

SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN MANISA:  
MATERIALIZATION OF LABOR, BODIES AND PLACES THROUGH EVERYDAY  
ENCOUNTERS

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## Thesis Abstract

### Deniz Duruiz, "Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Manisa: Materialization of Labor, Bodies and Places through Everyday Encounters"

When it comes to seasonal agricultural workers, the only language to talk about them follows: "They are carried at the back of trucks, packed like sardines, they live in plastic tents deprived of hygiene and in inhuman conditions, and they work twelve hours a day under the sun, for awfully low wages, be them women, children or elderly. Their bodies are the bodies of poor and lacking bodies of victims in destitution. But they are also excessive bodies, they have too many children, they steal, they cause disturbance in the regions they migrate and they are dangerous. Their bodies are turned into such objects through these discourses and squeezed into the category of "seasonal agricultural worker", which is a term its referents never use. The differences among the referents of this category are ignored and they are turned into a monolithic "other". But how do the "objects" mentioned as such experience this labor practice and how do they relate to their bodies? How are these bodies materially and discursively constructed and rendered meaningful? How do they materialize within the social, economic and political relations surrounding this labor practice? Within these power relations how are the bodies and the social space in which they take place formed? Who encounters whom in this social field? Who learns what from these encounters?

In this thesis, I will be looking for the answers to these questions by elaborating upon the results of the fieldwork which I conducted as a participant observer in the districts of Soma, Akhisar and Alaşehir of Manisa in the summer of 2009 and by analyzing the moments of the labor process through bodies, places and encounters.

## Tez Özeti

Deniz Duruiz “Manisa’daki Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri:  
Gündelik Karşılaşmalarla Maddileşen Emek, Bedenler ve Mekânlar”

Konu mevsimlik tarım işçilerinden açılınca edilecek söz bellidir: “Patates çuvalları misali, balık istifi kamyonlara doldurulup taşınıyorlar, plastik çadırlarda hijyenden yoksun, insanlık dışı koşullarda yaşıyorlar, kadın, yaşlı, çocuk demeden çok düşük bir ücretle güneşin altında günde on iki saat çalışıyorlar.” Onların bedenleri, zavallı yoksul kurbanların bedenleridir, yoksun ve eksiktir. Fakat bazen de bu bedenler fazladır, çok çocukları vardır, hırsızlık yaparlar, huzursuzluk çıkarırlar, tehlikelidirler. Bu söylemler aracılığıyla nesneleştirilen bedenler, tarladaki muhataplarının hiç kullanmadıkları “mevsimlik tarım işçisi” kategorisine sıkıştırılırlar. Bu kategori içine girenlerin aralarındaki farklılıklar yok sayılır, yekpare bir “öteki”ye dönüşürler. Fakat üzerine konuşulan bu “nesne”ler bu emek pratiğini ve bedenlerini nasıl yaşar, nasıl deneyimler? Bu bedenler maddesel ve söylemsel olarak nasıl kurulur ve anlamlandırılır? Sosyal, iktisadi ve siyasi ilişkiler içinde nasıl şekillenir? Çeşitli iktidar ilişkileri içinde bedenler ve içinde yer aldıkları sosyal alan nasıl oluşur? Bu sosyal alanda kimler karşılaşır? Karşılaşmalardan kim neler öğrenir?

Bu tezde 2009 yazında, Manisa’nın Soma, Akhisar ve Alaşehir ilçelerinde mevsimlik tarım işçileriyle birlikte çalışarak katılımcı gözlemci olarak gerçekleştirdiğim alan araştırmasının sonuçlarını bedenler, mekânlar ve karşılaşmalar üzerinden sürecin gerçekleştiği anlara odaklanarak inceleyecek ve bu soruların cevaplarını arayacağım.

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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	1
The Concept of Encounter .....	5
Materialization of Bodies and Places .....	6
Two Analytical Tools: Discourse and Fantasy .....	14
Chapter Outlines .....	20
CHAPTER 2: OBJECTS OF LACK: THE DEPICTION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCOURSES .....	28
Introduction .....	28
Seasonal Agricultural Workers in the United States .....	33
Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Canada.....	38
Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Mexico .....	40
Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Turkey.....	42
Conclusion.....	62
CHAPTER 3: LABOR PROCESS .....	64
Introduction .....	64
Processes of Labor in the Harvest of Tobacco, Grapes, Tomatoes and Gherkins	66
Attempts to Structure Labor Processes by Managing Encounters .....	96
CHAPTER 4: THEFT AND TERRORISM.....	107
Three Stories of “Theft” .....	107
Recognizing Strangers.....	110
The Dirty and the Dangerous .....	115

Romany Workers- “Thieves” in the Field.....	124
Kurdish Workers- “Terrorists” in the Field .....	131
Yürük Workers- “Uncultivated Peasants” in the Field .....	155
Conclusion .....	160
CHAPTER 5: FAMILY AND HOME .....	169
Introduction .....	169
The Bodies of the Workers Will Become Whole Again When They Go Home .....	173
Women Make Their Bodies Valuable Again by Investing in Home and Family ...	183
Conclusion.....	210
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION .....	213
Appendix A (Memorandum on the Improvement of Working and Social Lives of Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers.....	231
References .....	234

