and talk about the themes covered in the evening sohbet over cups of tea and hot chocolate. The longer conversation I had with him, which is where I draw much of the data to stitch the following story on his moral journey, however, took place during the span of a two-hour iftar at one of Kehl's famous Turkish restaurants, Istanbul. He and his friend, S Bey, had picked me up from the parking lot of L'Eclerc in Schiltigheim, and while our initial goal was to go to another Turkish restaurant, Beyoğlu, in Strasbourg, given the long line, and our growing hunger after the day-long fast, we decided to cross to Kehl instead.

Going to Istanbul Restaurant was my suggestion. The restaurant was big. It served Turkish delicacies. I had eaten there before, and I thought that it was a good location to have an intimate conversation while we broke our fast. I was to later realize that Istanbul Restaurant was also a place that B Bey sometimes stopped by back in the day, not just to eat, but also to play the slot machines located in a small room right by the restaurant's entrance. B Bey, these days, would intentionally avoid coming to Kehl. Even to buy cigarettes, which are considerably cheaper in Kehl, he would ask a friend who would be crossing the border that day to get him the tobacco. "Nowadays, I ask a French friend of mine to buy them for me. Not that by coming to

Kehl, I will necessarily gamble. I have had enough of that filth in my body... But I still do not want to come here. Nowadays, we are trying to be in control of our nefis.” For that reason, perhaps, coming to Kehl, and especially to this restaurant, was not to B Bey’s liking. Perhaps, it brought back memories that he was not proud of. This was likely a place where the night initiated for him and his friends every time they crossed to Kehl. As if he recalled one such memory, on our way to the restaurant, B Bey recounted the following anecdote:

If you have the inclination [to gamble], you gamble even when you go out to eat. You order a soup, for example, and while waiting for it to arrive, you go and drop in the 20 in your pocket. These were things we did back then. You lose that 20, and to gain it back, you say to your friend, ‘Let us go grab a cup of coffee there.’ And there you drop in 30 more. Then you go to the bank to withdraw some money, and drop that in too. That night, if the food you ate costed you 50, the rest would cost you 250-300 more. And the next day, you are deep in thought [about last night’s affairs]...

B and S Bey initially met at the French language training school that they attended when they first arrived to Strasbourg. But friendship developed when B Bey started working at a Turkish run pizzeria. S Bey would come to the pizzeria too to eat and hang out with friends. Soon, their friendship extended beyond the French classes and the pizzeria. “Then,” S Bey continued, “we started going out to places with slot machines (*makine ortamlari*). Back then, it was better, not like today. Today, the machines...you know, they are bad. Back then you’d win, you’d treat your friends. It was enjoyable. When you won, days were good.” Later on, both men continued working in various construction sites, and crossed to Kehl after work regularly, together, and often in company of other friends. This routine, however, came to an end

approximately three months ago, when they decided to put away their Kehl night outs, and started to come to Semerkand instead.

A Bey had to attach himself to a place where he could discipline his nefts. Semerkand was a good venue for that. But the decision also had to do with his friendship circle, who also frequented the tekke. It was thanks to peer pressure that they were able to reorient their lives according to Islamic ideals. This was a decision that they took as a group. “Since we first arrived here [Strasbourg], we would go to play [gamble]... how long has it been? (asking B Bey). Nine years? Nine and a half? We would socialize in the same venues all the time. It is like we were all tied to one another... But it is as if we all waited for someone to take that first step. Everyone was fed up with it. Then one of us took that step, and the rest came along. Thanks be to Allah (*Allah’a şükür*), what else can we ask for?” asserted S Bey to emphasize how they, as a group, supported each other in taking the decision. And other friends, too, were interested in following their lead.

Like most other men who chose to reorient their life choices, B Bey’s introduction to Semerkand was not an informed one in the sense that he did not seek a particular interpretation of Islam. As already mentioned, his knowledge of Islam was limited to a few prayers necessary to pray the salats. Instead, it all happened during one of his soccer games at an indoor soccer field, where he was approached by a group of men, also playing soccer, and invited to come to the tekke. Here is how he recalled that initial encounter:

Let me put it this way. We had planned with a few friends while we were at the movies to (later) play soccer. After a few weeks [of playing soccer with them], new faces joined us. Some of them were from the tekke... That is how we met them. Then they invited us [to the tekke]. We went to meet their friends there. I liked it there. Personally, it was

something I wanted. What I am trying to say is, I was at a stage where I could understand what they were talking about/what they were after. If they came to us six months later, maybe we would not go. Maybe we would not look at their faces. But it was destined on us. As I say, this all has to do with being destined (*nasip ve kismet meselesi*). Just like how you cannot eat an apple when it is not ripe. Earlier, we were not ready. Then we became that ripe apple... We got enlightened. All of us [his friends] were, that's why we were able to go [to the tekke]. And up until then, I was the kind of person who would swear at the thought of things such as the tariqas. I would not think such things as kissing [the tariqa leader's] hands, etc, were plausible... And also, we were always shown the bad sides of this thing [the tariqa].

Before having met the men from Semerkand at their weekly soccer games, B Bey would frequent the slotmachines in Kehl, and spend a good deal of his money on gambling, which caused problems at home. He did not go in depth talking about these problems, but he mentioned that there were times where his marriage was on the brink of collapse.

While the decision to end these Kehl trips may sound abrupt, like E's story which I shared in the previous pages, for B and S Beys, too, the decision was in the works for some time. When they first arrived Strasbourg around ten years ago, they gave into a life of pleasures. "We lost ourselves" (*dağıttık*, literally scattered) argued B Bey, as he recalled those earlier years. "Like the Syrians who cross the border [into Turkey], grab a glass of beer, and take pictures with it. Why? Because they do not have such freedoms there. We did not have such freedoms either. Up until then, all the things we did hidden we could now do here legally. Gambling was legal in Turkey in 1997, but since then, it became illegal." But with greater freedoms came not only a sense of loss, but also a gradual sense of dissatisfaction. As B Bey described: "We have a

Creator. But with these games [slot machines], we were about to lose the very reason we live in this world. We were stupefied. We were struck. But thank Allah we were able to stand back up.”

It was not about the money they had lost to the slot machines, but the fear that this gambling habit had turned into an addiction that could cost them their families. The addiction was real. For S Bey, it was a game that the Şeytan played on the mortals’ nefes:

The Şeytan probes you, your nefes, to win, win, win all the time. I lost too much today, let me go [to the casino] try to make up for it. You feel like you have what it takes to win, you go, and still lose. And then you ask yourself, why did I lose? How do others win? I remember seeing a man winning 45 to 50 thousand Euros right in front of me. He played Poker on the machines, betted the maximum amounts. 100’s. He won, then he went to grab a coffee, drink some alcohol, come back to the machine... the machine was still in the midst of counting the 50 thousand Euro he made... But when I saw him again a few weeks later, this time, he was betting only in cents.

Winning mattered for these men. It mattered because in other aspects of their lives, it was harder to be conceived as winners. As working-class men, opportunities at work to excel were scant. At home, as ithals, their authority was jeopardized by threatening in-laws and a demanding wife. But outside, in front of the slot machine, they had the chance to become winners. But winning did not necessarily solve their problems. It certainly was satisfying, for after winning a big chunk, a man would order drinks for all his friends, or take care of the bill for their next excursion. But even when they got lucky and gained big sums, they would still be unsure how to spend it, for they were aware that the money gained from slot machines was not halal. It was the kind of money that they did not want to spend on their family’s welfare, for they did not think that money won through gambling would bring any good to their loved ones. Instead, they spent

it on new bouts of gambling, and for future excursions to Kehl. For B Bey, one needed to sweat for the money earned. “That’s my approach to money,” he argued. Moreover, they simply did not know what to replace gambling with, or what to do about this addiction. When B Bey decided to stop going to the casinos, and drinking alleys (*türkü barları*), he felt that he started to live a very boring life. “I remember saying to myself, I am living like a vegetable (*ot gibi yaşıyorum*, literally, to live like grass).” But after having met the men from the tekke, he realized that he was, in fact, in search of something, one which he could not yet name. “The people we were looking for came to us within the span of a few weeks eventually.” For both men, the encounter with the men from Semerkand, whom B Bey called “the friends of Allah” (*Allah dostları*) was a chance encounter, but also one that was destined on them.

It is not surprising that we all follow certain routines in life to make things easier, predictable or more digestible. Mine, during writing this dissertation, include visiting the same coffee shop almost every midday to write, going to the gym, and going to a bar late at night to crunch in more pages. For the men I study, the routines consist of work, home, and visits to coffeehouses, shisha bars, the quartier courtyards, or, in the case of men who gamble, visits to coffeehouses, restaurants and casinos in Kehl and other German cities nearby. For some men, the mosque replaces these venues as a part of the routine for they experience a sense of unease in frequenting venues like coffeehouses or casinos. They are aware that these spaces are not conducive to moral practices, or practices that are Islamically proper, and therefore have a stigma attached to them. As I already mentioned in the previous chapter, and as we will see in the following chapters, too, there is a moral label attached to men who frequent coffeehouses or the quartier courtyards as no good doers. They are seen as “empty men” who kill their “empty time” with “empty” practices (*boş işler*). But it is not always the fear of others’ moralizing gaze that

matters, as B Bey would explain to me. “It is not how the society sees me, what kind of person I am... It is whether I feel at ease with the paths that I take. I used to tell myself, like you said, things like, ‘Will I hide back from others what Allah already knows (*Allah’ın bildiğini kıldan mı saklayacağım?*) That [kind of logic] is kind of bogus to me. And those people [who say it], they do not feel at ease inside. They are not at peace.” When the sense of unease becomes unbearable, when the routines they follow, and the paths they take make them feel uncomfortable, these practices and spaces get replaced with other practices and spaces. For B and S Beys, hanging out in the tekke and attending religious rituals provided a new routine that provided them the comforts they sought. Yet, it should also be kept in mind that for many men, the mosque, as a part of daily routine, also risks becoming uninteresting over time. Hence, for many men, and especially the young ones, these mosque visits may constitute a temporary escape, and not a permanent part of their lives.

It is hard to tell whether for B and S Beys, the mosque will serve as a final stop. Considering that neither of the two come from a religious background (unlike Y, who was born and raised in a Milli Görüş family), their enthusiasm for frequenting a *tariqa* like Semerkand is still relatively fresh, and therefore retains its appeal. In speaking about his discovery of the tekke, B Bey would point out how happy he was to finally have a chance to undo the many practices he regretfully engaged in during his earlier years of ignorance. He was exuberant having left the “swamp” (*batak*). And for S Bey, the tekke was such an integral part of his life now that even during our prolonged iftar, he would often remind B Bey that it was getting late, and that they would have hurry back to the tekke to compensate for the salat they skipped before the time for the next salat would arrive. It was almost as if he feared not following this new routine of his, for slacking off once would invite further transgressions. Both men, despite their enthusiasm for the

tekke, still feared going astray once again, and falling back into the pleasures of drinking, gambling, and even other women. They wanted to seek meaning in life in pious escapes instead. But what really struck me the most was why they chose to stick with piety. It was not the mere need for repentance that they sought in the tekke, but also the need to serve as good examples to their children. “Look Oğuz,” B Bey said, and continued:

What disturbed me the most was... I would drink every night. Each time I sat at the table, I would drink whatever there was on it. Rakı... Wine... I lived a lifestyle that Allah forbade. And my kids would see that. These kids will take me as their example, because they see what’s going on at that table. They will want to experience the same things when they grow old. And of course they will... but I hope they never do. But humans, they are curious. They want to taste, see, experience what things feel like. They will sit and drink too. Doing things like this in this country felt weird to me, because when you go out, things like marijuana, heroin, coke... access to them is so easy here. Later, the drinks won’t do it for them, and they’ll seek other means. And if I am responsible for it all as a father, that’s the end of me. My aim is to prevent that. To educate them. If I am responsible for those practices, I have no meaning [in life].

B Bey was going to the tekke not just for his own ethical enlightenment. To him, what also mattered was to serve as a good example for his kids. In his mid 30s, as a father, he felt himself responsible to make sure that his kids would grow up not repeating his mistakes. He himself had sinned. And he could come to terms with the moral weight that his sins brought on him. But he saw in his practices the harm caused to not just to him, but also to his family. Hence even when he frequented casinos, he chose not to bring home the money he made gambling. And

now, he wanted to continue on serving as a good example by not engaging in things that Allah forbade.

S Bey could no longer remain patient. It was time to leave, time to go to the tekke to pray. We got back into the car to start our ride to Strasbourg for the night salat. On the way back, we passed by sex workers lined up on the highway past the bridge, le Pont de l'Europe. A miniature Qur'an was hanging from the rear-view mirror, swinging frantically with each bump and stop on the road.

As I write the story of these two men's moral journey, I wonder now if they were at the tekke tonight, attending the silent dhikr and smoking with their friends outside. Or if they were in Istanbul Restaurant, or some other venue, dropping in coins to the slot machines. No matter where they are, I hope they found the peace they sought in their lives.

Chapter 6: The Migrant Coffeehouse: A Place for Empty Men?

“Gönül ne kahve ister ne kahvehane. Gönül sohbet ister, kahve bahane.”⁵⁹
Turkish saying

“Le café est un véritable prolongement de la maison”⁶⁰
Jean Claude David, cited in Mikhail 2007: 150

“The coffeehouse is many Turkish men’s secondary...No! Primary home.”
H Bey, coffeehouse owner in Strasbourg

The idea of an idle, free or leisure time, or “empty time” (*boş zaman*) as Turks call it, is a moral fact: “a diffusely sanctioned rule of behavior” (Durkheim 1906; Karsenti 2012: 22). For how and where time is spent is a key topic for moral critique, and a means to regulate human behavior. Yet, practices often defy moral frames. During my fieldwork, I have often found Turkish men in spaces where they simply should not be. I have also found them engaging in practices which they were told to not engage. I found them spending their time and money away in activities that are considered shameful, and even sinful.

So far in this dissertation, we have not yet participated in any sinful place or practice. Although we have crossed the border to Kehl numerous times, and listened to men talking about their moral transgressions, past and present, we are yet to experience, first hand, what these transgressions look like, or where they are undertaken. In this chapter, we begin to visit sinful spaces, and sin along with those frequenting them.

The coffeehouse constitutes our first stop. Building on the many idle hours I spent at coffeehouses with Turkish men in Strasbourg, this chapter asks what it is that men find in a space

⁵⁹ “The heart wants neither coffee nor a coffeehouse. The heart wants conversation, coffee is its excuse.”

⁶⁰ The café/coffeehouse is truly the extension of a house.

fraught with heated moral and political discussions—a space that has long been a main referent of moral critique.

The coffeehouse stands out for a number of reasons. Aside from its almost five-century long history, the coffeehouse is a key institution to analyze “coffeehouse masculinity” (Arik 2009), that is, a place where manhood is poetically performed (Herzfeld 1988; Papataxchiarchis 1991; Almeida 1996). Men go to coffeehouses to socialize, but since this type socialization takes place specifically among men tells us something about the intimacies created through homosocial interaction, and begs the question of whether similar intimacies can even be envisioned through male-female interactions, and in spaces that allow such exchanges, such as houses. While homosociality is an integral part of masculine *poesis*, and one that is culturally engrained, it is paradoxically also one that at particular moments comes to defy socially conventions. On the one hand, it is expected of Turkish men to go to coffeehouses for that is what they have been doing for centuries to let off the steam. On the other hand, they are also asked to moderate the time and money spent in these venues, and to be conscious of the activities they engage in them.

Frequenting a coffeehouse is more than just a pastime. Because in Turkey, and among members of the Turkish diaspora, the practice tells us something about one’s moral dispositions. One could argue that frequenting any space—a library, bar, mosque, café, theater, etc.—is open to moral judgment. We associate people with places, and places with people, and through that, pass moral verdicts about one another’s character. As I will show in the following pages, within the context of the coffeehouse, the judgments passed for those frequenting this space have often included derogatory identifiers—identifiers which are central to the making of a particular mode of masculinity, be it Turkish or Islamic.

Since its introduction to the Ottoman Empire, the coffeehouse was, on the one hand, an alternative space of socialization, and a space that enabled counterpublics to form (Habermas 1989; Cowan 2004). For this reason, it was a politically charged and highly surveilled space (Kırlı 2000; Öztürk 2006). But socially too, it engendered troubled discussions. As a male hangout that promoted idle time and vice, it was considered “the refuge of Satan” (Grehan 2006: 1375), and its clientele, “a crowd good for nothing” (Naima, cited in Mikhail 2007: 161) It was a place associated with vices such as frivolity, promiscuity, debauchery and intoxication (Grehan 2006: 1375). In Turkey, today, when parents talk about their sons’ character in the wake of a potential engagement, they talk of how they do not have a coffeehouse life or habit (*kahve hayatı, kahve alışkanlığı*). There are reasons why this is the case, and I will get to these reasons in the following pages. But, important to note is that all this negativity comes while acknowledging that the coffeehouse has been, and continues to be, a key institution for men, and that the coffeehouses continues to serve as a social valve (Yıldız 2002; Aytaç 2005) for Turkish men in Turkey and in the diaspora.

What really fascinates me about coffeehouses, and what really pushed me into writing this chapter has another reason which has to do with the smile that accompanies men as they enter the coffeehouse. It has to do with the excitement that seeps through the lips, and shines through the eyes, if only for a few fleeting moments as men walk through the door and seat themselves next to other men. There is something telling about this smile for I rarely got to encounter it elsewhere on migrant men’s faces in Strasbourg. The smile has a story to tell about the men that I study, and about how they feel about being in this particular space. This chapter reflects on this smile as it attempts to tell the story of men who come to coffeehouses night after night.

In the following pages, I take you inside various coffeehouses in Strasbourg. As I trace the origins of the smile, I attempt to rethink the coffeehouse as a space of self-care, that is, a space that men go to in order to feel comfortable with themselves and to interact with each other little-to-no strings attached. In conclusion, I explore the limits to self-care, and ask whether coffeehouses will withstand the changing times. But before delving into the ethnographic material, I would first like to revisit what the coffeehouse meant to different actors since its foundation, and how it has always been a space seen through a moralizing gaze.

6.1 Coffeehouses in the Ottoman Empire

The history of coffee consumption goes back over a millennium in some accounts, and its institutionalized spatial form, the coffeehouse, goes as far back as the early 16th century. Based on my readings of the secondary literature, here is what I could gather about the history of coffeehouses.⁶¹

Coffee was originally consumed in Ethiopia. It was made popular by Yemeni Sufis during the 15th century. As their beverage of choice, it accompanied the nighttime *dhikr*, a sufi ritual practice, where coffee was consumed from the same communal cup that was passed around members of the congregation.

The dissemination of coffee to the Arabian Peninsula was not until 1511, which marks the opening of the first coffeehouse in Mecca. By then, coffee was consumed in homes and in coffeehouses which were located near mosques, and in major urban centers, such as Cairo. While it was consumed by the Istanbul elite, who were introduced to coffee first through the pilgrims,

⁶¹ The secondary literature used in this section comes from writings provided by travelers, bureaucrats and historians of 16th, 17th and 18th centuries such as Mustafa Naima (1734), Ibrahim Pecevi (1999), Evliya Celebi (2013 [1611]), Katip Celebi (1957); historical and ethnological accounts (Unver 1963; Rosenthal 1971; Farouqi 1986;; Desmet-Gregoire and Georgeoin 1997; Hattox 1985; Heise 1987; Toros 1998; Kirli 2000; Isin 2001; Yildiz 2002; Grehan 2006; Mikhail 2007; Arik 2009; Sankir 2010; Yaşar 2010; Sokmen 2011; Tural 2014), published and unpublished theses and dissertations (Yasar 2003; Sahbaz 2007; Demren 2007; Tunc 2014), and encyclopedic knowledge (Bostan 2001).

traveling dervishes and hajjis, and later, via Ottoman merchants who imported coffee from Yemen and sold it for personal consumption in private gatherings (Faroqhi 1986), it was not until the Ottoman conquest of the Levant, Egypt and Hijaz in 1516-1517 that coffee began its spread beyond the Islamic heartland, first to Istanbul and the wider Asia Minor, and later, via Armenian merchants to Vienna, Paris, and London.

In early 1550s, two Syrian Arab businessmen opened Istanbul's first coffeehouse in the commercial Tahtakale district. Soon after, coffeehouses started to sprout in Istanbul and other urban centers of the Ottoman Empire. Early coffeehouses were founded close to mosques as they were considered venues for the congregation to spend time between prayers (Aydoğın 1997: 92). Demographic changes in the Empire starting the 16th century, and growing urban population led to a growing interest in coffeehouse as an alternative space of socialization and communication (Sankır 2010: 193). Before the coffeehouse, socialization took place either at home, or in bazaars, bathhouses, barbershop, taverns (*meyhane*) or the mosques. These spaces, however, came with limitations. Houses were not spacious; bazaars were crowded; taverns were associated with alcohol consumption; and mosques, given their religious nature, were not amenable to all kinds and styles of conversation. Coffeehouses, on the other hand, were spaces of conviviality (Kafadar 2014). Whereas other spaces were regulated by Ottoman authorities, the coffeehouse provided a space that remained, though temporary, outside state's control—a secular space that was organized for the people, and by the people.

The coffeehouse, moreover, was an eclectic space. The French historian Thevenot speaks of coffee as a beverage consumed by people from all walks of life. Coffee, in other words, was not a luxury item consumed only by the bourgeois classes. The coffeehouse brought people from

discrete backgrounds, “without distinction of religion or social position...to chat with one another.” (Thevenot, cited in Hattox 1988: 94).

As coffeehouses institutionalized, they also diversified over time to accommodate people with diverse interests. One could go to a coffeehouse close to mosques (*imaret kahvehanesi*) to participate in religious conversations (*sohbets*) with preachers and imams or to exchange religious myths (*hamzaname*). One could go to a guild coffeehouse (*esnaf kahvehanesi*) to talk business. Or to a Janissary coffeehouse (*Yeniçeri kahvehanesi*) to talk about local politics. Or to coffeehouses with musical, poetic or theatric performances (*aşık kahvehanesi, meddah kahvehanesi, semai kahvehanesi*) to engage in artistic activities, such as Karagöz-Hacivat shadow theater or archery demonstrations (Latifi 1977, cited in Yaşar 2003: 21; Yıldız 2007; Selvi 2014: 108-109). Some coffeehouses also doubled as barbershops and orthodontists.

The Ottoman coffeehouse was in many ways a creative and artistic space (Kömeçoğlu 2009). During *Tanzimat*, the modernization era of the mid 19th century, there were coffeehouses with small libraries, which provided their clientele with pamphlets, newspapers and journals published in multiple languages (Kocabaşoğlu 1984, Evren 1996; cited in Şahbaz 2007). These coffeehouses, also known as reading houses (*kıraathane*) served an important role especially for members of the resistance movement during the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the making of a new Turkish republic, which I will get into in the next section. There were also coffeehouses known to serve hashish (*esrarkeş kahvehanesi*), and shisha (*tiryaki kahvehanesi*). These would also be known by the name of dive joints/gambling dens (*batakhane*).⁶² Historians also bring to our attention that later in the 19th century, certain coffeehouses especially in Istanbul’s European

⁶² The swamp metaphor used to describe venues in Kehl, and Kehl in general, share the same root as batakhane, which literally means a room or space where one sinks.

Beyoğlu district started to resemble their European counterparts and served European desserts and delicacies (Birsal 1981, cited in Aydoğan 1997).