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

I would have done myself a great favor if I started this thesis with a generic sentence like: “This thesis is about Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Turkey and their living and working conditions” and went on depicting them, abiding by the rules of the literature on seasonal agricultural workers, as a homogeneous group of victims of the larger political, economic and social processes outside themselves, travelling long distances at the back of trucks ‘like cattle’, living in plastic tents deprived of basic hygiene and in ‘inhuman’ conditions, being paid awfully low wages for twelve hours of labor under the sun with no access to social security, their children uneducated, and oh their women, the scum of the scum, trapped in archaic structures of tradition and religion, bearing nineteen children and having to cook and clean even after twelve hours of labor in the fields! Like some ‘liberal’ researchers, I could have even addressed the problems they face due to ‘ethnic differences’ and showed that they have a hard time communicating with the bosses and that they do not always receive a jolly good welcome in the places they migrate to for several months because of the general ethnic conflict. It would be easy to write this not only because it is easy to reproduce the language and discourse already in circulation, but also it makes the body of the seasonal agricultural worker intelligible for the reader, leaving her content that she has grasped another reflection of the bigger social issues of class, gender and ethnicity.

When I present the criticism above, I am generally accused of denying the fact that seasonal agricultural workers suffer from unfavorable conditions of work, travel, accommodation and lack of social security. But are there no other options? Do we have to either deny the problems or reproduce the cliché by representing seasonal agricultural workers as ultimate victims, by reducing the power relations in the fields to reflections of the bigger social issues in the society and by equating their problems with some technical inconveniences like the lack of hygiene, traffic safety and education? This thesis is an attempt to answer this question.

First of all, who are seasonal agricultural workers? What allows the formation of a category of seasonal agricultural workers is the work they conduct: agricultural work which necessitates more labor at certain times such as the season of harvest in a field which is not the property of the workers. In Turkey, since such work is not defined under a labor law, it is informal. Generally, the recruitment process includes a labor intermediary between the employers and workers, a person who has regional, ethnic or kinship ties with the workers and who is called *dayıbaşı*<sup>1</sup>. He or she bargains for the type and amount of remuneration, makes a verbal contract with the employer, gathers a group of workers and arrives at the field at the right time with the correct number of workers. Most of the time, he or she is also responsible for making sure that the workers arrive on time at the fields and work properly every labor day and for solving any disagreement between the workers and the employers. This is about all that is common to all seasonal agricultural workers in Turkey.

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<sup>1</sup> In other regions, the labor intermediaries may be called *elçi*, *elci* or *elci başı*.

The rest of the practices including labor process, types of remuneration, time span worked in each field and spent in each region as well as conditions of travel and accommodation differ immensely for each product, region and field. Yet, the variable that introduces the major distinction among two groups of seasonal agricultural workers is whether they are migrant workers or non-migrant workers. This distinction is further coupled with an ethnic distinction: It is almost always the Kurdish, the Romany and the Arab workers who are migrant workers whereas the Turkish workers work only in the fields close to their homes and are non-migrant workers.

Migrant labor is generally preferred in the fields where a lot of workers are needed for a long time, in other words when the scale of production is large. Employing migrant labor is favorable especially for large agricultural enterprises because they access a larger group of workers through fewer contacts and the migrant workers tend to stick faster to the job since they generally have no contacts in the regions they migrate to other than their *dayıbaşı*, therefore no other alternatives to quit the job for. This lack of contacts and alternatives also forces them to accept lower wages than regional workers. Therefore employing migrant labor lowers the cost of labor for large firms and increases their profits. But petty commodity producers and middle-size farms which have little or no access to household labor or village labor based on reciprocity also make use of migrant labor, which comes in cheaper than regional wage workers allowing the employers to reduce the costs of labor and survive in the competitive market among large producers.

Whereas in the case of Turkish non-migrant workers, the clashes relating to the class are negotiated in the field and assuaged through the reconciliatory efforts of the *dayıbaşıs*, in the case of Kurdish, Romany and Arab migrant workers the class conflict is coupled with the ethnic conflict and a huge trouble zone is created which is bigger and more intricate than the sum total of the two. In the case of migrant workers, all the problems in the field are always dealt with in this trouble zone and this complicates the problems even further.

No matter how acrimonious the relations between the workers and employers get, it comes down to the fact that both parties are in need of each other: the employers need the migrant workers in order to reduce labor costs and the workers need the employers because they lack any other means of subsistence. Therefore the interesting part is not whether or not there are conflicts but how they are dealt with in daily practice and how the huge issues like the ethnic conflicts combined with class conflicts are managed and made endurable by all parties to allow the continuation of the labor relationship.

I approach neither the ethnic conflict nor the class conflict as abstract major conflicts traversing the society that are then copied verbatim on a minor scale in the everyday. I approach them as general antagonisms<sup>2</sup> which are reconstructed every time they appear in everyday power relations and whose terms are challenged, renegotiated, resettled and challenged again through each encounter in which they appear. In this thesis, by studying the everyday encounters among the actors in the field I aim to observe the power relations, analyze the conflicts that prevail among

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<sup>2</sup> I will explain what I mean by general/particular antagonisms while describing the psychoanalytical notion of fantasy in the section entitled Two Analytical Tools: Discourse and Fantasy.

them and concentrate on how they are managed through everyday power struggles.

### The Concept of Encounter

I find the concept of encounter particularly useful because it allows for the constitution of the relationship between the particular and the general antagonism as well as providing the time frame of the particular antagonism by establishing the relationship between its past and its present. Sara Ahmed defines encounter as a meeting that involves conflict and surprise; encounter “is not a meeting between already constituted subjects who know each other” rather, it is a meeting through which the subject is constituted, “by allowing the ‘I’ or ‘we’ to define itself in relation to others who are already faced.” (Ahmed 8) However, the subject does not arrive at the encounter as a *tabula rasa*; she has been constituted through past encounters. Ahmed asserts: “Encounters are meetings, then, which are not simply in the present: each encounter reopens past encounters.” (Ahmed 8) The relationship of the past encounter also hints at the relationship of the particular encounter with the general, Ahmed theorizes this as follows: “I want to consider how the particular encounter both informs and is informed by the general: encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular –the face to face of this encounter –and the general – the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism. The particular encounter hence always carries *traces* of those broader relationships.” (Ahmed 8) Employing the concept of encounter in this thesis will allow me to unpack the homogeneous and descriptive category of seasonal agricultural workers and to see

which worker, when situated within which power relationship, experiences which conflicts with which other actors, how she or he is recognized as what kind of an *other* and how in turn he or she recognizes the other actor(s) involved in the encounter as an other. It will also help me in understanding how this particular encounter among the actors informs and is informed by broader relations of power and conflicts of class, ethnicity and gender as well as how the present encounters of the workers with every other moot their past encounters with general others or particular bodily others.

#### Materialization of Bodies and Places

The concept of encounter also enables me to avoid taking both the bodies and the spaces as given and fixed entities; it allows for their conceptualization as entities that materialize within encounters through the power relations that constitute them. Butler notes that the debates on the discursive construction of the body through power relations have given rise to criticisms which claim that those who defend “construction” ignore the materiality of the body. In order to overcome the dilemma of either taking materiality as given and fixed or representing matter as in a constant flux which never gets fixed, Butler comes up with the concept of materialization: “What I propose in place of these conceptions on construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface but as *a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter.*” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* 9) The formulation of bodies and spaces as matter whose boundaries, surfaces and fixity are introduced through past encounters and carried into the

present encounters which are always situated in the broader relationships of power and antagonism opens up the grounds for the investigation not only of the effect of the everyday encounters in the formation of bodies and spaces but also their conjunction with broader power relations. In such a formulation, an encounter appears as a meeting that both reinforces the boundaries that have already materialized to form the bodies and the spaces and at the same time opens cracks in those boundaries never allowing the bodies or spaces to be complete or full.

In this thesis I will investigate the materialization of the bodies of the actors involved in seasonal agricultural work as the effect of power relations acted out through everyday encounters. According to Foucault's conceptualization of power relationship, "what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon action, on possible or actual future or present actions. A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes off all possibilities. Its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance it has no other option but to try to break it down. A power relationship, on the other hand, can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up." (Foucault, *The Subject and Power* 340)

Therefore, claiming that the body is an effect of power relations means that it materializes by being negotiated upon, claimed by and acted upon by several forces never being fully possessed by one. Yet it does not mean that power relations exclude the use of direct violence on the body, but it means that direct violence on the body can become only the instrument of power to act upon the actions of others but not its main principle of operation. In other words, within a power relationship a force can act directly on the body as Foucault claims: "...the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." (Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison 25) But if this force breaks down, destroys or closes off all possibilities of the other, it is no longer a power relationship: "slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains, only when he has some possible mobility, even a chance of escape" (Foucault, The Subject and Power 342)

I believe the relations through which the bodies of the seasonal agricultural workers materialize are characterized more by power relations than what Foucault calls a relationship of violence. The force of labor imposes speed and time limits on the bodies of the workers, keeps them in difficult postures over long hours, renders them vulnerable to injuries and marks of labor and exhausts them. Yet, the workers are not passive objects receiving these impacts but active subjects investing in the materialization of their bodies, employing tactics to evade labor, trying to erase the marks of labor from their bodies, negotiating their positions by making claims to their bodies and finding new ways of relating to the fragmentations and divisions imposed by labor processes to make them whole again. In this thesis, I will inquire

how the bodies of seasonal agricultural workers materialize as the effect of power relations forming around the material impacts of labor on their bodies.

The materialization of the body also takes place “through being related to or, and separated from, particular bodily others” (Ahmed 44). Yet, the relation to and the separation from the others is not constituted in the same way for every other. Sara Ahmed notes that bodily encounters always involve “social practices and techniques of differentiation...not only... *from the other*, but also... *between others* who have a different function in establishing the permeability of bodily space” (Ahmed 44). Therefore the differences between the self and the other as well as the differences between others are established within the relationship to the other and it is through these differences that the body of the self and the body of the other become intelligible. Intelligibility as distinct from perception or interpretation of meaning, does not pre-suppose an already formed material surface that one can relate to through a mental or sensory operation. The very process of becoming a surface, the process of materialization, is the same one with the process of making it intelligible (Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*). Therefore, the process of materialization of bodies involves the constant attempt to make the bodies of the self and the other intelligible in a particular way, to get closer to the limit of intelligibility of the bodies of the other and the self. As different from getting closer to *understand* the body of the other, approaching the limit of intelligibility is more of a *making* of the body of the other as well as making that limit itself. This is a very material process, forming the bodily space and bodily matter of the other and the self.