Coffeehouses, some scholars argue, may be the Ottoman Empire's first truly public sphere (Kömeçoğlu 2005; Akyazıcı-Özkoçak 2007; Şankır 2010; Çağlayan 2012). Yet, coffeehouses were not only public, but in a sense, were an extension of the home. As Mikhail (2007: 148) notes, in most coffeehouses, the guests removed their shoes before entering a coffeehouse. The space was furnished with carpets, and had a small garden with trees. Its design resembled the living room of a house. The move out of home to the coffeehouse also allowed more autonomy for women at home, allowing women to gather at each other's homes to socialize while men frequented coffeehouses.

The coffeehouse was also a space of Orientalist fascination and was mentioned frequently in traveler's accounts. In these accounts, the convivial ambiance of the coffeehouse was often juxtaposed to eroticized narratives. Orientalist British writers of the time described the Ottoman coffeehouse as a place where homoeroticism and pederasty were common, and men who labored hard during the day would gather to get drunk "in a tripling feast" (Cowan 2005: 18-19). Although women were not present in coffeehouses, Orientalist accounts highlighted the presence of "beautiful young boys" who provided sexual favors to the coffeehouse clientele. (Kömeçoğlu 2009: 67).

The conviviality ascribed to coffeehouses, while cherished by the general public, was not always welcomed by the religious establishment (*ulama*). Seen as spaces "disrupting the etiquette of controlled visibility" (Grehan 2006: 1364),⁶³ the critique of coffeehouses took on different forms.

⁶³ For a similar discussion on coffeehouses in 17th century England, see Cowen 2005.

Firstly, the opening of new coffeehouses in the Islamic heartland instigated discussions over the medical and religious qualities of coffee. Was it a healthy beverage? Was it *haram* (not Islamically permissible)? Could a Jew consume coffee prepared by a non-Jew?⁶⁴ Some argued that coffee was an intoxicant similar to wine: the coffee drinking ritual (passing the cup), and its effects (excessive laughter, slips of the tongue) resembled wine-drinking (Grehan 2006: 1359-1360). Although proponents of coffeehouses wrote about the medicinal properties of coffee (Üçer 1987 cited in Yıldız 2002; Schievelbusch 1992), and emphasized the humoral qualities of coffee (Çelebi, cited in Mikhail 2007: 162-163) for religious leaders, coffee consumption was *haram* as the coffee seeds were carbonized, a process known as *tefahhum*.

Then, there was the problem of what else was consumed alongside coffee in a coffeehouse. In his decree sent to the governor of Bursa, the Ottoman Sultan provided the following description of coffeehouse sociality: “At the present, people gathered with young boys, took *macun* (hashish), *beng* (marijuana), and *afyon* (opium), drank wine and *rakı* (an alcoholic drink made from anise seeds) with the pretext of coffee drinking, play backgammon, chess, and *doplu* (a game of the period), gamble, and spend their time with these illicit behavior and denials. (Dağlıoğlu 1940, cited in Karababa and Ger 2011: 748). Because coffeehouse conversations were often accompanied by tobacco, as well as opium and hashish, they attracted the state’s attention. The consumption of drugs in coffeehouses was questioned by religious authorities. In his account of these discussion, Katip Çelebi wrote: “I was asked about coffee whether it is

⁶⁴ Horowitz notes that this was one of the debates in Egypt during first half of the 16th century. While the Egyptian rabbi, David ibn Abi Zimra permitted the consumption of coffee, he was more cautious in giving permission to Jews socializing in non-Jewish spaces: “I do not consent to its being drunk at a meeting place [mesibbah] of non-Jews, for this has some undesirable consequences and the Jews are holy...if it is indeed for medicinal purposes one may send for it and have it delivered home.” (Horowitz 1989: 22)

permitted or safe. I replied: Yes, it is safe. The only difficulty are those additions to it”

(Rosenthal 1971: 16)

Coffeehouses were also equated to taverns. The vices associated with drinking houses (*meyhane*), which were run primarily by members of the non-Muslim community, and other venues for socialization that predated the coffeehouses, were ascribed the coffeehouses. For Ebusuud Efendi, the prominent jurist of the 16th century, the coffeehouse was a place where “beardless young chaps of the city were gathering and having opium with syrup and hashish and cups of coffee. And in this state, they occupied themselves with all sorts of gossip and neglected prayer time.” When asked what one should do about coffeehouses, he argued that they should be closed, and those who argue otherwise dismissed from their positions” (Akyazıcı-Özkoçak 2007: 975).

Furthermore, the coffeehouse, as an alternative space, provided a counter-public where discourses critical of the dominating public discourse were rendered possible (Warner 2002). It was for this reason that the ruling political and religious elite considered them as hubs of subversion and malice (*fitne*), and forced their closure. Part of the fear had to do with who hung out in the coffeehouse, and for what purposes. Coffee consumption was associated with a Sufi practice. Sufism, though widely practiced in the Empire, was a post-Mohammedan invention, and the nighttime *dhikr* involved practices such as music and poetry, which were considered by Orthodox Sunni interpreters of Islam as illegal innovations (*bid'at*). The consumption of coffee, alongside tobacco, hashish and other intoxicants, quickly became matter of disagreement amongst religious authorities. Some recognized the health benefits of coffee, found that its use “suited to the ascetic life” of a Sufi, and considered it “a sedative of lust” (Çelebi 1957: 60). Others, as noted above, saw in it the working of the Devil. Nevertheless, alongside hashish and

other intoxicants, coffee was welcomed by a range of sufi orders as a mental and intellectual stimulant and was widely consumed (Karababa and Ger 2011: 748-749).

Another reason why religious authorities were angry was what the coffeehouse did: luring men away from the mosques (Grehan 2006: 1375). One of the early fatwas in 1517 led to the closure of coffeehouses. A similar fatwa was in place later in Cairo in 1532-1532 (Şab haz 2007: 46). The Ottoman ruling class attempted to close down the coffeehouses several times—the most successful being during the reign of Murad IV (1623-1640), where coffeehouse owners who continued to serve coffee to their clientele were hanged.

Despite their ill and repeated attempts to drive this institution to extinction, the coffeehouses persisted. By the end of 16th century, in Istanbul alone, there were over 600 coffeehouses. By 19th century, historians noted 2500 coffeehouses in the Ottoman capital alone (Yaş ar 2005). Historians also note that in the later years, rather than implementing a total ban on coffeehouses, the Ottoman state rather used investigators (*hafiyes*) to keep track of the discussions in coffeehouses, and inform the establishment on public opinion and dissent (Kırlı 2004).

Especially during the later years of the Empire, the coffeehouse was seen as a space of not only moral, but also political subversion (Ulusoy 2011). It was considered a subversive space of state-talk, and authorities had little interest in tolerating such talk (Caksu 2009: 122) This, according to Şankır (2010: 198) can be understood as an attempt of a failing Empire to retain control of its population and to avoid political dissent. The Janissaries, in particular, were seen as a problematic group due both to their disbandment during the reign of Mahmud II (and the concomitant coup attempt, known as the Auspicious Event in 1826, which led to the closure of over 10,000 coffeehouses), and their commitment to the Bekhashi *tariqa* (order), a Shia

influenced alternative to mainstream tariqats of Sunni Islam such as Nakshibandism and Qadiriya (Çaksu 2009: 125). According to Berkes, coffeehouses were “nests of political gossip and malice. Rather than providing a hangout for the Empire’s non-Muslim population (*reaya*), and a space of fun and rest, coffeehouses and drinking houses turned out to be spaces where the Janissaries and the Bektashis, who wielded tremendous authority contra the state, were hanging out” (Berkes 2002: 44).

Despite various attempts to regulate or ban, the coffeehouse as an institution was able to persist, mainly because it had popular support. It brought in people from different walks of life under the same roof, which reflected the Empire’s cosmopolitan and rapidly changing demography (Şankır 2010: 196). The coffeehouse also reflected on the citizens’ changing tastes, as documented by the opening of French style cafes where liquor and Austrian pastries were served, especially in Istanbul’s cosmopolitan Beyoglu district (Ediz 2008: 183).

The coffeehouse was the product of changing times, and responded to (and in some way, commanded) the shifting leisurely practices of a rapidly changing society. Kafadar argues that the coffeehouse is “intertwined...with such related phenomena as changing night-time practices, including the emergence of new forms of art and public entertainment. All this is deeply related to...the emergence of a new kind of urban society.” (2014: 244) Rural to urban migration played an important role in the making of this new urban society. The drastic increase in Istanbul’s population in the late 16th century is well documented (Akyazıcı-Özkoçak 2007: 976). Coffeehouses now were flooded with working class men, rural immigrants, urban poor, and the unemployed. They provided hubs of ethnic solidarity for internal migrants (Çaksu 2009: 124). With the Ottoman economy and lands shrinking, some coffeehouses also provided temporary housing for the unemployed Ottoman soldiers (Janissaries), who were disbanded in 1826 under

Sultan Mahmud II (Akbulut 2015: 567). Some of these now unemployed Janissaries opened their own coffeehouses. Coffeehouse conversations encompassed problems pertaining to work and home, and the coffeehouse evolved into a place of exchange and reflection on mundane problems, as well as critical political discussions.

6.2 Coffeehouses in Republican Turkey

As the early 20th century brought the Ottoman Empire to its end, and led to the creation of a young Republic, coffeehouses continued to occupy the social and political imaginary in the same old fraught ways. A source of moral degradation, and den of malice (*fitne ve fesat yuvalari*) (Ediz 2008: 181) coffeehouses were seen by critics to be behind the gradual collapse of a seven-century old Empire by undermining the Ottoman social fabric and family life. The intellectuals of the time, such as the poet Mehmet Akif Ersoy, who would later pen down the Turkish National Anthem, considered neighborhood coffeehouses to be the enemy of the family—the very unit upon which a strong society thrived. This Durkheimian vision which placed family and culture at the very foundation of the new nation’s civilizing ambitions, not only determined the boundaries of moral unity, but also shaped how intellectuals approached institutions which they thought was detrimental to the new Republic’s modernizing vision (Parla 1985: 57-62). Upon his return from a four-month trip to Berlin in 1914-1915, where he made observations on Western social life, including the café culture, Mehmet Akif penned down his famous poem, “Mahalle Kahvesi” (The Neighborhood Coffeehouse). In this poem, he compared Western cafés to Ottoman coffeehouses, describing the latter as “a nest of filth. Its people, both materially and morally wretched.” (Aydoğan 1997: 93). Instead of seeking happiness in coffeehouses, men, Mehmet Akif advised, should seek happiness at home. Those who stopped coming to coffee

houses may leave behind friends complaining. But for him, it was those who went home after work, and not to the coffeehouse, who had found the right path.

Socially, the coffeehouse, as an institution, continued to be seen as engendering of moral anxieties. But politically, the coffeehouse as an institution gained particular importance during the First World War (1914-1918), and the Independence War (1918-1922) years. During wartime, with major urban centers (including Istanbul) under siege, coffeehouses provided a space for the locals to gather and exchange information on the war efforts, and later, to organize an insurgency, which would play a central role in defeating the occupying forces and the making of a modern nation, the Turkish Republic (Aytaç 1942, cited in Öztürk 2006; Ediz 2008: 186). Coffeehouses were where intellectuals came to interact with the public to discuss the developments of an Empire in conflict, and to seek ways out.

With the foundation of the new Republic, many institutions, such as associations, political parties, foundations (*vakıf*) and religious congregations, such as dervish lodges (*tekke ve zaviyeler*) where groups of men congregated were closed down. In the newly-founded state's attempts to control public sphere, and to create a homogenous society, venues that would enable the formation of counterpublics were highly regulated, if not banned. It was within this suppressive environment and in light of the recently passed Maintenance of Order Law (*Takrir-i Sükun Yasası*), which was initially passed to regulate religious and ethnic dissent, that a petition was made in 1926 to close down coffeehouses. Coffeehouses, however, were neither a religious nor an ethnic institution. And for this reason, they have evaded closure (Ediz 2008: 186-7). Instead, given their centrality in everyday life, coffeehouses were reimagined by the state as a modernizing agent—a space where the new Republic's revolutionary measures could be disseminated (Ibid: 187). It was in coffeehouses that the Alphabet Reform of 1928 was explained

to the public. The coffeehouse during this era was imagined as an educational institution—a space for the locals to go and read, watch shadow plays, and not play cards (Öztürk 2006: 162-168; Üçer 1987). In one of his trips to Aydın, having witnessed the locals playing cards at a coffeehouse, the founding father of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, made a decree to ban card games: “Coffeehouses are reading houses (*kıraathane*). I ban playing games in coffeehouses in Aydın” (Yıldız 2002: 9).

The idea of a coffeehouse as an educational and modern (*asri*) space, and not a play-space, which had occupied much of the discussion since the modernization period of the late Ottoman Empire well extended into the 1930s and even the 1940s (Öztürk 2006: 111-133). The coffeehouse played such a central life in the making of modern Turkey that in 1935, modernization (*asrileştirme*) of coffeehouses was proposed as a state-wide project (Öztürk 2006: 161-271). While some coffeehouses became artists and novelists’ hangouts, reminiscent of university lecture halls, (Abasıyanık 1970 [1948], cited in Öztürk 2006: 23), others, particularly in rural Anatolia, were visited by young teachers, and seen as complementary spaces to people’s houses (*halkevleri*) and rooms (*halkodaları*) established between 1932-1940 with the goal of increasing literacy in rural Turkey (Karpaz 1973: 187; Birsal 1983: 183, cited in Şahbaz 2007: 93; Ova 2005; Lamprou 2015).

Coffeehouses in rural Anatolia, however, were a relatively new phenomenon. In villages, male socialization often took place in public guestrooms, which are spaces in houses (often owned by the feudal elite) where they would host male guests and drink coffee together (Beeley 1970).⁶⁵ But the state saw an opportunity to seep into rural Anatolia and to bring projects to the rural population through using coffeehouses, alongside people’s houses and rooms. They were

⁶⁵ Beeley argues that it was not until the 1960s that coffeehouses were a part of daily life in rural Anatolia.

used by the patrimonial state as agents to monitor and modernize the periphery (Heper 1985; Toprak 1996). Yet, with 70 percent of the population still illiterate as of 1945, this attempt was largely a failed one (Öztürk 2006: 44; Toprak 2004).

The attempts to re-envision coffeehouses as educational spaces were also accompanied by attempts to ban card games, and gambling at large. Card games were considered a “public enemy” (Öztürk 2006: 162). Even after Atatürk’s death, there were calls to nationalize coffeehouses to better regulate activities promoted in coffeehouses.⁶⁶ While there were temporary local bans on card games around Turkey, a national ban on card games was never implemented. Part of the reason, Öztürk argues, is economic, since the state was the sole proprietor importing gambling cards and other gaming apparatuses. While the project to modernize coffeehouses called for a ban on card games, the money, which the nascent Turkish state needed during World War II, was an important dissuading factor (Öztürk 2006: 168-174).

Starting the 1950s, modernization of the periphery was still an unattainable goal, yet one that consecutive governments continued to promote. At this time, a new demographic change swept the Turkish rural and urban landscape. Migration, first from rural to urban Turkey, and later with the 1960s, from rural Anatolia to Europe, not only led to sweeping demographic changes in Turkey, but also brought about the re-envisioning of the coffeehouse as a migrant-hangout. Urban coffeehouses during this era served as spaces of solidarity for migrants. Some also acted as hometown associations, places where retaining local and kinship ties was made possible (Erder 2000: 200-201 cited in Denis 2011). Migrants frequented these coffeehouses in search of jobs, and financial help (Aytaç 2005).

⁶⁶ The same call was put into practice the current President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. His cabinet has recently enacted a bill that sanctions municipalities to run their own coffeehouses. The project is known as *Millet Kiraathaneleri*, the Nation’s Coffeehouses.

The 1960s, however, were also significant because of the Cold War. Turkey was one of the main playgrounds where socialist and capitalist ideologies clashed, and it was within this environment that hangouts such as coffeehouses attained a new political identity. While coffeehouses, as Öztürk reminds us, have always been politicized spaces, and were under state surveillance even during the Second World War (Öztürk 2006: 277-480), with the Cold War, coffeehouses now acted as hangouts for leftist and rightist counterpublics to mobilize. For the 1968 generation, the coffeehouse was a place to organize the next demonstration, and it retained this role in the following two decades, where Turkey witnessed two more military coups in 1971 and in 1980. During the years leading to the 1980 coup d'état, several coffeehouses belonging to different political factions (left and right, but also Kurdish and Alevi) were bombed or strafed with machine guns (Denis 2011: 11).

It was not until the military coup of 1980 that political activism was widely curbed in Turkey, thereby transforming the coffeehouse into a less politicized space (Öztürk 2006: 25-26). This, however, does not mean that coffeehouses in Turkey today exclude political conversations. In fact, coffeehouses continue to serve as one of the first stops for journalists who seek stories on voting behavior ahead of elections. Also today, one can still find coffeehouses in Turkey and in Strasbourg divided across factions, such as Kurdish coffeehouses, PKK-sympathizer hangouts (with Kurdish flags and pictures of Abdullah Öcalan, PKK's imprisoned leader), as well as coffeehouses frequented by ultranationalists or leftists. And although coffeehouses today are rarely bombed, one could still encounter stories of coffeehouses being strafed over ideological divides.

After the 1980 coup d'état, Turkey embraced a neoliberal agenda under the then-President Turgut Özal. Coffeehouses came under attack, this time, by the encroachment of

neoliberal economics and its competitive and consumptive logics, such as the opening of the market to Western style cafés. Before big franchises like Starbucks (2003) opened their first cafes in Istanbul, Istanbul's Beyoglu district, already known for its Viennese style cafes since the Tanzimat, was filled with smaller Western style cafés (Girgin Can 1993). There is a difference, however, between the clientele who hangs out in these Western style cafés and the coffeehouses. Whereas the former, found in shopping districts and inside big shopping malls in Turkey today, caters to the tastes of students, intellectuals, and urbanites, coffeehouses, often found on side streets and residential areas, cater towards the locals. Price is an important factor that shapes who frequents cafés and who chooses to go to coffeehouses. So is the ambiance. While coffeehouses are frequented by regulars, cafés, with some exceptions, are places where strangers can go to socialize. Both try to survive in a capitalist society, but rules in a coffeehouse are more extendable. A regular of a coffeehouse can, for example, drink a couple of cups of coffee or tea and pay for it later. Expecting the same from a café like Starbucks is simply impossible.

In a sense, the coffeehouse can be considered an institution that resists the capitalist logics that dictate work, leisure and socialization habits of the late 20th and 21st centuries. And in resisting these logics, the coffeehouse—a place where men go to socialize sometimes for hours, play cards, smoke cigarettes and chat—as opposed to Western style cafés, where such leisurely socialization is often limited and costly, represents an aberrant form of morality, one that comes in the form of a critique of idleness (Bertrand 1935).

In talking about coffeehouses, even scholars whom one expects to be attentive to the ways this institution withstands the changing logics of our times, continue to approach them under a negative light. Part of the reason has to do with the clientele who hangs out in coffeehouses, that is, working class or unemployed men or urban, “lumpen” poor writ-large

(Ozturk 2006: 25). Be it Yasa's (1969) study of a coffeehouse in an Anatolian village in 1969 or Abadan's (1961) and Demiray's (1987) research on university students hanging out in coffeehouses, the negative quality of idle time continues to shape the gaze through which scholars analyze the coffeehouse (Şahbaz 2007). The high number of coffeehouses in Turkey bother certain scholars and journalists, who juxtapose this number to the number of libraries, and see it as an example of wastefulness of workforce and power (Yıldız 2002: 10). The transformation of coffeehouses from places where news would be collectively listened to over the radio and then discussed to places where men gather to simply gamble occupy the public imaginary of coffeehouses (Köknel 1981: 174 cited in Şahbaz 2007; Ulusoy 2011: 163), making coffeehouses spaces exemplary of lower culture, laziness and ignorance (Aytaç 2005). For Tezcan (1977), part of the problem has to do with lack of education over how one should spend his empty time. But part of the reason, as Süzer (1997, cited in Ulusoy 2011) proposes, also has to do with lack of alternative spaces for youth to socialize. When coffeehouses are the only viable alternative for the urban poor to socialize, many men continue to frequent them and to forget the economic hardships that produces negativity. The coffeehouse, in a sense, becomes “a place where losers feel good about themselves,” and go in order to “evade loneliness” (Şahbaz 2007: xi).

However, as I will argue using ethnographic insights gathered from my time spent in coffeehouses in Strasbourg, coffeehouses are more than spaces to kill time. And even the idea of killing time needs to be evaluated critically for it provides a sense of care and camaraderie that is lacking in most institutions today.

6.3 Entering the Coffeehouse

“Selamın Aleyküm,” (Peace be upon you] he said to no one in particular. Words uttered aimlessly. But words expected nonetheless. When I forgot to say these words during my early days of frequenting this coffeehouse in Neuhof, I was scolded. “You American, when you enter this *kahve*, you have to greet the people with a Selamun Aleyküm!”

Me? An American? How dare they...

His clothes were fresh. Jeans, a shirt, and a jacket. Not the clothes one wears to work. They were clean. That meant he was home after work. To change. To eat. And maybe to have a quick chat with his family. Not everyone did that. Some simply showed up to the coffeehouse in their work overalls. With dry paint and plaster on their hands, clothes and faces.

When he left home, his wife probably asked him, “*Nereye?*” [Where to?]. He likely responded, “*Kahveye*” [to the coffeehouse] or simply, “*Dışarı*” [outside]. He grabbed the car keys, and his phone, and checked to see if he had enough cigarettes to last the night. If not, he could always cross the border to Kehl and buy more in Tabac de la Gare, and even drop a few Euros to the slot machines next door. He grabbed his lighter, put on his jacket, and left home. The coffeehouse was calling after all. Literally calling. Friends were ringing him, texting him, asking him his whereabouts. They were demanding his quick arrival for the card game as ready and waiting.

“Aleyküm selam,” (And peace upon you too) responded a few men back. Not all did for it was not expected. He threw a quick glance around. He knew exactly where to go. If not him, his legs did certainly remember the directions. For night after night, they have been bringing him to this coffeehouse, to the same place, and at approximately the same time after work. Unless he needed to be at a wedding. Then the coffeehouse was mostly empty, anyways. Or go to the

supermarket. Take the family out for a dinner. Go visit the in laws. Unless, in short, he had some obligation to fulfill.

He sat at the seat his friends had been saving for him. The cards (or Okey/Rummikub pieces) were already being shuffled. Likely over shuffled since he was late. Few words were exchanged about the day. None were about home or the family. There seemed to be little to talk about. After all, they all went through the same routine day after day. The same problems, anxieties and concerns. That he made it to the coffeehouse was a sign that he was still alive, and that was all that mattered. There was no need to ask more questions. Unless there was something big going on in Turkey, like a coup attempt, there rarely was anything exciting to tell.

Now that everyone was ready, the busboy came to the table to take orders.

“Espress” [Espresso].

“Make it two.”

“Do you have tea? Get me one.”

“Apricot juice with hazelnuts.”

“What can we get you?” one of the men at the table asked me. I was their guest for tonight. Like I was their guest the night before, and likely their guest the night after... They showered me with free cigarettes, and beverages here. Whatever I ate or drank at the coffeehouse was billed to whoever would lost the card game. And it did not matter who ended up paying the bill, for they took great pride in treating me.

“Tea will do,” I said, and lit a cigarette so that I was not the outlier. Normally I could bum a cigarette from anyone I wanted. But it felt weird doing that night after night. I gradually learned to carry my own pack. And to get addicted to this poison.

I started smoking after I started frequenting coffeehouses. A young man born in France once told me that smoking was inevitable in coffeehouses. He also told me that he had recently quit smoking. Next time that I saw him at this very same coffeehouse, he had picked up smoking again.

He also warned me that now that I picked up smoking by hanging out with these men, I would soon find myself in front of slot machines (in Germany) too.

Orders were taken. Cards shuffled. Cigarettes lit. We were all ready for the game. Drinks arrived a few minutes later. A few men wandering around grabbed a chair and encircled us.

“What goes (with you)?” (*Ne var ne yok?*). The question was directed at me.

“Same old!” (*Ne olsun!*) I responded.

As time passed, the anthropologist in me could not sit still. Gradually, I drew these men into a conversation about what they have been up to lately. Their answers were often broken by a new card dealt, which someone at the table almost always detested. I asked them where they have been other than work and the coffeehouse lately. And why they ended up coming here eventually. They talked about making do with minimum wage. And about the bills that need to be paid. They mentioned not enjoying life in Strasbourg. Not many places to go to, they complained. But there are, I intervened, and listed a number of places that I frequented in the city—cafés, restaurants, music shows, bars, mosques... None of these venues appealed to their tastes, apparently. It was a dumb question. If they had somewhere better to be, they would be there. But instead, they came to the coffeehouse.

Having frequented numerous coffeehouses a few nights a week, I could see that while the coffeehouse was where men gathered, it was also a place that they escaped from. It all depended on the mood in the coffeehouse, and on the insistence of the friends to go elsewhere—maybe for

a drink, or to buy cigarettes. Or to grab some food. And maybe to a casino for tonight someone in the group felt lucky. “Better spend 10 Euros on a slotmachine than a card game,” one man intervened. Or to the brothels to get lucky. It also depended on the finances. The coffeehouse was the penultimate stop, coming before the actual home where the wife and kids were for it was the cheapest amongst all other places to be. A cup of tea costed around a Euro. A coffee, two Euros. An apricot juice with hazelnuts three. Other beverages, more or less the same. In this coffeehouse, they served alcohol too. I do not think the owner possessed a liquor license. The place had beer taps, because it was, many years ago, a French style bar/café. Hence the name that still appears at the entrance: “Bar de Marseille.” But the taps did not work. And alcohol usually appeared out of nowhere. A Jack and Coke, JB and Redbull or Heinekens.

The place did not have a gambling license either. Few places in France did, and those were usually big casinos located near hot springs. But that did not stop anyone here. If one were to take a walk with me to the back room, and one would see poker chips on the table, and depending on the night, a pile of money in the middle and empty whiskey glasses and Redbull cans on the side. I was told that there was a time when this coffeehouse had slot machines. Illegally, of course, stacked somewhere up on the second floor ... I did not even know the place had a second floor. The machines, they continued, were taken away after a police raid.

I started the night sitting in my usual corner by the bar. The seats here were cushiony. Sometimes men came and sat with me while waiting for their friends to arrive. They engaged in a quick chat with the busboy. The owner walked around with a cigarette hanging from his lips. I had yet to see him without that cigarette. He likely chain smoked all day. He wore his jacket hanging down from his shoulders like the *agas*, the feudal lords in rural Turkey. His hands were embraced at the back. He gave squinty glances to others. Sometimes men came to the bar space

to have an intimate talk with each other. I could hear that some were seeking jobs. Others were looking for cheap labor to come work in their construction zone. Rarely these talk extended to the game table. For the job talk was an affair separate from the card game. It belonged to the day. Card game, on the other hand, belonged to the night. The game table was where life, with all its anxieties, was put on hold.

At the bar, I usually drank espressos and smoked cigarettes while watching the coffeehouse clientele. I usually sat right by a big sign that indicated smoking was not permitted indoors. I remember staring for countless hours to that espresso machine and thinking that the last time it was thoroughly cleaned was likely ages ago.

No one cared about my presence here. I was somewhat an object of fascination at first, but slowly, my presence was forgotten. Unlike the early days where men were trying to figure out if I were French. Or if I were a spy. Now, they all knew what I did there. I took notes on what my eyes saw, and collected stories from those who frequented this space so that I could finish writing a book about Turkish men's lives. Some probably took me as one of them. A lost soul who had no better place to go. They were right. I did not. And sadly, I learned to like it here. I now liked the dirt affiliated with this place, which bothered me at first. Both the literal and metaphorical dirt. Coffeehouses are usually very dirty places. This one, in particular, was extra filthy. There was nothing aesthetically pleasing about it. Its bathrooms were smelly. The red table cloths were full of cigarette burns and beverage stains. The coffee tasted moldy. Floor tiles were broken. The last time the place had a renovation was likely ages ago...

This was not a friendly place either. What started as a greeting could quickly be followed by a hostile look or remark. An arm that extended to a friend's shoulder could quickly be turned down by the recipient, who, in return, would respond: "Fuck off!" Winning a card game was

nice, that meant the winner did not have to pay the tab for the night. Winners were praised for their gaming skills. But winning also brought with it accusations of cheating or not playing the game according to the rules.

6.4 The Card Game as a Replica of Life

One can think of the card game as in some ways a replica of life. In Strasbourg, the men I studied wanted each other to survive... but none, it seemed, wanted each other to succeed, let alone become too successful. Like winning consecutive games in a card game, in life too, making good money, or having a stable family life attracted too much attention. How could things be so good? Each man here had a story to tell, and part of that story often was about a failed marriage or a broken family. Losing a game, like losing a family, certainly, was not fun, and it was costly. The tab would be no less than 30 Euros each night, usually shared among the two losers. For someone who makes minimum wage (of approximately 1100 Euros), and comes to the coffeehouse every night, that could easily stack up to a considerable sum. And losing could come at the expense of making new friendships, for most games were played in teams of two, and no one wanted to partner up with a permanent loser. And none certainly wanted to play with someone who would not be able to handle the tab.

Dirty, smoke-filled rooms with bad coffee and foul mouthed men... You might be asking what makes this coffeehouse so special. To me, it was a feeling of being alive that I sensed in similar coffeehouses in Strasbourg which kept on bringing me back to them. Though given the amount of smoke I inhaled, actively and passively, I am aware that being alive may literally have been a lie.

I remember sitting with four other men at a small round table. Watching them play the game. Sometimes 101, other times *Batak* (Hearts). Although both games follow a similar and

seemingly simple logic, my many attempts at watching men play it, and have them explain me the rules several times did not suffice to obtain a full understanding of the game. But I think I had a good idea who was winning and who was losing. The winner, I learned, “plucked out” the loser. In Central Anatolia, they call this *ütmek*. When I first heard this word, I thought it meant to fuck over, a bastardization of *sikmek* (to fuck), and I was so excited about its homoerotic connotation. Yet I was wrong. Nonetheless the way the word was uttered was always so aggressive, and even eroticized, often times accompanied by aggressive, hypersexualized hand gestures, that I wonder if these men really wanted to fuck each other. The word had a physicality to it. Each time one won and the other lost, the word was uttered, with erect arms pointing at the loser’s face, performing what to me appeared to be some type of sexual violence, leaving the violated in anger and shame.

While the game continued on, with men plucking out each other, I would watch other men walking by the front door and into the smoke-filled room of the coffeehouse. And all I could think of was why they all smiled as they entered. This was not the type of courteous smile one has on his face as he enters a room. It did not appear to me as forced. What was it about the coffeehouse that gave them so much joy, if that was what they were getting here? What was there to be happy about? Were they here to pluck, or to be plucked? Either way, one by one, they would either walk towards the bar stools and wait for their friends to arrive, or take a seat with others to start a new game.

For almost five centuries, coffeehouses have served, and continue to serve, as one of the primary institutions that Turkish men go to socialize. The reasons why men come to the coffeehouse night after night are multiple. In this chapter, I explore some of these reasons by

asking what it is that the coffeehouse offers to Turkish men in Strasbourg that night after night, they continue on walking through its doors, and spends many hours in it.

As mentioned earlier, this chapters builds on a smile, the photographic image of which I carry with me to this day. If the coffeehouse means something to men, the search for answers starts in deciphering the meanings embedded in this smile.

In the following pages, I reflect further on the smile to talk about the coffeehouse as a space of self-care. Like Bachelard's house (1964), I approach the coffeehouse as an intimate space. Men who come to the coffeehouse do so not only out of habit, or not having anywhere else to go. They come to the coffeehouse instead for it is a space where they seek a feeling they argue to be lost elsewhere. A sense of familiarity defines this space. There is something pleasurable, and even soothing, in speaking to other men, or in being plucked out by them. Perhaps, it is here that they do not need to speak much and can still be understood. It is also here that their presence is demanded. It is here that they feel missed. This is a space where their existence is expected. Coming to the coffeehouse is in some ways an act of self-care, one that responds to the leisurely comfort that men seek in their lives.

The coffeehouse, however, is also a threatened space. The temporary refuge that working-class men seek in coffeehouses is under threat not only by the moralists, but also by the changing times and logics, which brings in a calculative sensibility to social relations, and corrupts the intimacy that men seek in coffeehouses. Although they come to the coffeehouse to escape what they consider a loss of this intimacy (of family, kinship ties as well as neighborhood relations) that they ascribe to relations elsewhere, the individualism that penetrates into the workspace and domestic spaces also changes how men interact with each other in the coffeehouse. This is a theme that I delve into in the conclusion of this chapter.

6.5 Coffeehouse as a Space of Self-Care

Why would anyone come to a coffeehouse, a dirty place where almost everyone smokes, plays Batak, Okey or 101 for countless hours? Is there nothing better to do in life than to waste away time and money here? I fear that there is a sense of elitism that shapes this question—the same elitism that continues to shape scholarship on coffeehouses today. This is a sense of looking down on those who frequent a space that, as I tried to show in the previous sections of this chapter, has come to be associated with the uneducated, uncouth urban poor. This is a fear that is shaped by class positions, that of a white, Western educated middle-class Turkish man (such as myself) seeking a thrill in his expedition. And looking for meaning in a life that appears so foreign to him. Calling it fieldwork makes it sound less ugly. Entering the coffeehouse, and spending time with “no-good-doers” makes it feel less like voyeurism. But this thing that I do, participant observation in a coffeehouse... How different is my practice than attending a human zoo?

As an anthropologist, it is my task to fight this kind of superiority, and to provide an alternative narrative. To this day, I still struggle to see myself hanging out in coffeehouses regularly, but just because my tastes in leisure differ should not mean that they are superior, or moral. In the previous sections, we have seen how tastes in leisure often carry with them a moral evaluation. In this section, I make it my mission to reveal coffeehouse sociality as it plays out in its bare form, that is, from the perspective of the men who participate in it. What I expect of myself is to do away with prejudices and stigmas attached to this space, and to the people who frequent it. Yet, when I look back in my field notes, to my first entrance to a coffeehouse in 2016, I see that I perhaps carried the very prejudices and stigmas with me to the field, things which I have learned to condemn now.

Not only have I ever been in a migrant coffeehouse before, but I do not think I have ever stepped into a coffeehouse even in Turkey. So, the place to me is a somewhat exotic and also fear inducing one. (Fieldnotes, February 26, 2016)

These were the words that I typed. The exotic object of study. The fear... Of what? The native?

After the first few visits to coffeehouses in Strasbourg, I revisited my way of thinking. I now asked what was there to gain from being in a coffeehouse. What was it that I was not seeing? No matter how dirty the scene, the coffeehouse must have served a function. After all, it has been an institution up and running for many centuries. Moreover, there must have been a reason why the same faces appeared here each night after work, filling up coffeehouses spread across Strasbourg and Kehl. To my knowledge, there are nine coffeehouses frequented by Turks in Strasbourg. Another three in Kehl which also have slot machines in them. This number excludes horse-race betting bars (PMUs), owned mostly by the French or France-born Maghrebins; casinos, mostly German owned in Kehl; shisha cafés/bars; and mosque associations, spread around the borderland, each of which provide everything that a coffeehouse provides except alcohol, indoor tobacco use, and card games.

I needed a new way of seeing the coffeehouse, but I did not know how to formulate the right questions. Early attempts included a meager “What brings you here?” The answers I received were defensive:

“Where else can we go?”

Where else could they go? I could name a number, including their homes?

Over time, I realized that I was trying too hard. Sometimes it is better to not say anything at all but to sit, preferably at a table where men are playing cards, or on the bar stools by the

espresso machine, and simply observe. I conducted some interviews in coffeehouses. Some are recorded. But the majority of my data for this chapter comes from field notes based on what my eyes saw, and jottings on conversations that my ears heard while sitting at a table with other men, and observing them play games.

In my earlier inquiries, rather than understand what the coffeehouse was, I learned what the coffeehouse was not.

“Where else can I go? To the discotheque? To the bars? Yes, some do go to those places, but I do not,” said a frequenter.

So, the coffeehouse was some place that was not the discotheque or the bar. That was stating the obvious. But it also was a start.

“Rather than engage in dirty things, like (slot) machines and gambling, and I hope I do not because I spent so much money [in those places], I come to the coffeehouse,” said another.

The coffeehouse, then, was also a place to avoid engaging in dirty things and practices.

But so is the mosque association. But in coffeehouses, I was surrounded by men who chose to not go to the mosque associations to attend the night prayer, and grab a tea with others afterwards for example. Or men who chose not to engage in good deeds, such as planning community activities and volunteering in them in mosque associations and hometown associations. They were at the coffeehouse playing cards and smoking cigarettes instead. And they were well aware of what that meant—a transgression, and even a sin for they avoided complying with the *farz*, the mandatory activities a Muslim is supposed to undertake. Some were quite adamant in choosing the coffeehouse over the mosque. When I explained what my research was about to C Bey, a man in his early 40s who came from Turkey as a child in the 1980s, he rapidly intervened. “Don’t invite me to the mosque Oğuz. I won’t come.” That was not my

intention, but I wanted to know why he would not. Because the mosque, as he would make it clear, was not where he wanted to be. It was as simple as that. And this was a man who had childhood friends who now served in the administrative boards of mosque associations. By chance, a few months later, I would encounter C Bey at a wedding. I was invited to the wedding by a staff member of the DITIB mosque association. When the two of us bumped into C Bey, I did not know that they knew each other. It never crossed my mind that two men so distant from each other spatially (mosque and the coffeehouses), and in terms of their lifestyles (one working at a mosque association, who never stepped inside a coffeehouse, the other who pretty much lived in a coffeehouse, and rarely stepped in a mosque) could actually have grown up in the same neighborhoods. People here knew each other, even though they did not frequent the same spaces, and part of that had to do with socializing in the same mosque associations, and the same quartier courtyards while growing up. C Bey asked the DITIB member whether he was still (working) at the mosque. The DITIB staff responded with a firm yes, followed by a question: “Why aren’t you?” No, the mosque was no place for C. Bey.

Three years ago, when I first met C Bey in another coffeehouse that now has become a restaurant, he had talked about how those who frequented the mosques were not whom they appeared to be. People who came to the coffeehouse were at least honest in not faking their piety. Yes, perhaps there were very bad people here in the coffeehouse, “people who carried on them and supplied/sold to others heroine, and hash...” But he was also aware that there were others, like him who were not so bad after all. For they had manners, and principles. For example, they followed a kind of unwritten book of guidelines that regulated how men should behave in a coffeehouse: “If one of us were to speak loudly, everyone would turn around and look.” Yes, we may have been sitting at “the filthiest venue in Strasbourg,” but “we have no filth

in us.” He was at a coffeehouse, but he was clean. Unlike being at a mosque, which he considered to be a place filled with people who faked piety. And he took great pride in that.

At the coffeehouse, he did not need to fake.

At the coffeehouse, people did not feel the need to hide much from each other either, at least with regards to their practices. In one corner, there could be a man rolling a joint. In the back room, there were be others gambling. Some would drink beers and Whiskey-Redbulls. Others would chain smoke and curse at the cards that were being dealt. Were a man to curse too loud, men from other tables would intervene and ask of him to come to his senses. Cursing was allowed, but shouting was not. The coffeehouse was a space of where one did not fear to be himself, to act in ways that would otherwise be shunned upon, such as smoking in most mosques’ courtyards, or cursing, for the transgressions here came without the communal repercussions. How interesting that men came to the coffeehouse to avoid other sins, like going to the slot machines or visiting brothels, while engaging in what they considered transgressions of a lesser kind.

Not all coffeehouses accommodated such transgressions. In fact, majority of coffeehouses I visited in Strasbourg did serve not alcohol and some (though few) did not even allow indoor smoking. Men who wanted to further limit their transgressions chose to go to these coffeehouses instead. The owner of one such venue, H Bey, took great pride in how older men [*hacıs*, those who went to Mecca for the pilgrimage] would come to visit his coffeehouse for they felt safe in his venue. “There are more than 20 hacıs who come here regularly, mainly because we do not offer alcohol or allow indoor smoking,” H Bey stated with great pride and continued: “When they went to the pilgrimage first, they all stopped coming here to play. It was tough. Back then [before they went to pilgrimage], this coffeehouse was much more crowded.

Nowadays, the hacıs stop by, but rarely do they play cards. They usually grab a cup of coffee, and chat with others in-between prayer times. Go pray in the mosque, come here for a coffee and chat, and then go back to the mosque to pray again...”

The unwritten rule of being old in Turkey, and likewise in Strasbourg is that people expect the elderly—particularly those who went to the pilgrimage—to put away their old habits. Coffeehouse socialization, and the practices such socialization brings such as smoking, playing cards, and cursing, are some of those old habits. For this reason, in Strasbourg, older men are generally not welcomed in most coffeehouses. Not that anyone would approach and ask them to leave. But they would be shamed by their peers for their outdoor presence in general. When I sat next to one such old man in a coffeehouse I frequented in Strasbourg’s Neuhof neighborhood, he looked at me, and right after I introduced myself, said that he would not be able to tell me much about coffeehouse life, for he rarely visited coffeehouses. That night was an exception, though. He was in the coffeehouse to watch the soccer game. For the most part, older men socialized in the mosque teahouse instead, one of the two places (the other being the community garden) that was welcoming of their presence.

I ended up finding myself mostly in this Neuhof coffeehouse. I think part of it had to do with the fact that I felt most welcomed in it. It is interesting how often I got the question, “where do you feel most welcomed” or “which community/congregation do you find the warmest” in each venue I visited in Strasbourg, and especially in coffeehouses and mosque association. It was almost as if my interlocutors needed the affirmation that the space they inhabited, or the congregation they associated themselves with, was indeed a warm and intimate space. They demanded the outsider/anthropologist’s approval.

Part of my coming to this coffeehouse also had to do with the pleasures of voyeurism—of seeing men drinking, smoking, swearing, verbally assaulting each other—in short, behaving badly. I also enjoyed spending time with men who went to mosques and religious conversation circles, but it was in coffeehouses that I felt that I was seeing through the different masks that my interlocutors had to put on throughout the day as they engaged with customers, bosses, mothers, children, wives, imams, etc. It was here that I could observe them at what I considered to be their most sincere and vulnerable state.

It is interesting how a space that I had such reservations for from the getgo had quickly become a place for me to be. There were times where I simply stopped by this coffeehouse after work at the snack döner to smoke and given my tiredness, do nothing else but throw blank stares. If I were to smoke anywhere else, I would judge myself for engaging in a harmful behavior. Here, I could justify the self-harm. It felt good, even. In this coffeehouse, I did forgo the moral frames that I had to abide by. There was a sense of protection here. In it, I found a safe space.

The men I met at coffeehouses would talk about the coffeehouse in similar terms. There was a sense of familiarity to the coffeehouse. You knew what to expect—the coffee, the cigarettes, the cards—and whom to expect—the same old friends, the same old tired faces. This was an aspect that I found fascinating. So did the owner of the coffeehouse that the hacıs frequented. He explained to me what he meant by that through the use of the family analogy. "We have become like a family here," he said. "Those who come here come here only. Were they to go to a different coffeehouse, people would look at them as if they are foreigners, and ask, 'Who's that person?'" The busboy of the Neuhof coffeehouse who worked there for over five years would add to this debate by arguing that what brought the Turks to the coffeehouse

was two things: the game, and the people whom one can get along with, people who are not bothered by your caprices, and whims...

It was not that everyone got along. The coffeehouse was not always a peaceful place. People did fight over trivial matters. The card game sometimes led to confrontations. But this was a space to get rid of stress, not to add more stress. As one coffeehouse frequenter recalled: “It is about finding the right ambiance/environment (*ortam*) in where you go... If you need to decompress (lit. discharge/*deşarj olmak*) or to get rid off stress (*stress atmak*) and if you get stressed out in where you go...well... We’ve known this place [the coffeehouse] for years... Sometimes we fight too, but we get along.”

It was this safeness that allowed not just me, but also others, too, to open up. I started to think of the coffeehouse as a space where a man revealed more about himself than in any other space. It was in the coffeehouse that men engaged in activities that they would not engage in otherwise, or practices that they would moderate elsewhere, like in the mosque. The coffeehouse was a place where men could swear at will, for example: “A man works all day. He is under stress. If he stays home, there are kids. He has to pay attention to how he talks. Here, in the coffeehouse, you can say ‘Fucking cunt’ (*Amina koyayım*), and such.” A similar account by another coffeehouse frequenter, a few days later at another coffeehouse: “When you have your wife with you, you limit yourself. But when you’re here, you can say anything to anyone. You can say, fucking cunt.” In the coffeehouse, not only that men were free to decide what they brought into their bodies (cigarettes, coffee, tea, alcohol, hashish), but also free to decide what came out of it.

Soon enough, like cigarettes, coming to the coffeehouse turned into an addiction. I was warned about it long ago: “Emmoğlu [son of my uncle], if you frequent this coffeehouse, you

will become a gambler yourself... They'd make you sit down, say, come over, we're missing a man. And that'd become an obligation.”

I was not expected to join the card game per se, but when I did not visit the same coffeehouse for days, my returns demanded an answer as to where I had been, and how they had missed seeing my face.

6.6 On the Feeling of Being Missed...

To be missed by others is a warm feeling, even when you are unsure whether those who tell you how much they missed you really mean it. That smile which men carry as they walk into the coffeehouse... Could it be a reflection of that warmth? Of returning to a table where there are three men waiting for you eagerly, and demanding your presence?

I am reminded by a caption that I have recently seen circulating in the social media. The caption reads, “if men, rather than seek a fourth for the card game, were to create a congregation as three, we would have a more faithful generation.” In Islam, three is the number you need to create a congregation (*cemaat*), and to perform the salat collectively. While three is enough to pray, one needs a fourth to collectively play the card game. And even though playing, for some, may constitute a less moral form of practice than praying, I have rarely seen men waiting for a third to start to pray.

At another coffeehouse, this one in the Montagne Verte neighborhood of Strasbourg, I was sitting down for a chat with the owner and some of those frequenting the venue. The men around me must have come directly from work as they still had their work clothes on. White, dried-out plaster was stuck on their clothes, hands, and even foreheads. One even had a trowel in hand. I asked what brought them to the coffeehouse even before going home to change, and to wash off the dirt. One of the men smiled, and looked at his friend, the coffeehouse owner. “I came here because of him.” They all laughed. Was this a joke? The men did in fact come to this

coffeehouse to grab a cup of coffee and to have a chat with the coffeehouse owner. Maybe exchange a few words about the bills to pay. Or about politics. They demanded the coffeehouse owner's presence. There was something soothing about this companionship. The scholarship on masculinity highlights the ways homosocial desire helps to reinstate hegemonic forms of masculinity and reaffirm the boundaries of manhood (Bird 1996; Guttman 1997; Meuser 2007; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). What I want to highlight here is that in thinking of ways that masculinity reproduces itself, the role of feelings such as love, care and affection that men seek in each other's company should not be underestimated.