Materialization of the body therefore, happens in relation with the other and this relation always informs and is informed by the broader relations of power and antagonism. In this thesis, I will focus on how the bodies of the seasonal agricultural workers become intelligible as different from the other actors (and vice versa) in the field and how difference works in managing the face-to-face encounters among the actors in the field. I will also expatiate upon the differences recognized between the seasonal agricultural workers as well as how these distinctions are lived and negotiated through everyday encounters.

When bodily distance or proximity is mentioned, space also needs to be taken into account, not as the background on which power relations are exercised but as an important element of the power relation that materializes through the very same encounters. Space just like the bodies, also becomes matter and functions as a fixity or boundary once it is invested with power relations. The investment of space with power relations does not only function in determining the proximity of bodies to each other but also in regulating which bodies 'belong' to which places and which places 'belong' to which bodies.

At this point, I need to address the relationship between the concepts of materialization of space and place. While the notion of place gives us a sense of fixity and bounded matter, the notion of space gives a sense of flux and a process of making, unmaking and remaking. However, the idea of constructing a place out of space, gives a false representation not only of space as an abstract void in absolute time, but also that of place as concrete, fixed and static. David Harvey asserts that in order to view the concept of place as distinct from space it is not necessary to

view them in a dichotomous relationship and he offers the conception of relational spacetime which “starts with matter and process, and is therefore neither empty nor fixed” (Harvey 167). In the concept of relational spacetime, “space and time are internalized within matter and process” (Harvey 137). He cites Whitehead’s conceptualization of space and place in which Whitehead “...construes ‘places’ as ‘entities’ that achieve relative stability for a time in their bounding and in their internal ordering of processes. Such entities he calls ‘permanences.’(...) But the ‘permanences’ –no matter how solid they may seem –are not eternal. They are always subject to time as “perpetual perishing” (as Whitehead puts it)” (Harvey 190) In this sense, just like the bodies materializes as surfaces by acquiring boundaries and fixities which are still subject to further reinforcement and the opening of cracks in them, places materialize by achieving relative stability which are again subject to reinforcements and cracks.

The materialization of bodies and the materialization of spaces by their being invested with power within everyday encounters are interconnected in many ways. One of the prevailing themes is the movement of bodies into, within, through and out of spaces. As I stated before, the major variable that differentiates the processes and conditions of labor in the practice of seasonal agricultural labor is whether the worker is migrant or non-migrant. For the migrant worker, the work starts with the major spatial displacement of her body from the space of home to the space of work. Once the worker arrives at the space of work, home becomes a place that is far away both in terms of space and time: it is a distant place which they were in the past and it is a distant place they cannot return to in the near future. This spatial and temporal distance is stressed even more with the un-

homeliness of the workplace. The violence of labor on the body is combined with the harsh conditions of living in a tent and it is not only the body of the migrant worker that materializes as a weak and vulnerable body but also the workplace that materializes as an exploitative, corruptive and destructive place. However, for the non-migrant worker, the very same workplace is more limited in terms of time and space and so are its effects on the body. The difference between the movements of the two groups of workers into and out of workplace also bring about two different patterns of occupying that place: for the migrant workers, coming at the beginning of the season and literally living night and day within the workplace for months and for the non-migrant workers, coming in the morning and going home in the evening.

Moreover, the experiences of migrant and non-migrant workers are distinguished further along ethnic lines. In contrast to Turkish workers who only work in the districts close to their home, Arab, Romany and Kurdish workers are the ones who come into the field at the beginning of the harvest season with their families and live in the tents which are pitched up within or close to the workplace over a period of months. Most of them travel from city to city for work, installing their tents wherever the work arrangement takes them. If Turkish workers ever come from afar provinces, unlike the Kurdish, the Romany and the Arab workers who are confined to the tents outside the village, an empty house or a room at the back of the coffeeshouse in the village is hired for them.

Here we see the simultaneous materialization of bodies and spaces through the broader ethnic antagonism: Whereas the bodies of the Turkish workers are

recognized as safe and clean enough to inhabit proximate space and are allowed into the village, the bodies of Arab, Romany and Kurdish workers are immediately made intelligible as dirty and dangerous bodies, subjected to the ID checks of the gendarme and located outside the village in an area reserved for their tents and that space becomes known among the Turkish locals as dirty and dangerous places to be avoided for the next few months for the locals' bodies to remain clean and safe.

This is only one example (although a basic structural one) of how the bodies of the actors in the field materialize within power relations to form dirty, clean, pure, dangerous, safe bodies; Kurdish, Turkish and Romany bodies; fragmented, complete or to-be-completed bodies; bodies of women or men; how they are rendered valuable or worthless, potent or weak and how their categories are reinforced and cracked within everyday encounters. Also, the materialization of bodies has to be combined with the analysis of the simultaneous materialization of space: how the space itself materializes as a dirty place, a dangerous place or a place appropriate for women, how the embodied space expands or contracts in each encounter, with the inclusion or exclusion of which marked bodies. However, the materialization of the boundaries of bodies or spaces is never full or complete and these structural arrangements to keep the dirty bodies in dirty places, clean bodies in clean places, bodies of women in places appropriate for women never work fully to avoid encounters among these categories and it is through these encounters that power relations are lived opening the bodies and spaces to further materialization. In this thesis, by analyzing the encounters between “dangerous” bodies and “fragile” bodies, between “clean” places and “dirty” bodies, “women’s”

bodies with “men’s” places...etc I aim to observe how the broader antagonisms of class, ethnicity and gender are negotiated, challenged and reinforced within everyday power struggles and how these struggles sediment into temporary fixities which are called bodies and places.