In search of these feelings, men seek spaces where they feel comfortable. In speaking about their presence in coffeehouses, the men I spoke with mentioned a sense of familiarity, with the space and the people that occupied this space, which drew them to the coffeehouse. They were careful in choosing which coffeehouse to visit. A man would usually go to the coffeehouse where he knew the others who frequented. These others could be people from his hometown in Turkey, or even his home village. There are also hometown associations in the city which are no different than coffeehouses in terms of the sociality that they provide. Some men would also avoid coffeehouses to avoid encountering certain faces. Sometimes these faces would belong to their own fathers. The youth, for example, avoided going to coffeehouses where they knew their dads would be hanging out. Other times, the faces would belong to people who owed each other money, and wanted to avoid interaction. "I stopped going to M's. Back then it was run by Kurdish Bekir. I don't go there anymore because I do not like the people who go there," said D Bey, a man in his late 40s, who stopped going to Momo's and instead, started hanging out in another coffeehouse which was less than a minute's walk away. Imported grooms also avoided going to coffeehouses where younger, France-born men hung out. They did so because they

could not find ways to communicate with them. And while their lack of communication had something to do with the French-born men not speaking proper Turkish, it also had to do with the understanding that there was little that the France-born could add to the debate about migrant life and struggles. There was little they could share about having to comply with demands from their in-laws—other than being ridiculed for their positionality as imports. Something as simple as exchanging jokes was harder between the two generations of men, for those born in France lacked the cultural repertoire to make sense of jokes expressed by those imported from Turkey. Even I, sometimes, had a hard time making sense of certain jokes since I was not familiar with the words they used, which may have been common knowledge in Central Anatolian towns like Kayseri, Yozgat or Sivas, but certainly not in Bursa, which is where I was born and raised.

Rather than going to the coffeehouse closest to them, some men also drove around Strasbourg, and sometimes to Kehl, especially if they wanted to play the slot machines.

The coffeehouse is an intimate space. It is intimate because it is a space where men open up to each other about their problems. Some would, often in pairs, and in secluded corners. “Here, everyone has a problem. And no one has any possibility of offering any solutions.” Maybe the busboy was right. But were men really looking for solutions, or did they simply need an outlet to express their pain? And moreover, where could these men go other than the coffeehouse to share, if they choose to do so, their hardships in life. What other space brings so many broken souls together, and provides an opportunity to embrace each other in their collective melancholy. What other space speaks to their arabesk soul? And if they choose not to share, then they can at least listen to the hardships faced by others so that they realize they are not alone.

I seated myself at a bar stool in the coffeehouse owned by H, the man who took great pride in running a clean coffeehouse—so clean that the hacis come here in between salats than to sit at the mosque teahouse located within a five-minute drive. He recalled an anecdote. It involved one of the men who frequented his coffeehouse. This man's wife, H told me, wondered where he went when he was outside. The man said that he was out at H's. . He would also talk regularly about H at his home. His wife, one day, met H at some event. She told him that his husband talked about him all the time. She contemplated that maybe, he even liked him more than her. She also suspected that he probably did, because he had asked her to name their next son after H.

When was the last time you liked anyone, let alone a coffeehouse owner so much that you contemplated naming your child after him?

6.7 Reminiscing the Times Long Gone...

The first Starbucks in Strasbourg opened while I was there for my yearlong fieldwork in 2016. The morning of the opening, there was a long line that swirled all the way around Librarie Kléber, Strasbourg's iconic bookstore located at Place Kléber, Strasbourg's iconic plaza.

Weeks before the opening, some of my young interlocutors were talking about Starbucks coming to town. Some had already visited it in their trips to Paris, and many frequented similar coffeeshops in Strasbourg where young men and women, French and France-born immigrant alike, gathered. Most of these young men avoided migrant coffeehouses for it was not their scene. Coffeehouses, after all, were filled with older Turkish men, including their older brothers and fathers, all smoking, speaking Turkish and Kurdish depending on the coffeehouse, swearing, and playing cards. But they frequented the trendier shisha bars in Strasbourg and Kehl, which were expensive, but also cool to be at. Starbucks was different than a shisha bar, or the many

small coffee shops scattered around the city though. Even though Starbucks would never meet their demands for a cool way to socialize—for it was expensive and crowded—other than, of course, the Snaps they would send to friends, and the check-ins they would share on Facebook, I could understand the hype.

I do not know how often my younger interlocutors frequented Starbucks as it opened late in my fieldwork. I know that some like the young H whom we read about in the first pages of this dissertation were excited about it, but when we went out, we still ended up sitting at his old-time favorites, l'atelier de Grandpère, Raven, and le Thé des Muses, all located in the city center. In these cafés we would order an espresso or diablo (nonalcoholic cocktail) and sometimes even cookies or a chocolate cake, and look around, often in the direction of other women, sometimes for hours. H would take selfies and post it on Facebook, posing behind porcelain cups while throwing pensive glances.

For other men, who either could not afford Starbucks socialization or simply did not feel that Starbucks was the place to be given its long lines, blended coffees, and touristy feel, migrant coffeehouses continue to be one of the main stops to escape work and home.

In this chapter, I presented migrant coffeehouses as a space that working-class Turkish (and often Turkey-born) men in Strasbourg go to in order to escape responsibilities and obligations that they face at work, and at home. As the coffeehouse owner H reminded us, coffeehouses serve as second, or even primary homes for these men. These are homes that are imagined, of course, for the home with children, parents or a wife still exist in its physicality somewhere in the neighborhood, and serve as the ultimate stop for most men (with the exception of those who sometime ended up sleeping in their cars for they were kicked out of their homes). It was within coffeehouses that men found something that they considered missing elsewhere. It

was a sense of camaraderie, and a feeling of affection of a homosocial kind. It was an intimate space where they felt being wanted, and their existence being demanded and desired even if for seemingly utilitarian purposes such as the need for a fourth player to start a card game. It is these observations that led me in this chapter to conceptualize coffeehouses as spaces of care.

There are, however, limits to this care.

Remember D Bey from the previous section, the man who switched coffeehouses due to not liking others—one man, in particular, who postponed paying his debt to him in full. When I asked him if he felt like he had friends to rely on in Strasbourg, he said that he used to have such friends. In fact, one of them was sitting at the coffeehouse we were as we spoke. This friend, whom he was close to for over 34 years, however, had done him wrong by speaking behind his back, which he heard from others in the coffeehouse. D Bey was what he called himself a man of principles. He would talk to me about how he could erase someone off his life over a single cigarette—that is, a gift not reciprocated. What led him to break off his relationship with his close friend, however, was over something else this time: “One day I heard from others that he was asking how come I get to go to vacation every year.” That this friend of 34 years was questioning D Bey’s finances bothered him, for he earned his money in an honest manner, that is, by working a lot harder than others. “Back in 1982, everyone was making somewhere around three to eight thousand francs. I made 14,000. I invested all that money. I have not received a single dime from my dad, nor have I inherited a single acre of land. I earned it all myself and spend it all myself.”

For D Bey, men worthy of their words were nowhere to be found anymore. There were no more people he could rely on. He still came to the coffeehouse almost every night. Everyone knew him by his name, and he knew everyone’s names too. He did not care how others made

their money—whether they scammed the government or sold dope—and he expected the same lack of curiosity from others. But D Bey’s vacations, which he took sometimes more than once a year, mattered to others. Like a card player who wins consecutive games, his financial success attracted others’ attention. I have heard of similar talk about men who bought new cars or houses. The talk was about whether the car or the house was bought on dope money or on bank loans. It was not uncommon for men to take out loans to buy a new Mercedes, BMW or Audi to drive to Turkey, and upon return, sell it back. And some young men did in fact sell drugs in the quarters, drove around in such cars and wore designer clothes—all of which attracted attention. D Bey told me that he was no such man, though. He expected of his coffeehouse buddies to avoid such gossip. But the coffeehouse, after all, is an institution that is not isolated from the outside world. People in coffeehouses, as in other venues, talk about others’ money and achievements, and rarely in positive terms. And this, for D Bey, was when the coffeehouse ceased being a space of care, but rather became a part of a routine for a man who had no other place to go.

The calculative logics of the times not only shape the type of gossip that circulates in the coffeehouse, but also people’s practices. Remember C Bey from the previous section, who asked me to not invite him to mosques when I explained to him what my research was about. When I first met C Bey, it was in 2013, and at a coffeehouse-cum-snack döner near the Eyüb Sultan Mosque. In our initial encounter, C Bey was sitting with three other friends playing cards, drinking Whiskey Redbulls and smoking cigarettes. Our discussion was mainly about life in Strasbourg, and ways that human interactions in Strasbourg differed from those in Turkey. Turkey was an imagined space for them—one whose faults and shortcomings got rarely mentioned as if they were erased from their memory. Turkey was a place where relationships

were still sincere and feelings, reciprocal. It was a space that was intimate. A space where life was good, and affordable. In Strasbourg, on the other hand, relationships were “robotic”, utilitarian and interest-driven. In our conversation, one of C Bey’s friends gave me the example of a pack of cigarettes to explain what he meant by it. “Take this pack of cigarettes as an example,” he said, and continued:

In Turkey, with friends, we put the pack on the table and we all share it. We do not make a big deal out of who smokes how many. We all go out to eat, and if one pays the bill one day, the other pays it the next. We do not make a big deal out of it. But since coming here, since coming to our hometown association (which by then was closed down), I have yet to see anyone’s pack out on the table.

When Turkish migrants first came to Strasbourg starting the mid 1960s, they sought solidarity in each other’s homes. Gradually they started socializing in French cafés and bars. The closest they could find that resembled a Turkish coffeehouse was owned by an Eastern European migrant. In the 1980s, there was only one migrant coffeehouse, and that was owned by a Yugoslav. It was called Yugoslav Osman’s coffeehouse (though the owner was neither Turkish nor Muslim), and was located in south Neuhof, on Rue de la Zigelau. This was also the first coffeehouse bought by a Turkish man in the following years. Later in the 1980s, and into the 1990s, with the idea of a permanent return to the homeland fast fading away, Turks started to buy property, and invest in new businesses. Coffeehouses and horse-race betting bars (PMUs) were such businesses where Turks started to operate, and gathered to socialize.

Many men spoke of those old days they spent in each other’s homes and outside in coffeehouses with a sense of nostalgia. People sought each other’s company more in those days, they argued. Neighbors would gather at each other’s homes more often to eat and talk. Even

without giving a call in advance, they would stop by and be treated with a smiling face. But the same men also acknowledged that the times were different then. The French *franc* was more valuable, and one could buy more with the wages earned. Hence, when my interlocutors today speak of people not sharing cigarettes, not reciprocating meals, not returning loans on time or in full, or not paying their share of the bill after a night of playing cards, and are saddened by loss of sincerity in human relations, they are also well aware that these very relations are the product of changing times. Sharing, in the form of cigarettes, is an aspect that may be lacking in coffeehouses and hometown associations in Strasbourg today because sharing has become costlier. “No one hands out cigarettes like this (holding the pack and extending it to others). No one has the courage to do so because a pack costs six or seven Euros, and you cannot give away cigarettes like that,” argued C Bey’s friend as I took a cigarette from his pack and lit it. And then, the conversation quickly switched from cigarettes to costs of living in Strasbourg, and the hardships of making do in today’s economy.

In this chapter, I may have approached coffeehouses with the same sense of nostalgia that my interlocutors feel for an institution that is changing in light of the calculative logics that the neoliberal economy demands of individuals. The coffeehouse may still provide an escape for men who complain about not finding the care, affection, intimacy and sincerity in their relations in work and home spaces, but to what extent is this escape an attainable one still, or in the near future, is a question that I have no clear answer for. According to the coffeehouse owner H Bey, there will not be coffeehouses anymore, not in its current form at least, in 15 to 20 years. With the old generation leaving the scene to the next, and the changing tastes and leisure practices of Turkish youth, the coffeehouse as migrant hangout may cease to exist. But considering the five-century old history of this institution, one could still be hopeful that the coffeehouse may

withstand the test of time, and continue to serve as an escape-scape for men who seek care and comfort in each other's company. That, time will tell.

Chapter 7: Masculinity on the Road: Broken Cars, Broken Men

“Doğrusu seninle beraber olmak çok güzel Balkız...
Senin ise bundan hiç haberin bile yok.
Nereye mi gidiyoruz? Sana bizim oraları göstereceğim Balkız.
Bak! Avusturya, Yugoslavya, Bulgaristan’ı aştık bile.
Bize yol mu dayanır? Vardık işte. Burası Türkiye.”⁶⁷
Bayram’s monologue to his yellow Mercedes in the movie
Mercedes Mon Amour (1992), directed by Tunç Okan

The car. Few objects succeed in capturing the male imagination the intense way the car does. 20th century was the century of the car. The steel and petroleum car that fascinated many scholars of culture, such as Urry, for whom the car represented “the literal ‘iron cage’ of modernity, motorized, moving and domestic” (Urry 2004: 28). The driver, in the 20th century, took over the creative role ascribed to the *flâneur* of the 19th century by providing a new aesthetics of experiencing urban space (Sheller and Urry 2000: 738). The car, both in movies and on the road, represented everything the modern metropolis exemplified: the traffic, the lights, the speed, the escapes, the thrill, the chase, all of which were so central to the production of modern manhood (Krutnik 1991; Orr 1993). It represented a new means of consumption. A mass-mediated sign of prestige. “A whole civilization,” Baudrillard argued, “can come to a halt in the same way as the automobile.” (Baudrillard 2006[1968]: 137). For Barthes, the car was “the exact equivalent of Gothic cathedrals... the supreme creation of the era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object.” (Barthes 2001 [1972]: 88)

Barthes was fascinated with the New Citroen, the DS. So was Godard. The French, however, had a taste not just for their Citroen, Peugeot, ACMA Vespa, Simca, Motobécane,

⁶⁷ “It really is great to be with you, Balkız (Honeygirl)... But you don’t even know that, do you? Where are we off to, you ask? I will show you my part of the world, Balkız. Look! We’ve already driven past Austria, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. No road is too long for us. We’re here already. This is Turkey.”

Chausson, Berliet, Ratier and the Renault, but also the American Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Studebaker, and Dodge, the English Plymouth and Triumph, the German Borgward and Volkswagen, and the Italian Fiat/Alfa Romeo. These are some of the cars that appear 121 times in Godard's *A Bout de Souffle* (Breathless, 1960) alone.⁶⁸

Did Ahmet's and Mustafa's sitting in their village shacks and dreaming of a future in Europe which they could only attain by emigrating to Germany, France, the Netherlands or Austria watch these movies? Likely not for they were busy tending the farm, the herd, or simply killing time in their village coffeehouse. Did they fantasize about going for a drive in the city, with a cigarette hanging down their lips, and a lady accompanying them? Possibly. For the aspiration to own a car encroached even the most isolated highland villages of the Central Anatolian plateau and that of Eastern Turkish hamlets as early as the 1960s. The very places that my interlocutors once left to come to Europe. By then, urban centers in Turkey such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara already had a growing appetite for automobility thanks to the rapid construction of highways following the adoption of the Truman doctrine and incoming aid through the Marshall Plan (Güneş 2012: 220). But dreaming of a car had less to do with villagers visiting urban centers—though rural to urban migration was already changing Turkey's demography and tastes as early as 1950s. Instead, it was transnational migrant workers of the 1960s who really nailed in the image of the car to rural Turkish male imaginary. With every migrant returning to the village well clad in their Mercedes Benz's, as beautifully portrayed in Tunç Okan's delightful 1992 film, *Mercedes, Mon Amour/Yellow Mercedes*, aspiration of going abroad, buying that fancy car and returning to the village as a new, Westernized man kept brewing in rural imagination.

⁶⁸ I draw on an enthusiast's online compilation, where he keeps track of the kinds of cars that appear in movies. For more, see Internet Movie Cars Database: <http://www.imcdb.org/>

Fast forward half a century, the car continues to occupy the male imaginary. For Turkish men, and their France born offspring, automobility is experienced at a number of scales. The move from Turkey to France, which continues to date through marriage migration, was initially considered a disorienting experience. As I have already discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation, earlier literature on migration, which emphasizes the feeling of uprootedness, is abundant with accounts of migrant disorientation (Petersen 1958; Tiryakian 1980; Kağıtçıbaşı 1987; for a trajectory of the concept, see Lie 1995; for a critique, see Glick-Schiller et al 1992; Levitt 1998; Silverstein 2005). While migration carried with it dreams of a more economically stable life, it also brought along a sense of uprootedness, and a sense of belonging neither to the homeland or to the host country, a feeling that social scientists called neither German nor Turk, but a strange in-between. The migrant used the idea of the return to homeland as a way to cope with this feeling, but what initially began as a temporary stay to save up enough money to buy a tractor, and maybe add a second floor to the village house had gradually become a permanent one.

The move back to the homeland today, though still a dream some hope to attain someday, is rarely permanent. It is practiced once a year—and depending on one's financial status, more or less frequent—and usually during the five weeks of paid summer vacation. Every year before one of the *bayrams*, or religious festivals, hordes of Turks inundate the highways of Europe, driving in their cars for days to reach their homeland, that is, their villages in Turkey, first, followed by a few days at a five-day holiday resort.

Movement within Europe, which I primarily deal with in this chapter, is an equally disorienting experience, but of a different kind. Whereas movement between Turkey and France is one that most Turks dream of on a daily basis (to the extent that while sitting in coffeehouses,

some use Google maps to revisit their trajectory months ahead their vacation or share pictures and videos of their villages on social media), movement within Europe, and across the Franco-German borderland is one that they engage in regularly. Despite its regularity, these trips within Europe reveal a sense of ambivalence of moral kind. It is this ambivalence that I focus on in the following pages.

In this chapter, I ask what it means to be on the move. Specifically, I explore what movement does to our understanding of morality and manhood. Movement, as I already discussed in earlier chapters of this dissertation, envelops a moral anxiety. Mobility brings with it a string of questions pertaining to moral transgressions, for mobility allows room for transgressions. The car makes things within reach, and often times, these are things of transgressive nature—like visits to night clubs, brothels or casinos.

There are a number of reasons why that is the case, and why I think of movement across space primarily in moral terms. For one, movement is a not a neutral act. It is gendered, power-laden, and political. While most Turkish women (especially those born in France) have cars and drive around to meet their friends in various venues, the general expectation that women should either spend time home (watching soaps, doing domestic work, taking care of the children, etc.) or outside with their parents and husbands still persists to date. The outside, especially at night, when it is explorable mostly by car (for the tram does not take you to everywhere and stops running at 1:30am), is still conceived as a masculine domain. This, however, does not mean that men are entitled to spend time outside. Despite the patriarchal undertones that shape everyday life for Turks in Strasbourg, men's (auto)mobility is not a given. Instead, one of the underlying themes of my research in Strasbourg so far has been that men's outside lives are also under scrutiny. And not just by the researcher, but also by the very men who spend time outside. This

chapter, then, needs to be read as an auto-critique that men engage in as they participate in Strasbourg's night life. In this dissertation, I have been attentive to men's moral voices. The pages to follow will continue this tradition, and focus on moments where men engage in self-reflection.

There is, as argued in the previous chapters, a general expectation from Turkish men to spend less time in venues outside socializing, and more time at the mosque, or at home. Do Turkish men meet this expectation? Rarely. Yet, this rarity is of importance for part of the making of manhood comes from standing up to these expectations. As Hertzfeld reminds us (1985: 232-259), part of the masculine performance involves in engaging in sins, and owning them. Movement is power-laden and political. It demands a sense of carelessness and even rebellion from mobile agents, especially with regards to what others would make of this movement, and how they would perceive it. Movement is also poetic, in that it generates a politics of manhood (Hertzfeld 1985). Being seen at a wrong time, and in a wrong place is a fear that men have, but I have also often heard the rebuttal to this statement in the following form many times: "What, then, was the person who saw me in that particular venue, say a casino or a brothel, doing there in the first place?" Guilt and shame are washed away by stamping the other as equally guilty and the act, shameful. Movement carries with it the always imminent potential to transgress. And this potential is vital to the reproduction of masculine Turkish selves.

In this chapter, I focus on movement that the car provides, or what, following Urry and others called "automobility" because the movement that is attained through the legs carries with it less of a stigma. There is a limit to where the legs can take you. It can take you outside your house to the quartier courtyards, that is right by the HLM (rent-controlled public housing) you live in, to a walk by the canals, or at most, to the coffeehouse—though even that may require a

trip that necessitates a car ride. As the previous chapter on coffeehouses and quartier courtyards have showed, some of these spaces are already stigmatized, and men are discouraged to spend too long a time in them. But the problem exacerbates with the car. Once in a car, men are imbued with the ability to simply disappear. And in a borderland, the possibilities as to where one can disappear to are almost endless.

This chapter takes the car as its departure point. Each of the three trips that I engage in, first to ride around Kehl (Germany), second to a brothel in Karlsruhe (Germany), and finally to a casino in Ribeauvillé (France), starts with me being picked up and driven, in company of other friends to these venues. But before I start describing these three trips, and explain what they mean to my interlocutors, I would first like to think of what the car represents for the men that I study. For the following trips tell us as much about the car as an intimate space the venues we are heading to. The car, in other words, is not only a conduit that enables escapes, but an escape in itself.

7.1 The Car as a Broken Escape

The car is an escape, but it is also a broken one in two senses. In its physical sense, the car, the BMW, the Audi, and the Mercedes, is an aspiration, or a dream that can only (with rare exceptions) be attained by purchasing it in the second-hand market. Because it is purchased in the second-hand market, the car/dream almost always comes with a broken part—a window that does not shut properly, a turbo that does not fully ignite, a bumper that needs a paintjob, etc. Or it comes with precarity of an economic kind—one, as the trip to Ribeauvillé will show, that becomes obvious when the speed trap/police camera flashes on our eyes.

Owning a luxury car is a dream, which can only be fulfilled in its broken state, and can gradually be mended depending on one's finances. One can only discover the full extent of the

car's failings (often times, many) while in it, and driving it. The failings roar through the engine, of which the driver and the passengers are fully attentive. They become apparent with the bright lights of the speed trap. It is therefore no surprise that some of the conversations that take place inside the car pertain to the car's failings, the repairs that are postponed due to lack of funds, or the hardships of paying the fines for speeding. There are moments in my interviews where we all go silent, listening to the strange sounds that the engine makes, and contemplating what the problem might be. The car is physically broken.

But brokenness also reveals itself at another level. This level is symbolic. The escape that the car symbolizes is a broken one for it brings with it a sense of guilt which also can only be fully grasped once one is in the car. As the car picks up speed on German highways, the paragon of freedom (Shand 1984), one realizes that the escape is never free from constraints. Much of the literature on automobility speaks of the freedoms that the car provides. But this freedom, as I argue in the case of my interlocutors, is an illusion. It is one that gets interrupted by phone calls and text messages by mothers and wives who inquire the men's whereabouts, and demand an expedited time of return. Being in the car is therefore never a total escape, but only one which is broken temporally. With each text, and each inquiry from home, as well as from the ethnographer who poses questions about where we are off to, and why, men come to the awareness that their freedom is curtailed. Sometimes this awareness brings with it a sense of rebellion. Other times, it brings with it moments of moral reflection.

This freedom is curtailed through a moral inquiry, one that men engage in in the form of a self-critique that reveals a sense of discomfort by the kinds of practices that the car enables. The reality, with all its obligations—to be a good Muslim, good husband, fiancé or son—

surfaces in these moments of self-reflection. But the next moment, with the road rolling, and foot on the pedal, it is fast forgotten.

7.2 “A Bus-full of Women”: A Trip to Kehl

It was a Friday night, and I was at M’s Snack in Schiltigheim, Strasbourg. M’s Snack is a snack döner located about a 10-minute bike ride from where I lived in Hoenheim. Lately I have been coming here every other night or so, and spending my time smoking with G and his friends, who, like me, come here almost every night for they have no place better to go. The place provides a nice research site for I know that there will always be young Turkish men here socializing. These young men are all in their early 20s, but when they were younger, they would hang out in the quartier courtyard instead. M’s Snack was not around then, but even if it were, these men belonged to the streets. Some of their peers, they tell me, still do. Schiltigheim is nowhere near notorious as that of Neuhof, Hautepierre or Kepler (Cronenbourg), but when I mention it to them, G’s friend, P intervenes. “No way brother, there was just a fight with the kids from Kepler a few nights back.” He was not part of the fight. But back in the day, he very well could have been.

Back in their teens, these young men have gotten themselves in trouble. P had even been detained for a night for delinquency. Eventually, he dropped out of high school and found himself unemployed like many other Turkish men of his age. I have met P’s parents. They were sweet, and loving people. But like most kids growing up in the quartier, P also had his days where he hung out until after midnight, smoking shit, and getting high. Now both G and P argue to have calmed down. They still belonged to the quartier, but nowadays, they preferred spending their time drinking machine-made coffee and mint tea, eating döners at M’s Snack, smoking and chatting on the patio.

Every night, G arrived the snack around 8pm in his entry-level BMW 1.16. He also used the car to also transport his mom from home to work. Thus, every night around 8:30, G had to take a break from M's Snack, and leave us for half an hour to go pick up his mom, and take her home. She worked as a housemaid for some extra income. After running that errand, G returned to M's Snack. During the day, he worked in a storage facility of a supermarket where he was in charge of managing where each box gets stored. P was unemployed. So were most other friends who hang out at M's Snack. Most young Turkish men I met on the streets and in snack döners in Strasbourg worked in construction zones, painting and doing plaster work. Work here, especially for young men like G and P, was never permanent. G was lucky for he worked full time. Others, however, kept on switching from one temp-agency job to the next. And when they had no job to go to, they spent the days sleeping till noon, and then, after spending some time home, they went out, to either socialize on the streets, or to gather outside of snack doners.

Not all friends of G and P (or better put, past friends from the quartier) did hang out at M's Snack. You could also encounter some in the parking lot a few blocks down getting high on shit. They usually parked their cars next to each other and smoked. I hung out with them once, in a fancy Mercedes Benz. It was the young man's father's car, so he was trying to be extra careful not to drop any ashes on the seats. It was one of my weirdest interviews on tape. We just stared at each other, without exchanging many words.

G was not interested in socializing with those guys. His mother did not want him to hang out with them either, for she knew that they smoked shit. Neither was I interested in sitting in cars and smoking shit. It was rather G who fascinated me, for he made the conscious effort to not be like those other boys. He arrived M's Snack, night after night, to sit, and smoke his Marlboro

Reds, sometimes in his car with the door open, listening to French rap, and other times on the patio, usually accompanied by P, and others.

G and P are the protagonists of this section, for I ended up spending much of my time with them at M's Snack, and usually went for a ride in the city.

The following pages are based on one such night when we went for a ride. G was running low on cigarettes, so he needed a trip to Kehl, Germany. We had driven around in his car a number of times before, often without any specific aim. Our trips usually took us first to the Çarşı to take a look around and see if we would encounter anyone we knew (and more importantly, where we would encounter them, so that we would have something to talk about), but also to throw glances at girls walking in or lining up by the bars and nightclubs of Strasbourg and Kehl. In these trips, we also did our share of swearing at jaywalkers and other cars making abrupt stops. Cruising, for these young men, as it is for other youth around the world was a pastime—one which is very much linked to cars and mobility, and lends itself into “imaginative possibilities” (Carrabine and Longhurst 2002).

Our cruising around the borderland would almost always end with a late-night stop at the Kehl or Schiltigheim “McDo” (McDonalds) for McFlurries. G would stop by the Kehl McDo if it was late for the Strasbourg McDo would be closed. He did not like the Kehl McDo much because there were many other men, mainly drunk partygoers, who would be there looking for trouble. Sometimes we would also go to a youth hangout/shisha café in the Hautepierre neighborhood to smoke shisha and play Okey (Rummikub), but that, we did not do often for both G and P had to be careful with their spending. G was saving up money for the car parts which needed to be replaced. It would cost him upwards of 1000 Euros, and he did not have that kind of money in hand. P did not work and spent whatever he could gather from his parents.

Tonight's excursion was nothing out of the ordinary. It was Friday. There was no work tomorrow for P, which meant spending a few extra hours outside. Some others around us at M's Snack wanted to go to Esplanade, and hang out where the university crowd usually gathered. Esplanade, especially on a Friday night, would be full of young women. Most of the young men frequenting M's Snack talked about these women, but none, to my knowledge, had any luck—or even an attempt at—dating them. Yet, like a Safari trip, they did not mind gazing at them from a distance, or talking about them with me, and amongst each other. G and P told others that we might join them later. First we had to stop by Kehl.

Our car ride bore out of sheer boredom, mixed with the need for cigarettes, which we all shared while sitting down in M's Snack and doing nothing but stalking people on social media, watching Snapchat videos, both representative of a “digital escape” (Gifford and Wilding 2013) that I do not get much into in this chapter, drinking coffee, smoking, and every now and then chatting. “Sooo, Brother Oğuz, tell us.” P said. “Tell you what, P?” I replied. There was silence on P's end. We looked at each other and smiled, and then continued to stare back at the TV running in the background and the road separating us from the neighborhood's HLM units, where P lived.

P and I got into G's BMW. This time I took the front seat and P, the back seat. Our first stop, after a 10-minute drive, was the tobacco shop, Tabac de la Gare in Kehl. On the way there, the talk was mostly about other cars on the road.

“Is that so and so in that car driving?”

“He's zigzagging, he must be a Turk.”

“Drive that fast and the flash (speed trap) will explode all over your ass.”

G idled the car right outside the tobacco shop, and hopped out to grab two packs of Marlboro Reds while P and I waited. When he returned, G and I lit a cigarette each. I had no idea where we would head to next. But G had a plan. It was a Friday night, and we were right by Gold Club, one of Kehl's biggest nightclubs. From Bahnhofstrasse, where the tobacco store was located, we hit back on the highway, and took the first left to Königsbergerstrasse. To our left was the discotheque, Gold Club.

G brought the car to a near stop as we slowly drove by Gold. Outside, there was a bus unloading partygoers, who mostly consisted of young women. "A bus-full of women," G remarked with a smile. Our eyes were fixated on the scene. Outside the entrance there was a line of men and women waiting to get in. Most men were dressed in dress shirts. Women in tank tops, high heels, miniskirts or nightdresses. A car drove by and parked. A couple came out of it. We did not know any of these people, but we were staring at them nonetheless as G continued to drive at less than 5 km/hour, windows open, and French rap blasting.

"Let's go in," I said to the two young men.

"They won't let us in," G replied.

"Why not?" I asked.

G listed a number of reasons: "You need to know the bouncer... You need to wear better shirts... And even then, you need girls... And even then, we all look like boys from the quartier. But you, brother Oğuz, you can go in."

But why could I go in and not them? I was nowhere near better dressed than they were. I looked not that different from G. He had fair skin like I did, and did not have the tough guy looks—the kind that puts you on spot as someone ready to start up a fight, which is a common story told amongst my interlocutors about Turkish and Arab men socializing in shisha bars and

nightclubs. The quartier look, however, had more to do than the clothing and the skin color. It was something that they reflected, and I did not.

What did that mean?

G explained to me that the image of the quartier was engrained on them—an image that I failed to see on him. He pointed out minor details, like my round glasses, like my being a tourist here, and coming from the United States. He pointed out that I may not have been wearing nice clothes now, but I nowhere near looked like them.

In their essay, “Year Zero: Faciality,” Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that our ways of reading one’s face is determined by our evaluation of how much the image that it communicates deviates from the norm, that is, the White man. In the case of G and P, the images communicated carry along racial meaning, which are reflect on G and P, and even internalized by them to the extent that it shapes their leisure practices.

My face, on the other hand, communicates an identity that is different than theirs. Mine, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the White man’s face, one which endows me with privileges, such as going to a night club that G and P cannot even dream of entering. For that reason, the bouncers, who themselves are not “white” either, for I was told that they are sons of migrants themselves, but who internalize faciality by reproducing it in their rule-making, would let me in, but not G or P. I could tell them that I come from the U.S and they would be interested in that. I could speak English and fool them. But for G and P, there was nothing that they could present, both through their face, and through their accents, to make them less quartier-boy like. Nothing to make them look more acceptable for an entry to Gold Club.

G made a U-turn at the end of the street to do one more slow-sortie by the club. Both G and P now looked more carefully to see if any of their friends were in the crowd that had

gathered outside. Friends who were buddies with the bouncers. Friends who were known to spend big time at the club by renting out lounge-spaces, ordering bottles of vodka or Champagne, and frequenting Gold every weekend.

I had met one such friend, K, near M's Snack. A few years back, when he was 19, he had been to Mecca for the *ümre* (lesser pilgrimage), a trip that was all paid for by his grandfather. The reason for this *ümre* was for K to have a moral awakening. Many families either sent their younger kids to the lesser pilgrimage, and in some instances, to boarding schools in France, or even in Turkey, for them to escape the quartier life, one which was seen as inviting of transgressions. K's *ümre* was of this kind. Yet, after getting back from the *ümre*, K's first stop was to Gold again. "Within five months of my return, I spent 12,000... I think I went to *ümre* too early. I had not lived life yet. I was only 19." In telling me this story, K was repeating a commonly repeated narrative among youth, that young men had to "live life" before deciding to embark on a more pious one. For him, living life meant nightclubbing, and meeting girls. Spending money was his main way of being accepted at Gold Club. Through spending way, he kept the channel open.

When K and I first met, I accompanied him to a nearby grocery store where he bought a small bottle of vodka, and a can of Redbull, and sat on a wall by the sidewalk to mix the two while he showed me pictures of a Kurdish girl who lived in Esplanade, and went to the university there. He told me, while showing a picture of him in her house half naked, how he had sex with her the week before. Having sex with a Kurdish Alevi girl meant a lot to him because, in his narrative, he felt like he was taking revenge for the bomb attack undertaken by Kurdish guerillas in Turkey at that time. There was a sense of pride and joy in "fucking a Kurdish Alevi girl" as he asserted. During the day, K worked at a job he found through the temp-agency. At night, he

walked around and sat on the streets to drink. Then he went home to watch Turkish series and sleep. Weekends, however, were different for he would not hang around M's Snack. He would either go to Kiss Club (but less frequently, for that's where the quartier kids went, he argued) or to Gold Club.

After reaching the other end of the street, G took us back on the highway. Next stop was Kiss Club, the Kehl's other famous nightclub. There was not a big crowd in front of Kiss, and therefore not much to see. So, G ended up continuing to drive, passing by *türkü* bars and shisha cafes owned by Turks, taking us back to the highway, followed by the trip across the bridge to Strasbourg, and then, to Esplanade, where we would meet the two men earlier introduced at M's Snack.

When we arrived Esplanade, I thought we would sit and grab a drink like the rest of the crowd of young men and women occupying the plaza. But instead, all we did was to walk around and throw empty glances at others. I do not think it was money that was the issue here. Or alcohol. After all, a glass of nonalcoholic beverage or a Coke would cost maybe a Euro or more than tea or coffee at M's Snack. Was it rather a lack of belonging to this space—a space that was foreign to them, but enticing nonetheless? Out of all the bars with outside patios in this plaza, all filled with young French men and women, we ended up walking into the one snack döner in the area and had a chat with the owners. Out of all the young men and women sitting in communal tables, drinking, we ended up finding the two Turks in their snack döner, and hung out for a good 15 minutes talking to them.

Was not the purpose of our driving around to look for women? What were we doing here, then, chatting with Turkish men?

I have been with other Turkish men on “girl-hunts” (Grazian 2007). With them, we did sit next to other women, and started up conversations. Often times, I found this approach a bit aggressive, and sat silently and observed my interlocutors’ attempts to get a phone number, Snapchat username or a Facebook profile. With G and P, that was not the case. They simply looked at women from a distance, as if they were taking a voyeuristic pleasure in engaging in this practice. We talked about women too, but often in general terms, such as how the place was full of women, and how good some of them looked. I have also been to trips with men to bars and brothels. They went there for the obvious purpose of hooking up with other women, or having sex. For young men like G and P, as well as their two friends we encountered in Esplanade, the extent of our interaction was limited to a bunch of comments and a distant gaze. Perhaps, their cruising in Esplanade was limited simply because they felt as if it was not wanted, or welcomed.

After leaving the snack döner, we decided to get back in the car and call it a night. But first, we had to go help one of the two men we encountered in Esplanade with starting up his car. He had recently bought a car for very cheap. But it was cheap for a reason. The car had engine problems. Once it stopped, it took a good push to have it reignite. He had previously taken me with this car to a love house in Offenburg. The car had stopped on the German highway at 2am as we were heading back to Strasbourg. I had to get out to give it a push which other cars zoomed at 200km/h next to us. I knew that the car was up to no good, and he had told me then that he would return it right away. But he had not. So here we were, the four of us in Esplanade, trying to give Z’s car a push as he triggered the ignition over and over. Others walking by cheered for us, and laughed. We cheered back. He had no luck. Despite several attempts, the car was simply not running. G was not happy. He did not want to stay here and keep on working on a broken car. He

had told him that the car was no good, and that he should not have taken it out for a ride in the first place. Despite our laughter at the absurdness of the situation, both G and I were pissed. So, we left the guy with his broken car, and his friend in Esplanade. We would later hear that he could not get the car to restart, and had to leave it behind.

G, P and I got back in the car. It was a little after 1 am now. G proposed that we could make it to the McDo in Schiltigheim for late night flurries before dropping us off to M's Snack. Hence we left Esplanade, and after a short ride to Schiltigheim, got ourselves McFlurries from McDo's drive-thru. As we sat in the car parked in the parking lot, we listened to French rappers at full volume. G asked me if I understood the lyrics. Some, I did. "This one says "Fuck you Hollande!" Most of the songs were about guns, women and quartier life. They were sung by young men from the quartiers, who used the quartier vernacular which still was foreign to me, but not to G or P.

After finishing our McFlurries, G took us back to M's Snack. M and his busboy were just locking up the snack after having finished cleaning. G and I smoked one final cigarette, and from there, I hopped back on my bike and left for my room in Hoenheim.

7.3 "Fiki fiki"

H was anxious. Without a car the last few weeks, he felt greatly limited in expressing himself, that is, the young man who could just get in his car and escape at will. He could have borrowed his brother's Mercedes E-class of course. But he needed his own car. The E-class was too big, and it was his brother's. Even though that car was over 15 years old, his brother loved it more than anything so the chances of H getting his brother's car were slim.

For weeks, H's car had been sitting in the repair shop waiting for the spare parts. H could, of course, have gone to an official Mercedes shop and asked for it to be repaired. But that would

mean that he would have to pay a hefty sum for the original parts. Instead, he went to one of the many auto repair shops, and trusted the garage owner with gathering the parts needed second hand on the grey (Internet) or the black market.

I had met H at one of the coffeehouses that I frequented in the city. Because the coffeehouse clientele consisted mostly of Turkey-born men of various ages, encountering a France-born young man in his mid 20s made me question what he was doing there. He had told me that he would have never even considered spending time at the coffeehouse for it was full of men smoking and playing cards. When I initially met him, H had recently quit cigarettes, and he would also mention how much he hated playing cards with other men. A few weeks later, however, when I bumped into him again, he was the one offering me cigarettes, and watching other men play cards. Without his car, he seemed to be stuck in the city. Normally, he argued, if he wanted to be somewhere, he would cross the border to Germany and go drinking instead. But the last couple of weeks had been anything but normal. After all, his car was broken.

It was a Friday night when H reached out to me. My boss at the snack döner and I were just finishing serving the last few customers at his snack döner, and we were getting ready for the nastiest part of the day: cleaning. H asked me what I was up to. “Döner, working.” I responded. He told me that I should meet him once I was done. He could pick me up from the coffeehouse.

“Pick me up for what?” I wondered.

“I got the car back. We are going to Karlsruhe!”

I knew what Karlsruhe meant. I had talked with H before about these late-night trips he took to the “Volkswagen Garage.” The Volkswagen garage was what the Turks referred to when talking about the Brunnenstrasse, the red-light district in Karlsruhe.

I ended my shift at T's snack döner early and met H about an hour after his call, in the parking lot by the coffeehouse. I stank of grilled kebabs and bleach. But he did not care. He had a big grin on his face, and his black Mercedes, the S class, under him. It was repaired, but not fully. There were still a few things broken here and there, but the car was at least in working condition. H was accompanied by his friend, N, an imported groom from Turkey. I had seen him before in the coffeehouse too as he mostly went out with H. The two had met a few years back, right after N was dispatched as a groom to Strasbourg. One day, they were both at a coffeehouse killing time before heading to the DITIB mosque to pray the Friday/noon salat. The same night, they ended up going to a bar in Strasbourg. Next, they went picnicking with a couple of male friends and played games played by young men in Turkey, such as those that boarding students or soldiers play in Turkey, like *uzun eşek*, the long donkey. And with that, the two became close friends.

“Are you ready?” H asked me.

“Ready for?”

“The women!”

No, I was not ready. I wanted to go to Karlsruhe with them, but I was not sure if I was ready to go to a brothel, really. I had a girlfriend back in the States, and even though she had given me the OK to go to the brothels for research, I did not feel comfortable with the idea. No, the idea really disgusted me. And here I was, thinking about going to a brothel with married men.

“Get in the car and we'll decide on the road,” H responded, and we started driving away from Strasbourg. Before we crossed the bridge to Kehl, H asked for silence.

“I need to call the Minister of the Interior,” he asserted.

The Minister was his wife, whom he had to call to tell that he was going to be late.

“Listen, I am with N and Oğuz. [...] The American. OK? I am with them. I am now entering Kehl, I need to hang up because the border police are looking [...] and from there, grab a beer and such. [...] Yavrum/Sweetie, let me decompress a bit [...] I don’t know where I am heading to [...] I don’t know, I have no idea. L’Artichaut or something. I don’t remember the name, how do you expect me to? [...] Putain/Shit... Agora! I am not off to Agora. [...] Café des Anges, L’Artichaut, something like that. [...] Enough! You are searching for a squall? [...] They are all small bars [...] Putain! Don’t you ever go downtown? Don’t you know what the city is like? [...] But there are no nightclubs in the places I am headed to [...] Those are nightclubs. [...] Do you want me to film where I am going? [...] But that’s not the kind of place. Tranquil, ya.../Relax, will you! Let me go out. [...] I have no idea where, I will let you know when I find out. OK. Ciao. [phone hangs up] You see Oğuz?”

What was there to see? That H was a bad liar? Was it sympathy that he expected of me for lying to his wife, who was with their kid waiting for his return at her in-laws? I was only able to pick up what H said to his wife (hence the [...]s) about where we were headed. He gave her the impression that we had crossed the border into Germany just for cigarettes, a common stop for most Turks living in Strasbourg, but also one that is often accompanied by a few Euros dropped into the slot machines (for the tobacco shop has a bar next door with three slot machines installed), and that we would head back to the city to sit at a bar and drink. But his wife demanded where this bar was. And whether it was Agora, one of Strasbourg’s hip nightclubs. H told her that downtown was full of small pubs, didn’t she know! He asked for some time alone for decompression. But H had previously told me that his wife knew about his affairs with other

women. That she had caught him a number of times before and made him confess his unfaithful acts. Their relationship was on the rocks. And she was not happy about his “decompressing.”

H needed time to decompress. He worked a boring job at some government office carrying mail around, and things at home were shaky at best. But was going to Karlsruhe the way to do that? Was this the escape he sought? And if so, how did he feel about leaving a wife and kid behind wondering his whereabouts?

H had told me before, when we were in the coffeehouse, that he tried being a different person many times. There was even a time, a few months, when he went to the mosque regularly to pray. But he eventually returned to his old habits. “Do I have belief in God. Certainly. But do I comply with the duties of being a Muslim? No. Sometimes, I say to myself. OK, starting this Friday, I will start praying. But before I realize, 6-7 months will have passed and there will still no salats...” N was not that different in his approach to religion:

“Were I to tell my mom that I will start praying from this moment on, she would even give me money to keep up with it... Do I have faith? Yes. But I am not religious. I don’t comply with any of the religious duties... Sometimes, if I think too much about the afterworld, I fear my actions. But, what can I say? The moment I meet up with H, the fear is gone. That point on, I revert back to my bastardized ways.”

Later that night, after H had finished having sex with a sex worker whom he had slept with the last three times he came to Karlsruhe (which N joked about), H and I shared a cigarette outside while waiting for N to come out. In my field notes on that night, I described the scene as follows:

H told me that he was not happy about the kinds of things he does, but he does it nonetheless because he's stressed out. He was not happy about the way things were at

home, so he sought ways of de-charging outside. I could see the kind of mess that he was dealing with, nonetheless, I was surprised about his lack of effort to make things better.

To me, he seemed to be having a free fall. (Fieldnotes, April 29, 2016)

On the way to Karlsruhe, we first made a stop at the tobacco shop, followed by the gas station to fill up the tank and get some Redbulls.

“Dang, whenever I put on this yellow vest, we go fucking... fuck it!” N exclaimed.

“For real?” I probed, “It must be your lucky vest!”

“Now will I ever take it off!” N laughed.

I still was not feeling too great about this trip. Part of that had to do with my own feeling of guilt. Was I making these men engage in immoral practices just for research? Then again, would they not have gone whether or not I accompanied them?

“I feel responsible about making you guys take me to the brothel,” I uttered. H interrupted me: “Yes, you are fully responsible,” followed by N, “You are fully responsible. We are on this path because of you.” Both of them laughed. “You even told your wife that you were out with me,” I replied to H.

I was aware that H was using me as a bait for his escapes. Neither was he the first man to do that, nor this the first time. Before, with H, we had been to a nightclub in Strasbourg, and it was me again, this time appearing in a Snapchat video sent to his wife while we were outside walking, which was his way of telling her, “Look, I am not doing anything bad. I am with the researcher.” That night in the nightclub, we just had drinks, a few failed attempts to talk to some women, and called it a night around 2. Tonight, however, the destination was Karlsruhe, meaning that there was little chance of failure. It was past 11pm already. We still had a good hour’s drive to reach the destination.

Why were these two men going to a brothel? Could we not have gone to the nightclub and pick up girls instead? Apparently, we could not, for such affairs required more time, according to H. For N, it was his marriage that was an obstacle. H agreed: “Before getting married, I did not know these paths (to the brothel/Karlsruhe) As a single man, I had the time to go wherever I wanted to. No problem...”

“Putain!” (Shit) H exclaimed.

He was trying to close the window, but it was stuck. After giving the button a hard push, he finally managed to get the window to close with a loud screech. At this point, we all saw a flash explode.