### Two Analytical Tools: Discourse and Fantasy

In order to expatiate upon the intricacies of materialization of bodies and places, I will use two analytical devices: the Foucauldian concept of discourse and the Lacanian concept of fantasy.

In *Two Lectures* Foucault conceptualizes discourse as such: “in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse” (Foucault, *Two Lectures* 93). In the Foucauldian analysis of power, discourses are major tools through which power circulates consolidating not only the bodies but also the spaces which are embodied through them. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault claims that discourses should be treated no longer “as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 54). Discourses form their objects by explaining, ordering, classifying, limiting and naming them as well as establishing the relations among the objects thus formed within its systematic. Throughout this thesis I will analyze the bodies and spaces which are constituted as the objects of the discourses which speak about them, trying to answer how the bodies of the

actors in the field are rendered dirty, dangerous, pure, clean; how they are constituted as the body of a victim, the body of a woman, the body of a proper citizen, the body of a terrorist, in short as the objects of the discourses which form them.

Yet, as noted before in the discussion on power relations, investigating the bodies as the objects of discourses which form them does not render them passive; on the contrary, a discourse can act upon a body only if the body preserves its capacity to act. By investigating the power relations that organize seasonal agricultural labor, I aim to demonstrate that the dirtiness of a body becomes an element of those power relations in so far as it can 'contaminate' the spaces or bodies it encounters; the dangerousness of a body is important to the point that it can 'threaten' what or whoever it encounters.

In the Foucauldian conception of discourse, discourse accounts for the creation of the object of which it speaks as a holistic entity, yet, with regard to the relationship between the subject and the discourse Foucault claims that discourse should not be regarded as an enunciative modality that unites the subject but as various modalities that manifest his dispersion (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 60). He asserts: "..., discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined." (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 60) Yet this de-centered and discontinuous subject also makes continuous attempts to present itself as a consistent, coherent and unitary whole.

Foucault states: “the goal of my work... has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.” Yet, neither are the modes he analyzes the only modes through which all human beings in all societies become subjects, nor does he attempt to formulate a general mode of operation of discourses on subjects like he does for their operation on objects. But then how do we explain why these discontinuous subjects are attracted towards particular discourses to present themselves as holistic entities? The answer to this question is the reason why I bring in the Lacanian concept of fantasy.

Dolar writes: “The fantasy, useless as a tool to explain its object, can shed light upon its producers and adherents. It projects on to the screen of this distant Other our own impasses and practices in dealing with power and stages them.” (Dolar xiv) In this sense, the framework of fantasy is especially useful for formulating the relationship between the subject and power. It brings in the notion of *jouissance* which is the element that mobilizes particular subjects to invest in and grow attachments to particular discourses in order to make their reality into a harmonious and coherent whole when faced with their own impasses in dealing with power.

At this point, let me address what I mean by general and particular antagonisms. Žižek, in his essay “Beyond Discourse-Analysis”, interprets Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of ‘social antagonism’ in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* as a homology to the Lacanian concept of the Real claiming that both the subject and the social field are structured around a central impossibility. (Žižek, Beyond Discourse-Analysis) He claims that in the Laclau and Mouffe’s sense of the term, the

'impossible' (antagonistic) relationship seems to stem from two subject-positions (such as the capitalist and the proletarian), "each of them is preventing the other from achieving its identity with itself, to become what it really is." (Žižek, *Beyond Discourse-Analysis* 251) Yet, according to Žižek, the relationship between the two terms of an antagonistic relationship should be inverted: "...it is not the external enemy who is preventing me from achieving identity with myself, but every identity is already in itself blocked, marked by an impossibility, and the external enemy is simply the small piece, the rest of reality upon which we 'project' or 'externalize this intrinsic, immanent impossibility.'" (Žižek, *Beyond Discourse-Analysis* 251-252)

The Lacanian notion of the subject is constituted on an originary lack, which is impossible to fill yet at the same time is always attempted to be filled with reference to the existence of a full enjoyment. Similarly, the society is also constituted upon inherent antagonisms, which have to be masked in order to imagine it as a coherent and harmonious whole. Therefore fantasy becomes the tool of both the subject and the society to avoid the traumatic experience of facing these antagonisms and dealing directly with our impasses with power: "Fantasy then is to be conceived as an imaginary scenario the function of which is to provide kind of positive support filling out the subject's constitutive void. And the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for the social fantasy: it is a necessary counterpart to the concept of antagonism, a scenario filling out the voids of the social structure, masking its constitutive antagonism by the fullness of enjoyment" (Žižek, *Beyond Discourse-Analysis* 254) Moreover, since the task of "filling out the void" of the subject is always realized by situating oneself in the social structure which is in turn

imagined as a coherent harmonious whole, the subjectivation process is inherently linked with what Žižek calls “the social fantasy”.