“Did you see that?” asked H.

N nodded. “Yeeah.”

“But was it to the driver on the other side of the road?” H wanted to know that it was not him who got fined for speeding.

“No way, there are no flashes on this road...” N responded, and after a pause, he continued:

“Your turbo, it is leaking...”

“Noo, don’t say!” We all went silent for a few seconds to listen to the sound of the engine... N continued: “Go get it checked at the repair shop.”

“I will. That’s the one last thing left [waiting to be repaired]”

“You’re waiting because of 1000 (Euros)?” asked N.

“More or less.”

“Let me tell you, it will cost you at least 2500.” What N said was not something that H wanted to hear.

The two men then drifted into a conversation about the car, and how much the remaining repairs would cost. According to N, the repairs were going to be costlier than H had expected. Even something as simple as body paint would cost 150 a piece. And he had the entire front part of the car, and the sides to be repainted. H, however, argued that his repairman would do it for cheaper. While the conversation continued, H had one hand on the wheel, the other on the floor, searching for the lighter that he had dropped. After finding it, he started searching, this time, for his cigarettes, asking me if I had the pack. I told him I had my pack on me, and he had his. “OK, it is here. No stress. No panic.” He lit his cigarette. After having lit the cigarette, he dropped his lighter on the floor once again. “Putain!” (Shit)

After approximately a 50-minute drive, which was spent accelerating and decelerating to avoid radars, smoking cigarettes, talking more about the car’s turbo problem, and commenting on other cars that sped by us because H’s car’s turbo was not functioning properly, signs for Karlsruhe city center started to appear. The problem now was which exit to take. None of us had functioning Internet service in Germany, possibly because we were all on the cheapest French plan. And that meant no GPS to follow. Moreover, all that we knew about the address was that there was a Volkswagen Garage near it. I could speak and understand some German, but the signage on the road did not indicate the exit to the Redlight district. N said that he had some recollection of certain roads that we passed by, and certain bridges we crossed, but the exit that we took from the highway per M’s copilotage ended up taking us to nowhere near the Volkswagen Garage.

“Where the heck is the Volkswagen Garage?” H shouted while pushing the throttle. “It would be a shame dying for a shitty cause” (here insinuating extramarital sex, which is a form of *zina*, and a grave sin in Islam) I responded as he hit the gas pedal more fervently. While N

agreed, H was not happy with my comment. “We are not polluted [*cenabet*] yet... But, well, we are on the way to get polluted, so I guess that counts.” N responded with a confirmation, but also acknowledged that perhaps the two men were not yet polluted. “But what matters is your intent,” H replied.

I always found it fascinating how religious discourse (pollution, intent) seeps in through the cracks of ordinary conversations, even (and maybe especially) those on sex. In front of me were two men, who argued to have faith in Allah, while also acknowledging that they were nowhere near close to being practicing Muslims. And yet, they were exchanging remarks about sinning—and in fact, repeating discourses (what matters is the intent) that I would hear in religious spaces, such as conversation circles in mosques.

And all of that *en route* to the Volkswagen Garage.

The religious back and forth was short-lived as we came to the realization that we were lost on the highway once again. We hoped that we could simply follow cars with French license plates for what else would they be doing in Karlsruhe this late other than, of course, going to the brothel? But there were no cars with French license plates to follow. At one point, we stopped to ask directions, hoping the person we encountered was Turkish. He was not. H tried to communicate with him using a mix of body language and what he considered the universal words for sex, “fiki fiki”, while moving his body back and forth on the car seat to imitate sex. Both N and I broke into laughter as we witnessed H’s body gyrate. The response we got from the man on the street was incomprehensible to us. Hence we continued our drive forward. N was starting to get frustrated: “In the name of Allah, tell me why we ended up coming here tonight?” He was content staying home and playing a soccer game in his PlayStation, he added. N also told H that he should have done his research in advance, on his phone, to figure out the address. H,

however, would not do that, for what would happen if his wife were to take a look at his search history? “Then she will wait for you with a stick back home!” N responded, all amused by his comment. We drove by a group of women. H contemplated asking them which way would lead to fiki fiki too, but he did not. He also contemplated stopping by a snack döner to ask for directions, but we never did that.

After many more wrong turns, the Redlight district finally appeared. Here we were, at the Volkswagen Garage... It was a street blocked from the outside view by concrete plant pots. At its entrance was a sign that indicated that no men under the age of 18, and no women were allowed. Photography was prohibited.

On this street, there were many languages spoken—French, German, Turkish, Arabic. The street was lit in red, pink and purple lights. It was no longer than 50 meters, and closed to car traffic. On each side, there were three to four story apartments. Some of the entrances had glass windows behind which women displayed themselves. Behind one, H saw the woman whom he visited each time he came here. N joked about how every time the two came to Karlsruhe, H would end up having sex with the same woman. In other buildings, there were doors. At each entrance, there was an ATM, a coffee and snack machine, and a room where tough looking security guards sat. On the first floor, there were some other rooms too which were used by the sex workers for bathing (for they left these rooms wrapped in towels). If a man chose a sex worker behind the glass windows, he would then take her up to a room using an elevator. Otherwise, he would have to walk up the stairs in search of other women. In each building, there were other men—some in groups, others in solitude.

I remember feeling horrible looking at these men, as they were all here for the same purpose—to have sex. I also remember avoiding contact with them, as if touching them in this

venue would contaminate me with a dirty mindset or even a disease. Upstairs, there were doors. Some open, others closed. If a door was closed, that meant that the room was occupied. When open, you could see women inside, sometimes lying down and waiting, other times smoking, or sitting and inviting you to come in.

The first door we stopped by, the woman inside welcomed the three of us. As H was the talkative type in our group, and N had little command of French still, H engaged in a conversation in French. The woman inside, a brunette wearing a black bra and underwear, must have been startled by my reserved stance as H chatted her up, for she was staring at me dead blank. I was standing the farthest from her with my arms crossed. She threw a laugh, followed by a question that cracked up H and N. She asked H whether I was a “bede”, that is, a fag. The question could only force a smile out of me. We moved up the stairs, to the second and third floors. H and N were still searching for a woman to sleep with.

We moved from one apartment to the next. In each apartment, the setting was similar. Some doors open, others closed. At some point, we stepped outside for a cigarette. H was not sure which woman to go for (though he eventually ended up settling for the same one he always visited.) There is something about this girl, he said. She was thin, and very flirty. N was set on one, but she was occupied. So, he ended up choosing another. “Did you make a choice?” H asked me. Why would I not want to have sex? Why did I feel bad? H was interested in knowing more about what went through my head. N was wondering whether I was a virgin. No, I was not. “Why not fuck, then?” Yes, I had my eye on a woman. A pale redhead, who was at the very end of one of the corridors on a third floor. But no, I could not see myself as being in the same room with her.

After the cigarette break, H went to talk to his choice behind the glass window. The two disappeared indoors, taking the elevator to some floor which I did not follow. N and I did another round of pick and choose. He found a woman, one with enormous bosoms which excited him. He disappeared into the red lit room. I stepped outside and waited for them. I was nervous, but what for, I could not really tell. Maybe the feeling of not belonging to this space kicked in right at that moment. Hence my chain smoking while waiting for them to come out.

First to arrive was H. While we waited for N, H and I had a chat. He mentioned something that startled me there. He admired me, he said, in that I chose not to have sex despite having been granted the permission to do so. I told him that it was not my girlfriend, but the overall experience that shaped my decision. I told him that I did some soul searching while passing by rooms, and passing by men entering and exiting rooms. The smirk on these men's faces nauseated me, I mentioned. For H, the whole experience was about one thing: ejaculation. It was a necessity, he argued. Nonetheless, he had guilty conscious. Now that I had mentioned, he did not like the fact that he was like other men that occupied the same place—the ones who disgusted me.

N came out with a similar smirk on his face, asking H whether he had a good treatment. He had. How was N's, I wondered... He was reticent. We got back in the car, and started our journey back to Strasbourg.

The conversation on the way back began with what went on in the brothel. The talk was about the sex workers—how big one's breasts were, how attractive the back tattoo of another's was... Kisses were not allowed, but almost everything else was, except for anal sex. H then moved onto telling us an unexpected encounter in Strasbourg with one of the “paid soldiers,” that is, the sex workers who solicit on the streets, which is illegal in Strasbourg. After having bumped

onto her on the street while driving, he had agreed to give her a lift to her house, and to return the favor, he demanded oral sex. He described the scene in graphic detail. I asked him if he used a condom while engaging in this act with the “paid soldier.” He did not. I reminded him that he should get himself tested. He had no idea that he could have transmitted a disease through oral sex. Neither did N. This anecdote brought N back to his days in the Turkish military. One day in particular, where a young soldier, who had transmitted an STI, did what his friends told him to do to get cured: penetrate a dog. The soldier who tried this technique, N told us, however had a problem. He had his penis locked into the dog’s vagina, and had to be hospitalized, only after receiving his share of beating by his commander. N and H laughed at the story. This time, I could not even force a smile. I was appalled.

On the road to Karlsruhe, we were chattier. Now, we were less talkative. Tired? Maybe. Or was it the idea that the escape was over, and where these men were returning now was home, followed by work in the morning? Was it the idea of a family waiting back home that made these men reticent now? “When we get closer to Kehl, I will turn on my phone,” H said. N’s phone had reception now, and he started receiving texts as we got closer to the French border. “Mine (the wife) sent me texts asking me what time I am coming home,” he said. H could not dare to turn on his phone... at least not just yet.

“Now we cannot go back home and take a shower, either,” G argued.

In Islam, Muslims are required to cleanse their body after sexual intercourse. The practice is known as *gusūl abdesti* (Arabic *ghusl*/full body ablution). And taking a gusūl this late would mean only one thing—that H had sexual intercourse while he was outside. N was bolder: “I will go home and take a shower, buddy.” H was surprised by N’s response: “How brave! Were I to take a shower now... Putain!” H’s plan was to wake up 10 minutes before going to work to take

his shower instead. For N, the reason why H had to be so cautious was because he had been caught cheating on his wife before. “Because I haven’t, well... I also have not done anything to get caught, I have done nothing to make my wife suspicious.”

To emphasize a point that I find important here: these are two men who argue not to comply with most Islamic duties except for having faith in Allah. But when it comes to the full ablution, they still feel obliged.

The same kind of soul-searching that H had engaged in while sharing a cigarette with me outside the Redlight district returned. According to N, H was putting himself in trouble for no reason. “You’ll end up losing your wife and kids!” H was aware of this fact, and he did not like the idea. “Oh Allah, please save me from such a path, I am in such a bad situation,” H exclaimed. N continued on giving him advice to stop fooling around. At that point, H’s regrets surfaced: “We ask for good things from Allah, and whenever something bad happens, we rebel (against him).”

N’s phone was ringing. It was home calling. “Yes, I am on the road coming back...” The line got cut off. N started singing to himself. I asked him what he found in sex workers. Why did he not have sex with his wife instead and avoid places like Karlsruhe. “It is a change. Maybe I cannot find things in my wife that I find in sex workers. Physically, or in terms of the treatment (I get). I treat my wife as my halal, and the sex worker, as a sex worker. And maybe I can make the sex worker do things that I cannot make my wife do. *T’as compris?* [Got it?]”

This was not the first time I was hearing about how married Turkish men’s sex lives were shaped by the notion of halal and haram, licit/clean and illicit/dirty. Certain acts, such as oral sex, were considered dirty (though certainly still fantasized about), and therefore avoided by some men in bed while they had sexual intercourse with their wives. These acts, however, were

perfectly fine when performed on someone who is already considered illicit or dirty, like a sex worker. Or a non-Muslim woman who is not the wife, who is the bearer of a man's children.

My conversation with N got cut off by H's intervention about his car once again. The problem with the car's turbo was what was still bothering him.

We were about to enter Kehl. H asked N to pass the phone. It was time to call home. "Don't blame me for us being late, blame Oğuzhan for it, OK?" N jokingly asserted as he passed H's phone.

This time, the call was to H's mother. It was past 2am by now. "Oh ma!... of course she got sleepy [...] But you're not asking me what happened. The car came to a still. It broke down. [...] Don't even mention. [...] Putain! The fucking car stopped in the middle of the road. Where is (the wife's name)? Sleeping? [...] OK, let her sleep. [...] Yeah, it broke down in the middle of the road." N intervened "Tell her we're driving very slowly." H continued: "We just passed Kehl and the police came. And the phone does not work in this fucking country. [...] I don't know what will come out of it. I will go visit the repair shop Monday. [...] The car came to a halt, everyone was passing by us like missiles. [...] Anyways let's end it here, I am in Kehl. N is with me... I brought shame on him too. [...] We took my car [...] I don't know, I thought it was all fine..." N intervened once again: "Tell her the turbo is broken." H told N that that she would have no clue what the turbo was, and returned to his mom: "Anyways, not much left to drive. The police called the repairmen, a tow truck etc. The guy came and opened the trunk... I don't know. The motor was running but the car was not moving. He worked on the car for a while. It was cold outside. He said somethings in German... not a single word in French. Anyways, now the car is moving but very slowly. I will drop off these men to their homes and come over [...] What do you want me to do, leave them out on the street this late? [...] What tram! What bus!

This late?" N intervened: "Don't get angry." H continued: "OK, let them sleep. Of course, they'll sleep, look how late it is! No, N recently got his car, he does not even have insurance yet... How could I have taken his car? [...] No I can't leave the car in Neuhof... They would set it ablaze it there. Anyways, not much left. [...] How could I have called you before? The phone started working when I got closer to Kehl. *Attends!* [Wait] OK!"

The police stopped us for passport checks as we crossed the bridge to Strasbourg. Our night was about to come to an end. H would go to his mom to pick up his wife and kid. N would go home, take a shower and dose off next to his wife in bed. Would their wives know where we were tonight? Were they such good tricksters that they could hide such escapes to Karlsruhe? "Am I crazy, why would I tell them where we were tonight!" was N's response when I wanted to know whether tonight's trip would ever come up in pillow-talk. For H, tonight was just an outing to have a few drinks. For N, even such a conversation was a dangerous one, for the first thing that would come to his wife's mind would be that there were other women in the bar. "They think that we go to places where girls are sitting on the boys' laps... But that is not the case." H complained that his wife was too jealous. "It (her jealousy) has reached a psychotic level. She even complains about my looking at women on the TV... I am looking because... you try dancing like that a bit, like those women on TV..." N intervened: "Yeah, and then I would look at you instead!" H continued:

"Were you to go and tell them, yes, I was with the prostitutes, and so what? You know what? At that point, she would be in disbelief. She'd make you swear on it a hundred times. How come you went to them? How could you do such a thing to me... And if she were to believe you then, six months later, she would bring it up again, and make you swear on it again... These women's brains... Its like a computer."

N concurred: “Yes, they have large Gigabytes”

We stopped where we started the night, the parking lot of the coffeehouse in Neuhof. I got on my bike and began my long bike ride back to my room in Hoenheim. H would drop off N first, and then head over to his mom’s.

7.4 “*Vay amina kodumun... Tövbe yarabbi ya...*”⁶⁹

On a warm August night, I was on the road, once again, heading to Ribeauvillé in a Mercedes Benz that T owned. It was an old S-class Sedan which was well maintained. Second-hand, as expected.

Ribeauvillé is a small town that lies 65 kilometers south of Strasbourg. I have heard of its name mentioned before by some of the men I met in Strasbourg, but only in one context: its resort/casino complex. Unlike Germany, where one finds slot machines in almost every snack doner and/or other restaurant, in France, slot machines and on table gambling are limited mostly to big spas and resorts. Attached to these spas are upscale casinos, which require proper attire (at least business casual), and identification. Most Turks I have met crossed the border to the German town of Kehl to play slot machines in snack döners, coffeehouses and small casinos. Those who wanted a change, and wanted a bigger venue, or those who simply did not want to be seen by others in Kehl, came to places like Resort Barrière in Ribeauvillé, the casino closest to Strasbourg, or to its more distant branch in Niederbronn.

T, my driver for the night, was a 22-year-old Strasbourg-born young man. His parents came to France almost two generations ago from a village close to Turkey’s capital, Ankara. This was not the first time that T was *en route* to Ribeauvillé, but for the three other men in the car, U, his young Moroccan friend from the quartier, V, his Turkey-born acquaintance, and I,

⁶⁹ Fucking cunt, God forbid...

whom he met at an event (*kermesse*) organized by a mosque association a few weeks ago, this was a first.

I bumped into T earlier in the day at the snack döner where V worked. T would later tell me that V, who recently got engaged, was pestering him for some time, demanding him to take him to Ribeauvillé. V visited the casinos and other venues with slot machines in Kehl regularly. But he wanted to try his luck someplace else. T postponed taking V to the casino for over two weeks. That lasted until V started calling him names, which T did not take lightly. “He started saying that I was not a man of my word, that I was a woman, so before you even arrived (to the snack döner) today, I had already told him that we’d go tonight. But that does not mean I go everyday.”

Going to a casino is not something that one openly talked about, at least in Strasbourg, unless around close friends. No one in T’s family knew about T’s casino excursions. Maybe his older brother guessed what he was up to, as he was not much different in his youth than T either. So why should he be the one to complain? His brother was now married, and seeking a pious life by not skipping prayers, attending events at mosque association, not spending time in the coffeehouses or other venues in Strasbourg and Kehl. T respected his brother because he was eager to put his life in order and spend his time at home, work and the mosque, rather than coffeehouses and gambling venues like many of his peers. But he also realized that he could not be like him, not at this moment at least, for he was young, and had a life to live.

Neither did V’s fiancé know about his gambling habit. Engagement might, after all, not be the most opportune moment to reveal one’s secrets. But V would later mention that he would stop his outside adventures in Kehl once he got married.

Yet, this did not mean that these two men were not already the usual suspects of transgression. For it was common knowledge in the community that Turkish men gambled and cheated on their wives. And the nightouts, in cars, were often taken to be a sign of taking the steps towards such transgressions, for “where would a man go in his car after 10 pm,” as a male interlocutor in a coffeehouse once asked me with a smile. “He can go to buy cigarettes, of course, but while doing that, he might as well drop in a few coins to the slotmachines,” he answered his own question.

There apparently was also a ranking of moral transgressions. Going to a casino was at the very bottom, that is, the very deplorable stage of this ranking. When V got in the car, the first thing that he demanded of T was to tell his boss, in case he asked, that he was at a brothel, and not a casino. “If he [his boss] asks you where I’ve been tonight, tell him I’ve been to the prostitutes, OK?” When I asked why, T responded: “Because it is worse to go to a casino here, they’d call you a gambler.” Spending your hard-earned cash at a brothel was valued higher, apparently, than spending it away in a casino. Or put another way, better go spend your money having sex than trying it out on slot machines. For there were higher morals in going to a brothel, and fulfilling your lust, than in going to a casino, and fulfilling your greed.

It was not only V who frequented casinos. T had a habit of gambling too. Not something one would expect of a 22-year-old, perhaps, but I have often encountered young Turkish men who were into different forms of gambling: betting on soccer games, going to shisha bars in Germany to play the slot machines, or going to bigger casinos to play Blackjack, Poker and Roulette. “I am a good gambler. I play this damn game real good,” T added while talking about his skills in gambling, which he took pride in. But no, he added, he was not addicted to gambling.

T had been into gambling for the past few years, frequenting casinos every other week or so. But lately, he had hesitations. Before he picked up U and V, he had told me in an inquiring manner that his evading the casinos was a good sign, for that meant that he was on the right track. The right track to what? Becoming a better Muslim? To some extent, yes, for “he was Muslim after all.” In fact, like most of his peers who smoked shit and drank alcohol, and engaged in other sinful activities, conscious that what they did was haram, T fasted all Ramadan long too—a point he reiterated when speaking of his identity as a Muslim man.

But avoiding gambling had only so much to do with Islam for T. It had more to do with not finding the meaning and joy in it anymore. Like girl hunting and dating, gambling was always the same for him. “You go (to a club), you make eye contact, get her number, go do your thing with her that night. Then you cut contact with her. And the next week, the same thing all over again. It is not pleasurable after a point.”

This sameness, which led to boredom, seemed to be a recurrent motif in T’s life—be it hooking up with women, or going to casinos, nightclubs and bars in Germany. Lately, he had been spending much of his time at a coffeehouse playing cards, drinking tea and smoking cigarettes in the Turkish youth hangout close to his home in Cronenbourg.

In a previous chapter of this dissertation, I have talked about men, young and old, killing time in coffeehouses to avoid going to casinos and nightclubs, for lack of anything better to do, or for lack of pocket money. But I have also seen them getting bored of idling at coffeehouses too, and revisiting other venues. T made a conscious decision to avoid engaging with the illicit, the haram. And also, as a 22-year-old man, he talked of himself as being at a stage in his life where he started thinking more about marriage. Perhaps, he wanted to follow his older brother’s footsteps.

But here we were, *en route* to a casino. *En route* to haram.

After picking me up from my room in Hoenheim, T drove back to Hautepierre to pick up U and V. This was the last outing for T in Strasbourg for he was about to leave for Turkey in a few days to start his summer vacation. In Turkey, he would be spending a few days in his hometown near Ankara, and then hitting the vacation resorts by the Mediterranean. He missed Turkey, and considered himself as someone who loved his home country. The home country, despite being born in France, was Turkey. At that point, it became clear to me why T was taking us to Ribeauvillé. Before his departure, T wanted to make some money in the casino so that he would have more pocket money to spend. “After all, we are youth who go out, there is money to be spent for food, with friends...” he said.

T, like most other kids in Strasbourg, had grown up socializing in a mosque association until the age of 16. That meant attending Qur’an classes and going to summer camps. He could read Arabic, and knew a bunch of prayers, short and long. The short ones, most Turks knew. What mattered was knowing the longer ones. Today, however, he had a hard time remembering some of the long ones. With the exception of the Friday salats, he had stopped going to the mosque regularly for two years now. But even after the Friday salat, the very same night, he would also go out to nightclubs. “If you do not go to the mosque, you forget the prayers, it is as easy as that,” he added.

“*Dunya, il est fort*” (The world, it is hard) U asserted as T was talking about his engagement with worldly pleasures. U committed the same sins as M. They were, after all, from the same quartier. They were raised in the same quartier environment, and socialized in the same friendship circles.

But U refrained from going out on Fridays. Fridays, for him, was a day of piety.

Back to T and V... It is somewhat unusual for a France-born young man to be buddies with a young ithal. There are a number of reasons for that, the most obvious being the language barrier. T knew V from the workspace. He met him while V was slicing döner kebabs gyrating on the vertical spit. "I realized he was an Anatolian boy," T responded when I asked them how they met, and then he mockingly continued: "Then I started being disgusted by him. Why... because he was a coup supporter. A dishonest man." Here T was referring to the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey which heightened the already present distrust within the Turkish community in Strasbourg. Since that day, people have been calling each other out for being a coup supporter. Even though T was joking about V's support for the coup, V took this as an insult: "Wow wow wow! Stop now!" Then the two got into a verbal back and forth, which lasted a good five minutes about the coup attempt in Turkey. T's condescension of V was not limited to the coup, though. T kept picking on V all ride long, starting with his politics, continuing on with his mooching (not paying for cigarettes that T bought for him from Germany), and then moving onto his accent and lack of fluency in speaking French ("Say Port du Rhin", T would demand, and V would badly butcher the pronunciation. I would do too...), and finally to his lack of knowledge of T's hometown close to the Turkish capital of Ankara.

After collecting U and N from HautePierre, T gave us the nod. "OK, here we go. Bismillahirrahmanirrahim."

We were off to a casino, in the name of God, the Compassionate, and the Merciful.

"Let's light a cig," T asserted as he passed his pack to me. I lit a cig. We all did.

T had finished high school and after a failed attempt to sign up for the university, *la fac*, he had decided to follow the path taken by many other Turks of his age—first taking a painting job in a construction site, and then the Interim work, which brought him to his most recent job

working in a storage unit transporting items with a forklift. A few months back, he had quit his job to sign up for unemployment, *le chommage*. Nowadays, he worked illegally at a construction site in addition to his unemployment paycheck. “But don’t tell it to anyone,” he added with a smile. For if the authorities knew he was working illegally, they would cut off his unemployment benefits.

But was he not being dishonest, and even immoral, in undertaking this act?

What I find interesting in the lives of men that I study, including T, and U and V, is that they are all aware of the sins that they commit, and aware of the consequences (like fearing the Hell Fire), while continuing to commit the same sins, and engaging in activities that they deem haram.

Working and taking state benefits was one such sin. For it meant taking away money that would otherwise go to those more in need. In Turkish, there is a word for it which I explained in the chapter on the mosque. It is called *kul hakkı* (the pupil’s right), and violating another pupil’s right is seen by many as a grave sin. In various suras in the Qur’an and hadiths, too, violation of pupil’s right is considered a sinful behavior. But I have also often heard among the Turks living in France that because the money was taken from the French state (a secular state), and not a Turkish state (also a secular state, but with a larger Muslim population), it was seen as a justifiable transgression. Thus, violation of a non-Muslim pupil’s right was justified in T’s eyes.

But in the case of going to a casino or a brothel, is there any justification? And if none, why sin while knowing that it is forbidden by the very book, the Qur’an, whose guidelines Muslims are asked to follow?

For T, the answer had to do with living in France. That things were so easily accessible here. That the Devil, *Şeytan*, did not have to struggle much to tempt them. “It is easy to obtain

things here...like the casino. It is a vice. It is Şeytan. But we go because it is not too far.” But they could evade going out, could they not? Why was it so hard to say no to engaging in a sinful act? Lust, perhaps? Sure, they could evade, T argued, but according to him, there was too much temptation of the *nefs*, and following one’s *nefs* was easy, especially with a car readily available under his command. “When I was younger,” T continued, I did not have a car, I could not go all over the place, I was not as mobile. I could not go far. When I got a car, everything got easier. If I wanted to grab a drink, I went to a club. If I wanted to see a girl, that was easy too...”

The car, in other words, made sinning an easier feat. It enabled and even tempted one to sin.

But why blame the car and not the sinful self?

“I am young and I know I do mistakes, and knowing that I do mistakes I still commit them, knowing that I will burn in Hell...” T asserted as he reflected on his moral transgressions. Yet, like many others, he was not alone. There was the culprit, which was either the car, or the quartier in which he was raised, the one filled with Turks and Arabs engaging in drug dealing, and car stealing, and *shit* smoking, which was to take the blame. It was the French state who kept Muslims on the margins, and vulnerable despite the three generations the Turks spent in Strasbourg. “Not much has changed since the first generation other than us having French citizenship. We still work in construction, snack döners. We work with our hands, and not using our brains,” T argued.

In each of the previous chapters, we had seen a different space taking blame for men’s moral failures. Kehl, the coffeehouse, the quartier courtyard are all to blame for inviting men to sin at some capacity. My conversation with T brings to this list a new conduit, the car, as yet another enabler of sins. M was aware that he was the one taking action, making decisions, and

facing the consequences. But he chose not to blame himself only, but rather bring up the externalities, such as his car.

As these thoughts were circulating in my head, a bright light flashed on us.

“Fucking cunt, God forbid...”

T referred to Allah often when he cursed, and asked of him for His forgiveness, that is, the *tövbe* he mentions after his curse. Each curse was followed by the God’s name. The bright light was the speed trap that caught us. Or better put, a fine of 90 Euros, and three penalty points on the license.

“Ha! It took a picture of us. I should have combed my hair,” V jokingly asserted. But T had no tolerance for jokes. He was going to 90 Euros on a trip that already made him feel uncomfortable. “Putain (Shit)! Fucking cunt!”

Facing T’s growing anger, V tried to placate: “*İnşallah* [God willing] you’ll make up for it in the casino. Don’t worry. Don’t make a big deal out of it.” T was busy counting the points he had left on his driver’s license. “I will lose 3 more points, leaving me with only two.”

T continued on driving but the regrets about the flash surfaced every couple of kilometers. I reminded him of V’s response, that *İnşallah* he would make up for it in the casino. T did not want to bring in God to his affairs anymore. “I’d say *İnşallah*,” he responded, “but I cannot.” He could not because Allah, for him, was not an authority whose help he wanted to request on the way to sinning.

T took the next right which brought us out of the highway towards the commune of Ribeauvillé, a town of five thousand people. But rather than taking the exit to Ribeauvillé, he kept on driving until, on our left, in big letters, the CASINO of Resort Barrière appeared.

“Here we are. Right across you is the casino, a perfect 10!” M exclaimed.

I was 1:40 AM. The casino closed at 3.

“Don’t forget to grab your identification,” T added. I checked to make sure my passport was with me. V, at the back, however, started to panic.

“Fuck, did I not take it with me?” After going through his pockets frantically, V finally found his ID. We descended the car, walked into the casino and presented our IDs.

We stayed there until closure. V chose to entertain himself with the same type of slot machines that he played in Kehl. He broke even. U was interested in table poker. He made 40 Euros. I put in 20 and lost it all. T took on the Blackjack machine, making him the winner of the night. 120 Euros.

Minus the 90 Euros of the traffic violation, of course. Leaving him with 30 Euros to take back with him to Turkey...

Chapter 8: Conclusion

“Asıl bir Müslümanın hususi hayatı yoktur. O, akşamın belirli bir saatinde kepenklerini indiren bir dükkancı gibi muayyen bir zaman çerçevesi içinde değil, her an ve her mekanda Müslüman ve mesuldür. Kenefte ve uykuda bile...”⁷⁰
Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Aynadaki Yalan, p. 95

8.1. *Alternative Research Paths*

In writing this dissertation, I could have taken different paths. I could have focused, for example, on a different group of men, who could have taken me to places other than the ones that frame each of the previous chapters. I could have, for example, socialized only with those who chose a pious path and dedicated their time after work to home, and to their families, or to the mosque, and to other pious men attending mosque associations, together engaging in volunteer activities to gain *sevab*, or good deeds. Perhaps, were I to conduct my fieldwork not in 2016, but a few years later, E, the young man who ended up selling his BMW would be one such man whom I would see more often not in the Hautepierre open air market, where he felt exposed to sins, but at the Hüdayi mosque association. Perhaps, I would sit down with him and talk less about his past deeds, but his current religious studies. He could have offered—like some did—to teach me how to read the Qur’an. Or, maybe, I would have ended up finding him at a coffeehouse, gambling, or back in the quartier, which is where he spent most of his teenage years, smoking shisha or consuming shit. If he ever gets a chance to read this dissertation, he would probably respond, “Allah korusun” (May Allah forbid), albeit acknowledging that the nefis is strong and ever-present, and that one’s carnal desires can only be tamed through constantly

⁷⁰ “A true Muslim does not have a particular life. Unlike the shopkeeper who takes down the shutters of his store at a fixed time, s/he is a Muslim, and s/he is responsible at all times and places. Even in the bathroom and during his/her sleep...” Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1904-1983) was a Turkish author, and poet, revered especially amongst Islamist circles for his writings on Islamic morality. His life, which was no short of the luxuries of a bourgeois Istanbulite, took a sharp turn upon his joining a Naqshibandi order in 1934. The passage comes from his celebrated book, *The Lie in the Mirror*, which is an autobiography of the novelist.

reminding oneself of Allah's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. I could have sought morality in the mosque, and mosque related activities alone which is what many researchers who study Muslims in Europe do. By doing so, I would likely be able to provide a more comprehensive understanding of practices leading to ethical cultivation, which to some readers may appear as a shortcoming of a dissertation which is so preoccupied with moral conversations. I, however, beg to disagree for my attempt was to seek moral conversations in places where we least expected them to take place.

I could have focused on more successful Turks, too, especially those belonging to the second and third generations, who are doctors, lawyers, and engineers. They do exist in Strasbourg! I met some such figures, who, while still being attentive to ordering halal dishes, treated me to meals in fancy French cafés and restaurants, or invited me for an interview in their cozy offices or homes. Even though some still lived in HLMs, their flats were larger, and usually located in calmer neighborhoods. Many were too busy or often on the road. But they still took the time to sit down and talk with me, and to remind me that with hard work, and the right kind of parenting and guidance, one could succeed in Europe, regardless of his religion or ethnicity. Were I to socialize more with them, I could probably have seen a different part of the city, too—one where there were more French than Turks, for example.

I could also have also written a dissertation on Turkish women, where I would talk more about how they reflected on the going out practices of their male peers, or how they, themselves, perceived the city. Though, as a male researcher, this would have been harder to attain, I did in fact conduct interviews with over two dozen women, and many of them, especially those born in France, were successful in overcoming the patriarchal undertones that demanded of them certain ways of being present in the city, and limiting their movement and visibility around others.

Among those I met, most did not seek their husband's permission to speak with me, or to sit outside at a café with this male researcher to grab a cup of coffee. Perhaps that was why I was able to meet them in the first place! Some of these women were successful business owners, while others helped their husbands with running the family business. Were I to tell their story, Strasbourg could perhaps have appeared as more of an emancipatory place for young Muslim women.

Or I could have chosen to tell the story of older men belonging to the first generation. The ones I have met—though they were few due to old age, poor health, and the decision to spend their last years in Turkey so that they would be buried in Turkish soil—did take me to the gardens they rented from the municipality, or invite me for a trip to pick up their grandchildren from school. I encountered most of them in mosques, sitting in mosque-affiliated teahouses, for that was where they spent much of their day, or idling in the mosque courtyard, killing time in-between the salats. Many spoke of how they were “kicked out” of their homes. Whereas younger men would normally seek opportunities to escape home, as I described in detail in the previous chapters, these older men were granted no space at home—a space that older women claimed as their own—which is a theme that the literature on the patriarchal bargain explores in greater depth. Were I to focus on them, the story of this borderland would be much different than the fast-paced lives that the youth and the middle-aged men pursued in my research site. Were I to focus on them, men's relationships with their homes would also be written on different terms.

But instead, I chose to focus on the younger working-class men, many of whom made barely above the minimum wage. This does not mean that they did not drive second hand luxury cars, or wore designer shirts, Gucci caps and expensive sneakers. But the money spent on such luxuries either came from additional hours they had to put in on Saturdays and Sundays at

construction yards, from drug trade, or at the expense of the money spent for home, such as the money necessary to take a family of four out for a nice dinner every weekend, or sending the kids to private tutoring so that they had a higher chance of excelling in schools, and finding better jobs.

I still do not know, to this day, what it was that drew me to these men in the first place. Studying working-class Turkish men was not a conscious choice, not even after I got a grant which brought me to Strasbourg in 2016. I was there to study Turkish men, but which Turkish men, really, I was not sure. It was only after the first three months in the field that I realized how I wanted to study those who were living on the fringes, both economically, and morally. These men were easy to encounter in Strasbourg's many migrant coffeehouses, *PMUs* (horse betting cafés), snack döners, and quartier courtyards. Because some were unemployed, or had part time jobs in temp agencies, they had no better place to go, including their homes. They were friendly. They had many interesting stories to tell. They invited me to trips in their cars, which usually started with a drive to Kehl to buy cigarettes or to fill up the tank, and continued with a full-fledged tour of Strasbourg and Kehl, and sometimes to venues beyond. *En route* to Kehl, these men were less interested in showing me around, which is what I demanded of them in the first place. Instead, they wanted to tell me their stories, which were somber in tone. Perhaps, it was the arabesk mood that I found in them which drew them to me the strongest. The yearning for a lost lover, or a lost homeland, while making do with minimum wage, and living in cramped conditions in public housing flats... For all their troubles, there was always fate to blame, but only within limits, for one could risk rising up to Allah (*şirk koşmak*), and that was the gravest of all sins. Hence, even when we were *en route* to nightclubs, casinos or brothels to sin, Allah was

always present with us, sometimes in the form of Qur'anic verses being uttered by my interlocutors, other times, in their repentance, and begging for Allah's forgiveness.

Were I to write about other men, I would have written a different dissertation, where not only the people or the spaces, but also the moral discussions we would engage in would differ. Were I to not sin with my interlocutors, I could have also just relied on stories of their sins, but would never feel the quandaries they faced on the way to sinning, at the venues which encouraged sins, and on our way back home after our night outs. Each research path would have lent itself into the production of a distinct story of the Turks' dwelling practices in this borderland, and their moral dilemmas. And I have cited throughout this dissertation many fascinating studies conducted by sociologists, cultural geographers, and anthropologists, who have taken some of these paths and wrote captivating ethnographies of Muslims and immigrants in various cities around Europe.

In writing a dissertation about men and their moral struggles, I learned to be attentive to the particularities that shape moral discussions. One such particularity, as I showed in this dissertation, was space. Space was not only a confine where sinning (or repentance) took place. Some spaces were also welcoming of moral transgressions. The shoe that wanders around may see many places. But as the aphorism goes, it may also bring back the shit stuck on it. A night that starts with the card game in a coffeehouse may quickly evolve into a night out in bistrocasinos, nightclubs, or brothels, in Kehl and beyond. Younger men, single or married, may choose to hang around in the quartier courtyards smoking *shit*, or in front of snack döners drinking cheap coffee and tea, or get in their cars after endless hours of idling to cruise by nightclubs, and if they have the means, to enter them to consume alcohol, and to seek female companionship. But if gambling, drinking, getting high, or engaging in pre or extra marital sex

are considered sinful practices, and not just by the imams, but by the very men who engage in them, why do most men I met in Strasbourg continue to seek such leisurely practices? And how do they come to terms as sinners?

8.2 Shadowing Muslim Turkish Men

I began this dissertation with a simple question: Where do Muslim Turkish men who live in Strasbourg go after work? It would depend, of course, which Turkish man one chooses to talk about, and what stage of his life one gets to scrutinize. A man like my dad, for example, whom I would consider a secular, middle class Turk in a relatively conservative Western Turkish town like Bursa, could be found at home at times, spending his leisure time in front of the TV with his family, taking us for a meal in restaurants, or taking me to the mosque on Fridays and during religious festivals. But later in his life, he opted for leaving us home and started to go out alone. Where to? As far as I knew, he was at the *meyhanes*, the drinking alleys, or at the bar of a hotel across our flat, getting drunk alone or with his drinking buddies. But I also knew that he participated in religious conversation circles led by sufi scholars from time to time, some of whom he invited home, too, to read sufi poetry, such as the magical pieces written by Ömer Hayyam (Omar Khayyam) in his *Rubaiyat* while inebriating himself, and offering his companions copious amounts of rakı. Later on, I have also heard that he had female companions. At that point, his relationship with my mom was coming to an end. There was constant fighting at home, which sometimes involved physical violence. By the time I was 13, I reckon, my mom had grown cists in her ovaries, and had to be hospitalized twice for surgeries. During the initial surgery, the doctor had called my dad and asked him for his permission to remove both ovaries, which would mean that my mom would lose all her reproductive capacity. My dad gave the

doctor the go ahead. My mom came home, and because my dad was still out, wandering, she soon moved to my grandmother's house for recovery. And soon after, they got a divorce.

Did my dad feel so uncomfortable at home that he had to leave it every night after work, sometimes without even stopping by for a bite? Did he have to drink to forget his sorrows? And if so, what were those sorrows? What caused them? Was there something that he sought at home that we could not provide him with? What was going on in his head? What was he trying to escape from? And where to? Where did these escapes take him? And to whom?

I did not start my fieldwork reflecting on any of these questions. The question on men's outside lives was motivated by a discovery I made during preliminary fieldwork where I was left with a growing sense of anxiety among members of the Turkish community over Turkish men's night-time trips to various venues in Kehl and other neighboring German cities. So, when I returned to Strasbourg in 2016, this was what I wanted to focus on. However, six months into research in Strasbourg, it had come to my attention that by way of studying other Turkish men, who were much unlike my dad in terms of their economic standing and upbringing, I was reaching out to my dad, and trying to understand him better. I was not at ease with this discovery though. For I felt like it was my mom who suffered, and it should have been her voice that seeped through my narrative. Not my dad's! But I could already read about accounts that spoke of mom's pain written by sociologists and anthropologists. There is, as I have cited in the previous chapters of this dissertation, already a vast literature on domestic violence, and its roots in patriarchy. Little, however, do we know about the very men who play a central role in these stories. Little do we know about their motives. And their regrets.

In search for answers to these question, in this dissertation, I brought the reader into various spaces that Muslim Turkish men in Strasbourg socialized. First, we paid a visit to a snack

döner, where I personally worked as a busboy for over 10 months. F, the man I worked for, spent more than half of his day in his snack döner, working seven days a week. He came to the shop around 9am, and left it sometime after 11pm, serving customers who came primarily during lunch and dinner hours. Others who worked in snack döners were open even later, but they were either aided by a family member, or they employed other Turks to help them. Though F was proud to be his own boss, setting up his own business meant putting in long, strenuous and boring hours, which came with physical and mental deprivation. The tasks involved for his profession were highly routinized. With the exception of few improvisations on the menu, each day, more or less, involved the preparation of the meat, grilling, cutting, and serving it, and cleaning up the shop. F did not like what he did and dreamt of a job as the floor manager of a men's fashion store. Yet he still had to excel in what he did, that is, selling döner kebabs, for his reputation was at stake. And he needed to save up money for the summer trip to Turkey, a goal that has become harder to attain today as most men make barely over the minimum wage, which, despite the child money and rent subsidization they receive from the French welfare state, is not enough to save up. Running a snack döner was risky business, but F's hard work eventually paid off. Yet, I still wonder to this day whether he would be able to afford the trip to Turkey were he to legally employ a minimum wage worker to do the job I did.

F was, in some ways, different than the other men I spoke about in this dissertation. He did not spend his time after work with his friends. Instead, he went straight home. He could have, however, chosen not to, and opt for his mosque association, the teşkilat, instead. But by the end of the day, he would usually be so exhausted that he did not even have the energy to stop for a glass of tea at the teşkilat.

Not all men were lucky as F to have their own businesses. Yet, whether a business owner or a wage laborer, almost all of those men whose stories I conveyed in this dissertation worked in back-breaking jobs that demanded long hours entailing physical labor, working in construction sites, infrastructural projects for the state, bakeries, bodega-like exports, butchers, etc. They had to submit to the whims of their bosses, who sometimes used trickery to pay them less, or fired them without compensation. Even those who got college degrees ended up opting for temporary positions in similar, physically demanding, and unsecure jobs. Some blamed the French state and employers for being racist and not employing Turks (despite being born in France and having French citizenship), while others blamed immoral Turkish bosses, and economic stagnation.

While in France, I was still at awe for how minimum wage workers benefited from the French welfare state. The state paid a sum of almost 500 Euros even to those who did not receive any unemployment benefits. 500 Euros may not be much, but it is better than nothing. In comparison with the US where the same men would need to work at least two jobs and still would not be eligible for health insurance or housing subsidies, or Turkey, where they would have to accumulate credit card debt, life of a working-class man in France seemed much more comfortable. However, as I complete the final draft of this dissertation, the same men (and women) whom I thought to have lived somewhat cushiony lives, are out on the street, wearing yellow vests and protesting against a state that has become more attentive to protecting the interests of the rich at the expense of the middle class and minimum wage laborers. My interlocutors have been telling me all along that life was not as easy as I made it to be in France. In the chapter on work, I tried to provide a sense of what the working conditions looked like. I focused on isolation and stress, specifically, to get a better sense of the emotions that these men were escaping from. This, I acknowledge, comes at the expense of a more comprehensive study

into the structural conditions that reify the class positions of the men I studied as wage laborers, and as precarious subjects of the French state. This is a topic that I plan to focus on for my next research project.

Köpek gibi çalışmak, “to work like a dog,” or its donkey variant, “eşek gibi çalışmak” was what I often heard from my interlocutors as they qualified their working conditions. Although the older men in the community, including the ithals, those exported from Turkey for marriage purposes, blamed Europe-born generations for their laziness, and their mooching off of their parents and getting high all day in the quartiers instead of seeking employment, most men I met, regardless of their age and generation, worked hard. And after a long day of physical labor, they went home, to their parents, and to their wives and children. Many of them dreamt of a home that would be tranquil, and one, after a long day of serving others, where they could be served. I remember F’s wife, who sometimes frequented the snack döner, telling me that she pitied F for all his hard work. She had mercy for him for all that F did for her, and the kids. Not all wives would have mercy for their husbands though. And not all husbands deserved mercy either. Hence, when men came home after work, they often times, did not find the comforts they sought. They blamed their mothers and fathers for constantly nagging them to find a job, their wives, for demanding money and asking them to limit their night outs, and their kids, for not even having the courtesy to come and greet them after work, and staring at their phones or their computers instead.

But even for those who had loving families, such as S Bey whom I introduced in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, there were other friends who sought their companionship, and waited for their arrival in places like coffeehouses. So, if they were not too tired, or if they had not already passed out on the couch while staring at the TV, after a quick shower, and a quick bite, men like

S Bey usually left home to the coffeehouses. And I followed them there too. The coffeehouse was their second, if not, primary home, as the coffeehouse owner introduced in Chapter 5 reminded us. And there was a reason for it. I found a fascinating universe in the coffeehouse. It was dirty, smelly and therefore uninviting, at least for me at the beginning. But gradually, the coffeehouse grew on me. Inside a coffeehouse, men seemed content, and perhaps even happy. They entered the coffeehouse often with a smile on their faces. They were welcomed by their friends, who were also working-class men, and who also escaped home to seek comforts in each other's presence. They asked each other to come join sometimes for a chat, but almost always for the card game. They competed against each other, sometimes winning, and other times losing and bearing the economic burdens of the night. They joked with one another while the card game continued, throwing hand gestures each other at the end of each round. Many of the jokes exchanged were sexually motivated. While sitting, they consumed copious amounts of cigarettes, coffee, tea, and sometimes, alcohol. For those who got hungry, there was always food available, ordered from the restaurants close by. While munching on the wraps, they cursed at the hand dealt, and swore at each other, probably more than they were allowed to curse at work, under the supervision of their bosses, or at home, in the presence of their children. Their transgressions were not without limits though. The coffeehouse owner, or some respected figure in the coffeehouse, would interrupt them if they were too loud, or too vulgar in their language. Still, in the coffeehouse, they seemed to feel less accountable, and perhaps, freer, to act the way they wanted.

Finally, we accompanied my interlocutors to their car rides around the borderland. These car rides were often shared by a group of men (usually two close friends, who were comfortable sharing with each other their secrets) who knew each other either through work, or through

having socialized in the quartiers. Usually after work, after a short stop at home, they would call on each other to let the steam off. The car was a magical machine for it helped men to simply disappear. Once they crossed the border to Germany, they would either turn off their phones, or lose cellular connection, which would grant them the freedom to do whatever they chose to, and to be wherever they wanted to be. The car was also a masculine symbol, but one that was broken, not only because the cars they drove—including the BMWs, Audis, and Mercedeses—were physically broken (the turbo not working properly, the windows getting stuck, the engine light on) as these cars were almost always bought in the second hand market, or fixed through parts obtained in the grey market. Automobile masculinity was also morally broken for it brought men in proximity to moral deterioration, taking them to venues where they would engage in the sinful activities offered by the borderland's nighttime economy, such as pre and extramarital sex, drugs, gambling, and alcohol consumption.