In this thesis, I will address three general antagonisms constitutive of society: gender antagonisms, ethnic antagonisms, class antagonisms. Yet, as I noted before, neither are these general antagonisms static and self-contained entities nor are the fantasy scenarios generated to mask these antagonisms identical in each and every encounter. This is why I name the antagonisms that surface in the everyday power struggles particular antagonisms, which both inform and are informed by these general antagonisms. Then, each particular antagonism also differentiates the fantasy-scenario through which the subjectivation processes are acted out. However, one thing remains the same: the fantasy structure which promises to fill out the voids both in the subject and in the society.

Stavrakakis asserts: “Desire, the element that keeps everything going is animated by the quest for a lacking/impossible fullness, around the promise of encountering *jouissance* - and *jouissance* always has ‘the connotation of fullness’” (Stavrakakis 45) I will use the Lacanian notion of fantasy in order to analyze not only the attachments and investments of the subjects to their own subjectivation, but also the antagonisms which are at the same time obscured and reproduced through fantasy. Stavrakakis asserts: “...when harmony is not present it has to be somehow introduced in order for our reality to be coherent. It has to be introduced through a fantasmatic social construction.” (Stavrakakis 63)

Fantasy operates by constructing a fantasy-scenario that depicts the fractured and antagonistic social reality as a harmonious whole. “However,” Žižek

warns us, “the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy cannot be reduced to that of a fantasy-scenario which obfuscates the true horror of a situation (...): fantasy conceals this horror, yet at the same time it creates what it purports to conceal, its ‘repressed’ point of reference.” (Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* 7) So it could be claimed, the analytical tool of fantasy sheds light on its adherents’ impasses with power by making it possible to ask: 1) What does the fantasy-scenario aim to leave out (antagonism) in order to imagine the subject or the society as harmonious and holistic entities? 2) What pops out as the symptoms of these fantasies when the fantasy-scenario cracks?

In this thesis, I will approach the power relations in the field by using the analytical tools of discourse and fantasy in order to understand: How do the bodies of the actors in the field become differentiated from each other as objects formed with the differential operations of the discourses on them? Which discourses adhere to which bodies to objectify them as homogeneous and particular wholes? How do these differentiated bodies relate to each other? How do they become subjects by growing attachments to and investing in which discourses to deal with the antagonisms that surface and to manage their encounters with others? I will also question how space materializes and how it is related to the materialization of bodies: How do some bodies materialize as belonging to certain places and others as not-belonging? How are spaces marked by keeping some bodies in and others out? How are they cut, merged and inscribed through everyday encounters? How do some places materialize as places where some bodies can *become one* and where others, by the practices of not-belonging, threaten that potential of becoming one? In the following section of this chapter I will open up the questions I

posed above within the scopes of the relevant chapters in which they appear in the thesis.

## Chapter Outlines

The thesis opens with Chapter 2, where I will not only review the literature on seasonal agricultural workers within and outside Turkey but also analyze the discourses that form the object of seasonal agricultural workers as a coherent whole. The majority of the literature I reviewed on seasonal agricultural workers used a discourse that depicts the bodies of the workers as lacking –deprived of hygiene, deprived of traffic safety (“travelling at the back of trucks like cattle”), living under “inhuman” conditions; in short as poor, deprived, lacking bodies of the victims. These discourses create their object of ‘seasonal agricultural workers’ as dehumanized victims of the socio-economic processes outside themselves, having neither the knowledge of nor the capacity to adopt “proper and modern ways of life” like hygiene, birth control, table manners and proper separation of spaces according to usage (like kitchen, living room, dining room...etc.). The differences of ethnicity and differences of migration practices among the seasonal agricultural workers are mostly rendered invisible concealing the power relations among Turkish employers and Kurdish, Romany and Arab workers, or at best they are reduced to difference of language.

In these studies, the state can only appear as lacking in its provision of services like health and education, but it is also through the operations of the very discourses of these studies that it becomes impossible to see how the state materializes in the fields with ethnic discrimination as well as with the economic,

physical and social violence it exerts on the bodies of the migrant workers. It further conceals the class antagonisms by depicting the workers almost as victims of a natural disaster and naturalizes capital in the many forms through which it appears in everyday encounters. Last but not least it masks the subjectivities of the workers by depicting them as passive objects. In this chapter, I will analyze in detail the operations of these discourses in the materialization of the bodies of the workers as lacking bodies of the victims and misfits fully determined by the processes outside themselves. I will also review the unfortunately few well-written ethnographies which take power relations into account, recognize the subjectivities of the workers and include in their analyses how the workers act within their encounters with other actors in the field, which tactics they employ to snatch power from authority and how the boundaries of their bodies as well as those of the spaces they move through crack and are reinforced within everyday power relations.