8.3: *Who is to Blame?*

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I explored what Strasbourg's German neighbor, Kehl, meant to the members of the Turkish community. The use of the metaphor, "swamp," was one often employed by my interlocutors to speak of this border town, for most men got in their cars after work, and crossed the border to Kehl primarily to play the slot machines. Kehl was, as many have argued, where men went to sink their earnings, and eventually their lives. Men's gambling habits were spoken as one of the primary causes of divorces, which, I was often reminded, was on the rise. If Europe, as a whole, is the dar-al-harb, the abode of sins, Kehl, for those living in Strasbourg, was certainly its apex. It was the Sin City, as some have referred to it. Or as G Hanım asserted, that bridge which connected Strasbourg to Kehl over Rhine had to be destroyed.

Men wanted to believe that their sinful practices were discrete, but the general understanding in the community was one which reified their subject positions as usual suspects of moral transgressions. For there were many stories told of men avoiding their duties to their families, and to Allah, and embracing instead a world of sins. The imams in mosques cautioned men to be aware of their outside lives. They reminded them that the divine camera was on at all times, keeping tally of the good deeds and sins. The mothers, wives, and the elderly tried to keep men accountable by calling them every time they went out, inquiring their whereabouts, and inviting them back home. These calls were often joke-material for men. They would pick on those getting that call from the “Ministry of Interior,” and emasculate him. But men, despite the social and moral obligations, continued to cross the border to Kehl, for they felt a need to escape the stress, isolation, and disrespect associated with work, and often times, with home too. They gathered with their friends, who also felt the need to escape, in coffeehouses, and various other venues in the borderland.

Though Kehl was in many ways the scapegoat, it was not just this border town which took blame for Muslim men’s sins. It was also the coffeehouses, the quarters, and the many other venues that were within reach via a short car ride. Certainly, in speaking about men who frequented these spaces, others did use many derogatory terms, such as “no-good-doers”, “empty men” or “immoral men”. But more than blame men for their moral shortcomings, and keep them accountable for their transgressive practices, stories of men who sinned almost always followed blaming the spaces in which they socialized. These were sites where the Şeytan was present and did his trickery to tempt men into sinning. All of the places included in this dissertation were in some ways inviting men to engage in sinful practices by way of offering them amenities that were morally dubious, or outright corrupt. Even the mosques, some would argue, were to blame,

for they were too political, or ran by corrupt leaders who filled their pockets rather than promote the public, moral good. Some men, as I mentioned in this dissertation, made the conscious choice of not going to the mosque because they felt the people gathering in mosques were fakes. Rather than repent in a mosque, they chose to live lives as sinner under Allah's gaze, and be accountable to Allah alone. "I fear no one but Allah," they would claim. And because they feared no one but Allah, they were comfortable with talking about their sins, or inviting others, like the anthropologist, to sin along.

In writing this dissertation, I have benefitted from two bodies of literature, and put the two in conversation. The first was on sociological and more recently, anthropological studies of morality, and the second was on space and place, which drew largely from cultural geographic and phenomenological approaches. After having spent over 15 months in Strasbourg, and two additional months in the site of outmigration, Kayseri's highland villages, and after having socialized with Muslim Turkish men who knowingly and consciously sin, I was able to see the subtle yet important connection between the two literatures. Following fieldwork, I came to realize that morality meant more than the spiritual guidelines that my interlocutors had to follow. Becoming a better Muslim had more to do than learning the Qur'an, or locking oneself up in a mosque to devote all his time to religious teachings. To understand how morality worked, one also had to be attentive to other spaces where moral voices could be heard, if one knew how to listen. And since much of these men's lives were spent not in the mosque, but in other places, I made it my task to follow them around. Starting with workspaces, then moving onto homes, and finally visiting various venues outside, I kept myself attentive to the ways my interlocutors engaged in a dialogue using their own moral voices as they moved between different spatial confines.

My interlocutors were well aware that by frequenting these places, they would expose themselves to the temptations of their nefs. The carnal temptations were too strong, and their will, too weak to control unless they restrained themselves spatially, such as staying at their homes, or at the presence of a religious figure in a mosque association, or in house sohbet. But, often times, rather than choosing the path of piety, they chose the path of sins. As a Turkish man, I had some cultural knowledge of the people I studied. So, this was not an Earth shattering discovery for me. What I wanted to further inquire, however, was how they felt about sinning, and why, knowing that they risked burning in the Hellfire, they continued to sin. Most men wanted to look strong, and carefree for spending endless hours in coffeehouses, consuming intoxicants in quartier courtyards and nightclubs, or going to casinos and brothels. But further probing brought to my attention that they had their regrets, too. The same men who invited me to join them in their trips to the casino in Ribeauvillé or the brothel in Karlsruhe were men who also tried to live pious lives: giving the daily salats a try, or asking for Allah's forgiveness for their weak will. They were all raised going to mosques, learning to cite prayers and read the Qur'an. Most of them still went to the Friday prayers, fasted during the Ramadan, engaged in charitable activities such as giving alms, and more importantly, avoided eating haram, mainly pork. And at certain points in their lives, their heightened piety also brought them back to the mosques to attend religious conversation circles, and to pray with the congregation. But while the mosque may be seen an inviting place for those who choose to come clean, such as the two men with whom I broke my fast with in Kehl's Istanbul Restaurant, and while some did find warmth in religious spaces, for others, mosques lacked the intimacy they sought. Furthermore, being accountable to their bosses at work, and to members of their families at home, they wanted to be control in their lives. They wanted to do away with the responsibilities that life had put on their

shoulders as wage laborers, sons, fathers, and husbands. Like the nefs demanding carnal desires, the arabesk in them demanded rebellion not just to the community they belonged to, but also to fate Allah chose for them to follow. In search of intimacy, love, and respect, they left their homes, the place where they were expected to experience these feelings, and hit other venues in the borderland, where they gathered with like-minded men seeking similar intimacies.

To the reader of this dissertation who is still in anticipation of a few lines, at least, where I blame the very men who sin for their conscious deeds: I salute you. You have made it this far, perhaps in frustration, waiting for that moment. You may demand of me to keep men accountable for their life choice, and to speak of them as culpable of their actions. But I am afraid I will have to let you down. While the men whose lives we glanced at together do regret their actions, as evident in moments where they reflect on their practices, and in instances where their moral voices surface, they speak of their moral failures not just as a consequence of their weak will, but also one that is encouraged by the spaces they visit after work. They could very well take the advice L gave to H in the opening vignette of this dissertation and avoid the paths that expose them to sins. They could limit their movement around the borderland, and spend more time at the mosque or their homes instead. But if they find no comfort such places, then they rather choose to be in places where they feel a sense of satisfaction. Where their presence is demanded. Where they are loved, even if for a few fleeting seconds. No matter what price they have to pay: be it financial, familial or moral.

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- Yeğenoğlu, M. 2005. "From Guest Worker to Hybrid Immigrant: Changing Themes of German-Turkish Literature." In Merolla D., and S. Ponzanesi eds. *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Pp. 137–151.
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- Zaimoğlu, F. 1995. *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne Vom Rande Der Gesellschaft*. Rotbuch Verlag.
- Zırh, B. C. 2012. "Following the Dead beyond the 'Nation': A Map for Transnational Alevi Funerary Routes from Europe to Turkey." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(10): 1758–1774.

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Curriculum Vitae (as of April 2019)

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Cultural anthropologist of modern Turkey and Turkish migration to Europe with over 16 months of fieldwork experience in the receiving and sending contexts, Strasbourg (France), Kehl (Germany), and Kayseri (Turkey). I think through theories on the moral, Islamic self in relation to theories on movement and space, combining philosophical, anthropological and cultural geographic insights in my scholarship. My dissertation research is on the negotiation of Islamic morality and masculinity in a borderland geography that generates moral anxieties. I have recently collaborated with a Strasbourg-based documentarist to produce a 20-minute ethnographic documentary on migrant socialization in Koenigshoffen, aka “quartier Istanbul”, one of Strasbourg’s migrant populated neighborhoods (*quartiers*). Previous research as a political scientist includes ethnographic research on Turkish institutions in Chicago, and mass demonstrations in Istanbul and Ankara. I am currently a scholar of the McDonnell International Scholars Academy, and have recently served as a fellow at the Center for the Humanities, and the Divided City Initiative, at Washington University.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Recipient of multiple sources of external funding, including Wenner-Gren Foundation Dissertation Fieldwork Grant, Social Science Research Council Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, Mellon Foundation Divided City Summer Research Fellowship, and National Science Foundation sponsored training in research design.
- Consistent record of public outreach as a McDonnell Academy scholar, and through publications on Turkish politics and society for Turkish and English outlets, including *Radikal*, *BirGün*, *openDemocracy*, *Association for Political and Legal Anthropology Blog*, and *Anthropology News*’ “New Turkey Chronicles” column.
- History of interdisciplinary collaboration in publishing on gender politics in Turkey. Currently engaged in archival research on women murdered by men in Turkey.

EDUCATION

2019 Ph.D. in Sociocultural Anthropology, Washington University in St. Louis.

- Dissertation: Sinning Men, Sinful Places: Spatial Politics of Moral Transgressions in the Franco-German Borderland, advised by John R. Bowen
- 2011 M.A. in Social Sciences/Anthropology, University of Chicago.
- 2010 M.A. in Political Science and International Relations, Boğaziçi University.
- 2006 B.A. Double Major in International Development and Social Change, and Government and International Relations, Clark University.

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

- 2019 When Women Demand Prayer Space: Women in Mosques Campaign in Turkey. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15(1): 125-134.
- 2016 The Case of Children Born out of Wedlock in Turkey: An 'Empty' Category? *About Gender: International Journal of Gender Studies* 5(10):261-281. (with Funda Üstek-Spilda)
- 2016 Do Your Best and Allah Will Take Care of the Rest: Muslim Turks Negotiate Halal in Strasbourg. *International Review of Social Research* 6(1):15-25.
- 2015 Toplumsal Analizlerde Konumsallık Tasavvuru: Saha Çalışması Üzerine Düşünümsel Bir Not" [Rethinking Positionality in Social Analysis: A Reflexive Note on Fieldwork], *Modus Operandi* 1(1):17-47.
- 2012 Facing the Ghosts of 'Statue of Humanity'. *Lights: The Middle Eastern Studies Students Association at the University of Chicago Journal* 1(2):33-46.
- 2011 Social and Political Transformations in the Middle East. *The Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies Newsletter* 7:1-3. (Guest Editor, with Ümit Kurt)
- Turkey as a Model Democracy? Revisiting the Turkish Referendum. *The Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies Newsletter* 7:23-27. (with Ümit Kurt)
- 2010 Ömer Madra ile Soyleşi: Tabiat Ana'nın Haklarına Saygı [Interview with Ömer Madra] *Notos* 22:66-7. (with Ümit Kurt)
- 2010 Bukowski'yle Kirlenmek [Getting Dirty with Bukowski]. *Mesele* 41:51-2.
- 2010 "TPQ Roundtable: Turkey and Israel - Old Friends, New Enemies?" *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 8(4):153-160.

Book Chapters

- 2019 Fais de ton mieux, Allah s'occupe du reste: les Turcs musulmans négocient le Halal à Strasbourg. In *Religions et alimentation*. Edited by R. Gounelle, A.L Zwillling and Y Lehmann. Turnhout: Brepols. (in press)
- 2018 Shadowing as a Methodology: Snapshots from Research in Strasbourg, Amsterdam, Barcelona and Milan. In *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*. Sixth Edition. Edited by G. Gmelch and P. Kuppinger. Waveland Press. Pp. 89-102. (coauthored)
- 2017 The "Unique Blend": Reframing Womanhood through Turkish Drama Series. In *Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective* edited by C. Brettell and C.F. Sargent. Routledge. Pp. 381-397. (with Funda Üstek-Spilda)
- 2015 The Social Life of Remittance Houses: Scenes from Rural Kayseri. In *Turkish*

- Migration Conference 2015 Selected Proceedings* edited by G. Şeker, A. Tilbe, M. Ökmen, M., P. Yazgan, D. Eroğlu and I. Sirkeci. London: Transnational Press.
- 2015 The Fear of ‘What They Say’: How Gossip Regulates Sexual Exploration Among Migrants in Europe. In *Turkish Migration Conference 2015 Selected Proceedings* (with Sherria Ayuandini)
- 2015 Anaakımın İçerisinde Alternatif Görünürlük Arayışları: Huzur Sokağı Örneği [“Serenity Street” Series: A Case Study of Alternative Media]. In *Direnış Çağında Türkiye’de Alternatif Medya* [Mapping the Alternative Media in Turkey] edited by B. Çoban, and B. Ataman. Istanbul: Kafka Kitap. Pp. 505-533. (with Funda Üstek-Spilda)

Documentaries

- 2018 KHF: Documenting Everyday Life in a Strasbourg Quartier.

Book Reviews

- 2017 Everyday Piety: Islam and Economy in Jordan by Sarah Tobin. *Review of Middle East Studies* 51(2): 317-320
- 2013 Islamic Schools in Modern Turkey: Faith, Politics and Education by Iren Özgür. *Turkish Review* 3(6): 660-62.
- 2012 Honor Killings in the Twenty-first Century by Nicole Pope. *Turkish Review* 2(6): 111-16. (with Alexandra Mateescu)
- 2010 *Antropoloji Tarihi* [A History of Anthropology] by Thomas H. Eriksen, and Finn S. Nielsen. *Mesele* 46:53-55.
- 2010 *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century* by Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, and Philip Robins. *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 9(1):127-135. (with Defne Kadioğlu).

Public Writing

- 2017 Is it Over? On Melancholy of Lost Hope, *Association for Political and Legal Anthropology Series on the Turkish Referendum*, <https://politicalandlegalanthro.org/2017/05/11/is-it-over-on-melancholy-of-lost-hope/>
- 2016 Working at a Doner Kebab Shop, *Anthropology News*, <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2016/07/21/working-at-a-doner-kebab-shop/>
- 2016 Ramadan Diaries (Weekly Series). *Savage Minds*, <http://savageminds.org/2016/06/06/ramadan-diaries-introduction/>

For a list of other public writings on Turkey:

Anthropology News: <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/tag/oguz-alyanak/>
 openDemocracy: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/author/oguz-alyanak>

Works in Preparation

Fieldwork on the Move (article to be submitted to *Field Methods*)
 Migrant Coffeehouses: A Place for ‘Empty Men’? (article to be submitted to *American Ethnologist*)
 Ethnography of a Döner Kebab Shop (article to be submitted to *Cultural Anthropology*)
 Blaming Kehl: Preserving Moral Unity in the Franco-German Bordertown (article

to be submitted to *City&Society*)

RESEARCH GRANTS

- 2018 The Divided City Initiative, Center for the Humanities/Mellon Foundation. \$5,000
- 2016 The Wenner-Gren Foundation, Dissertation Fieldwork Grant. \$19,704.
- 2014 Social Science Research Council, Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship. \$4,750
- 2013 Summer Research Travel Grant, Washington University. \$1000

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- 2019/20 Volkswagen Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, Washington University - University of Göttingen, \$50,000.
- 2018 Center for the Humanities Graduate Student Fellowship, Washington University, \$5000.
- 2012-18 McDonnell International Scholars Academy. \$28,000/year.
- 2016 Department of Anthropology Photography Contest, Honorable Mention.
- 2015 McDonnell Scholar Initiative Fund, Project Coordinator, Breaking Bread, Crossing Boundaries. \$500.
- 2014 Transatlantic Forum Travel Grant, Washington University, \$1000
- 2013 American Anthropological Association Central States Anthropological Society (CSAS), Best Graduate Student Paper Award. \$300
- 2010-11 University Unendowed Scholarship, MAPSS, University of Chicago.
- 2006 Honors, cum laude, Clark University.

GUEST LECTURES AND INVITED TALKS

- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Fashion and Islam in Turkey” in Anthropology of Clothing and Fashion. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. October 18.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Gender, Family, and Religion” in Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. August 4.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Religion and Rituals” in Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. June 30.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Borders and Boundaries” in Introduction to Global Health. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. June 19 and July 24.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Contemporary Topics on Migration and Islam” in Proseminar: Issues and Research in Anthropology. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. April 10.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Commentary on the Turkish Referendum”. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. April 4.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Reproductive Politics in Transnational Perspective” in Global Gender Issues. Washington University, St. Louis. MO. March 30.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer, “Döner Kebab in Transnational Perspective” in Of Dishes, Taste and Class: History of Food in the Middle East. Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

- March 22.
- 2017 Discussant, “Rehabilitated Ruins: Development, Democratization, and UNESCO World Heritage in Turkey” Ethnographic Theory Workshop, Washington University, St. Louis, MO. February 14.
- 2013 Commentator, “Exploration of the term ‘subtitle’ in Fatih Akin’s *The Edge of Heaven*” in German Film Series. Washington University, St. Louis, MO. November 14.
- 2013 Guest Lecturer, “Selling Islam” in Anthropology of Clothing and Fashion, Washington University, St. Louis, MO. October 30.

CONFERENCE PAPERS/WORKSHOPS/DOCUMENTARY SCREENINGS

- 2019 Beyond Salafism: A View from the Quartiers of Strasbourg. AES/ALLA/ABA Annual Conference. St. Louis, MO. March 16.
- 2019 Beyond Salafism: A View from The Quartiers of Strasbourg. Ethnographic Theory Workshop. Washington University in St. Louis, MO. March 4.
- 2018 Delusions of Grandeur: Reimagining the Self through Make-Belief Futures in Quo Vadis: New Turkey Panel II: Taking Stock of Ethnographic Knowledge on Minorities, Penal Policy, International Politics, and Neonationalism Inside/Out. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. San Jose, CA. November 14.
- 2018 KHF: Documentary Screening at Culture Club. Washington University. November 2.
- 2018 KHF: Documenting Everyday Life in a Strasbourg Quartier. Divided City Graduate Fellows Presentations. Washington University. October 1.
- 2018 Migrant Coffeehouses: A Place for Empty Men? Middle East History and Theory Workshop. University of Chicago. April 4.
- 2017 Fieldwork and Beyond: Students Share Experiences and Answer Questions about Work In and After the Field. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. Washington D.C. November 29-December 3.
- 2017 Turkish Men and their Going-out Habits: A Moral Critique of Masculinity and Everyday Life on the Franco-German Borderland. Gendering Migration & Transnationalizing Gender in the Middle East and North Africa. Middle East Studies Association. Washington D.C. November 18-21.
- 2017 Blaming Kehl: Preserving Moral Unity in the Franco-German Borderland. Borders: A Conference on Boundaries, Barriers and Transgression in Anthropology. University of Colorado, Boulder. September 29-30.
- 2017 Conceptualizing Boş Zaman [Empty Time]: Revisiting The Notion of Leisure in Turkish Islam. Society for Anthropology of Religion Biannual Conference. New Orleans, LA. May 15-17.
- 2016 Choosing Sides: Ethnography of a Turkish Witchhunt in Strasbourg, France. Late Breaking Session on the July 15th Coup Attempt in Turkey as Event and as Process, American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, November 18.
- 2016 Kabak Oyunu [The Squash Game]: Masculine Plays among France-Born Turks in Strasbourg. Games, Sports and Identity, American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, MN. November 16.
- 2016 Ethnography of a Doner Kebab Shop in Strasbourg. Turkish Migration Conference,

- University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. July 14.
- 2015 The Social Life of Remittance Houses: Scenes from Rural Kayseri. Turkish Migration Conference, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. June 25.
- 2015 The Fear of “What They Say”: How Gossip Regulates Sexual Exploration Among Turkish Migrants in Europe. Turkish Migration Conference, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. June 25.
- 2014 The French ‘Faux Halal’ Scandal: An Anthropological Intervention. American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA. November 23.
- 2014 Love, Transnationally? Migration Without Boundaries Graduate Student Conference, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. October 11.
- 2014 Emergent Actors, Emergent Narratives: Competing Representations of Islam and Turkey in North America. World Congress for Middle East Studies, Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara, August 20.
- 2013 Explorations into the Turkish Community in Strasbourg. McDonnell Academy Global Leadership Vision Conference, St. Louis, MO. October 17.
- 2013 Ties that Divide: Diaspora Discussions over Religion and Secularism. American Ethnological Society/Association for Political and Legal Anthropology Joint Spring Meeting, Chicago, IL. April 12.
- 2013 Workshop on Methodological and Ethical Issues in Ethical Issues in the Ethnography of Conflict and Violence. American Ethnological Society/Association for Political and Legal Anthropology Joint Spring Meeting, Chicago, IL. April 11 2013.
- 2013 Transnational Narratives on Laïcité and Islam among the Turkish Diaspora in the U.S. Central States Anthropological Society Annual Meeting, St. Louis, April 6.
- 2013 Festival Politics: Narratives of Exclusion among Turkish-American Institutions. Second City Anthropology Conference, U. of Illinois at Chicago, IL. March 14.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2018 Dissertation fieldwork/Divided City Initiative in Strasbourg on “Documenting Daily Life in Koenigshoffen, Strasbourg: A Visual Ethnography of French Public Housing Courtyards.”
- 2016 Dissertation fieldwork in Strasbourg on “Fear of the Ordinary: Muslim Turks Negotiate Men’s Moral Worth in the Franco-German Borderland.”
- 2014 Summer fieldwork in Kayseri on “Living in Sister-Cities: Exploring the Strasbourg-Kayseri Connection.”
- 2014 Research Assistant for Kedron Thomas (Anthropology) and Robin VerHage-Abram (Fashion Design) on “Sustainable Fashion: An Exploration of Knowledge Systems and Design Practice.”
- 2013 Preliminary summer fieldwork in Strasbourg on Turkish institutions in France.
- 2011 Fieldwork in Chicago on Turkish institutions in North America.
- 2009 Fieldwork in Istanbul and Ankara on mass demonstrations in Turkey.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2018 Lecturer for Anthropology of Modern Turkey and the Middle East.
- 2018 Instructor for Introduction to Cultural Anthropology.
- 2017 Instructor for Introduction to Cultural Anthropology.
- 2017 Teaching Assistant for Introduction to Cultural Anthropology.
- 2015 Teaching Assistant for Culture and Environment.
- 2015 Teaching Assistant for Anthropology and Existentialism.
- 2014 Teaching Assistant for Health, Healing and Ethics: Introduction to Medical Anthropology
- 2013 Teaching Assistant for Anthropology of Clothing and Fashion.

OTHER ACADEMIC TRAINING

- 2015 National Science Foundation, Summer Institute for Research Design (SIRD) in Cultural Anthropology
- 2014 Transatlantic Forum, Visiting Doctoral Researcher École des hautes études en sciences sociales and University of Amsterdam.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Turkish (native), English (fluent), French (advanced), German (basic)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- 2018- SEIU Local 1: Washington University Graduate Student Worker/Adjunct Union
- 2017- Anthropology News, Columnist for “New Turkey Chronicles” (2017 - 2019)
- 2013-15 openDemocracy, Columnist for “Arab Awakening & Turkish Dawn” (2013-15).
- 2013- American Anthropological Association, Student Member.
- 2016- Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA), Student Member.
- 2007-13 Turkish Policy Quarterly, Editorial Advisor, Managing Editor

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