In Chapter 3 on the labor process, I will depict the heterogeneity of practices and processes of seasonal agricultural work as well as the different attempts of the actors to structure the spaces and processes organizing seasonal agricultural labor by managing their encounters with each other. In the first section of this chapter, I will describe in detail the many different types of work, ways of recruitment, the variety of middlemen responsible for labor recruitment and labor control, types of remuneration, the skills each work necessitates, the duration of harvest, the scale of production in each agricultural enterprise and the number of workers needed for each field and product. I will give this detailed picture because it allowed me to see that there are four main variables in determining which worker would be employed in which particular type of work : 1) the scale of production, 2) whether the worker

is migrant or non-migrant, 3)the ethnicity of the worker and 4) the gender of the worker. With an analysis of these variables it becomes clear that different types of work bring different groups of actors together who encounter each other under different circumstances and engage in different power relations. Yet it will also clarify that the interplay of these variables cannot fully determine the structure of the labor processes, mobilizing the attempts of the actors to further structure them by managing and minimizing encounters. In the second section of this chapter, I depict the attempts of managing encounters through the roles of labor intermediaries and labor controllers, through the regulation of spaces of work and accommodation and through the regulation of remuneration. Yet, these attempts to structure and minimize encounters cannot exhaust the potential of contingency totally and the quality that make us formulate these coming together of persons as encounters- that an encounter always involves surprise and conflict, pops up.

I will begin Chapter 4 entitled Theft and Terrorism by depicting three encounters, three stories of 'theft'. Each story is on the encounter of a group of Romany, Kurdish and *Yürük*<sup>3</sup> workers respectively with the places in or around which they work and the people who inhabit and 'own' it, namely the locals and the employers. In this chapter, I will investigate the effects of the broader politics of ethnic differentiation and the ethnic antagonisms in Turkey and analyze how they are lived out and reformulated in everyday power relations. I will also describe how the ethnic and class antagonisms are glossed over and displaced to another level with the circulation of the ethnic stereotypes of 'the Romany thief' and 'the Kurdish terrorist'. Yet, the fact that these stereotypes circulate does not render the Romany

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<sup>3</sup> A Turkish community living in the plateaus of regions close to the Mediterranean

and Kurdish workers passive receivers of the discourses through which their bodies materialize as thieves and terrorists, therefore I will also analyze how they engage with these discourses to distort and subvert them, to render them useless and how they make their bodies valuable again. With the circulation of the discourses carrying these stereotypes as well as with the investments and attachments through which the actors in the field become subjects, not only the bodies of the actors in the field and the spaces they move through, but also the larger entities like the state and capital materialize. In this chapter, I will also investigate how the state materializes within these encounters in a way that reinforces the already existing social hierarchies and mechanisms of differentiation but also how it acquires a fantasmatic existence which requires any entity engaging in these discourses to relate to it and situate herself accordingly. I will conclude this section with a brief analysis of the encounters of the *Yürük* workers with other actors in the field not only to juxtapose this situation in which the class antagonism is not complicated with the ethnic antagonism like the experiences of the Kurdish and Romany workers but also to inquire how this encounter generates power relations in its own right.

In Chapter 5 entitled Family and Home, I will elaborate upon how the workers and the farmers imagine their bodies and the bodies of the others in relation to their home and the others' home. I will explore how some bodies are bonded into social wholes and located into spaces of belonging by keeping the other non-belonging bodies outside. By using the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy, I will elaborate on the individual or collective attachments of the actors in the field to these discourses and their investments in the harmonious reality, which includes imagining not only the body as at one with itself but also the social groups (family,

ethnic or regional group) to which they belong as harmonious, coherent wholes. By using the analytical tool of fantasy, I will elaborate on how the workers make their fragmented and marked bodies into a whole as well as how the categories of the self and the other which are rendered mutually exclusive through the operations of the discourses are lumped into categories of 'us' and 'them' through these fantasmatic attachments of the actors in the field to these presumed unities.

There are two major antagonisms which are dealt with through the fantasies relating to home and family: 1) the antagonism between the body and labor and 2) the gender antagonisms. The antagonism between the body and labor can be roughly defined as the fact that the extremely strenuous conditions of agricultural labor within this particular context extracts so much time and energy from the body to the point that it cannot rehabilitate itself and experiences major irreversible losses. In the first section of this chapter, I will argue that the workers develop many tactics to deal with these losses by imagining home as a healing abode where they will recover from the losses and erase the marks of labor from their bodies. The second set of antagonisms I will deal with in this chapter, the gender antagonisms, are also somewhat related with the first one. The gendered division of labor causes women to spend more energy and time than men which results in their experiencing the consequences of the antagonism between the body and labor more deeply. However, the main reason I include the debates on gender under the chapter entitled Family and Home is the fact that gender antagonisms in the field could only be spelled out and negotiated upon with reference to the concepts of family and home. Contrary to the arguments in the literature on seasonal agricultural workers which isolate seasonal agricultural women workers as the

ultimate victims of patriarchy and tradition and represents them as the wretched of the wretched, I will argue that seasonal agricultural women workers are neither unique in experiencing women's suffering (the women household workers experience a very similar kind of suffering and their tactics are very similar to women seasonal agricultural workers), nor ultimate victims conceding to the gender inequality and surrendering to their fate but are actors who come up with innovative ways to deal with these inequalities in everyday power struggles. I will argue that the main way they deal with these inequalities is to invest in the fantasy of the family as well as the fantasy of home to compensate for the loss in their bodies in order to make it possible to imagine themselves as a part of a bigger whole, namely the family, and to make their bodies more valuable through the fantasmatic attachments and investments in home and family. However, I will also claim that these fantasy scenarios of home and family as harmonious coherent wholes never work fully and the gender antagonisms pop up in everyday encounters opening up further domains of their contestation.

In Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, I will argue that seasonal agricultural labor in Turkey goes on as a widespread practice not only because it is based on structural social inequalities but also because it reproduces these inequalities at the everyday level. Yet, it does not mean that these inequalities go unchallenged in everyday encounters, on the contrary, they can only persist by being acted out, challenged and reproduced through everyday power struggles. I will also analyze a recent memorandum issued by the government on the organization of seasonal agricultural labor and claim that, the memorandum is an act of governmentality aiming to secure the continuation of this informal labor practice by minimizing the

encounters among actors and perpetuating the social, political and economic inequalities among them. I will further claim that the ethnic identity of the Turkish state is very much linked with the forms of governance reproducing these inequalities and that the technical and immediate solutions offered by the memorandum are the very ways of avoiding to pose the question of seasonal agricultural labor as a political question.

My aim in writing this thesis is to reflect on the humble experiences I gained by working as an agricultural worker for a short period in the summer of 2009 with the theoretical tools I have acquired through my education in sociology. I neither claim to represent the full picture of the *reality* of seasonal agricultural work in Turkey, nor do I uphold a belief that I convey the full experiences of the people whose generous opinions I quote. So let the words to convey my aim in writing this thesis to come from the wiser ones:

One morning in the July 2009 I was working in the harvest of tobacco with Auntie Gülcan and her two daughters. We arrived at the field before dawn, started picking tobacco in the dark and continued as the dawn broke. When I was done with one row of tobacco plants and straightened my back after twenty minutes to move to the next one, I realized that there was a beautiful light which painted the white flowers on the tops of the tobacco plants with all shades of orange and green as the morning wind shook them. I was taken by its beauty and I exclaimed: “Oh how beautiful these flowers are in this light!” The girls didn’t even lift their heads from work. Only Auntie Gülcan straightened her back and said: “Okay, you take

them and put them on your buffet<sup>4</sup>. My girls are sick of tobacco so their eyes see none of its beauty...”

My aim in this thesis is to pick the tobacco flowers on my buffet and place them back in the fields where I worked in order to describe not the change in the flowers but in my eyes that see them.

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<sup>4</sup> Buffet (*büfe*) is a specific cupboard that decorates the livingrooms of middle and upper-middle class apartments in Turkey. It is customary to ornament the tops of these cupboards with flowers in a vase, especially with plastic flowers.

## CHAPTER 2

### OBJECTS OF LACK: THE DEPICTION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCOURSES

#### Introduction

When I decided on the subject of my research, I informed my friends and professors at the university saying: “I will make a research about seasonal agricultural workers” and everyone understood what I was talking about. When I started doing my fieldwork and met workers, one of the first things the workers asked me was what I was researching and I said: “I am researching seasonal agricultural workers.” The most common answer I received was: “Seasonal what?” and I had to explain: “I am doing a research on how workers like you live during work time, what kind of problems you have, how long you work, how much money you earn...etc.” This chapter is about the circulation of the empirical, descriptive and monolithic sociological category of “seasonal agricultural workers” through several academic and non-academic texts, the discourses within which this category is produced and reproduced, the kind of categorical object these discourses create and at the same time which other possibilities of representation they foreclose.

I prefer to go over the literature by sorting the studies according to the country in which this type of labor is exercised for two main reasons. The first reason is that the practice or the program in which the workers are involved in each country is organized by a different legal framework and although the main variable differentiating the practices is whether the workers are migrants or immigrants, the country in which the migrant or nonimmigrant temporary labor is employed makes

a huge difference in terms of the conditions of travel, temporal accommodation and work and this produces different power relations, antagonisms and discourses in each country. The second reason is that the discourses through which the empirical category of “seasonal agricultural workers” circulates are more influenced by the literature produced in the particular country than that produced abroad. Since my main aim is to investigate the effects of these discourses on the production of their objects, it is best to focus on each particular case in its particularity.

Covering all the literature on seasonal agricultural workers in different parts of the world ranging from Bengal to Kenya, from South Africa to Canada, from Egypt to India explored by a variety of disciplines like economics, sociology, law, public health, medicine and even neurotoxicology far exceeds the limits of this chapter. Therefore I will limit my scope to two countries in which the labor of seasonal agricultural workers from different countries is organized under a structured program on which the majority of the academic literature is produced, the United States and Canada. I will further cover a study on the seasonal (migrant and resident) agricultural workers in Mexico, a fruitful ethnography of migrant workers within a country which analyzes the power relations in the field without victimizing, dehumanizing or objectifying the workers.

I will start with the analysis of the literature produced in other countries, trying to figure out how this type of labor is evaluated, which questions are treated as questions worth asking about the subject, which perspectives prevail. Then, I will focus on the academic and non-academic literature in Turkey, analyzing the dominant discourses that produce the “seasonal agricultural workers” as their

object and as an empirical category. I will also briefly touch upon the commonalities and differences of not only the practices but also that of the studies with their counterparts in Turkey.

The last point I would like to emphasize is the confusion among the terms “seasonal”, “temporary”, “resident”, “itinerant”, “migrant”, “non-immigrant”, agricultural workers, “farm workers” and “farm laborers”. First of all, I prefer the term worker over laborer because the connotations of the English word laborer include unskilled and manual worker and the dictionary definition proves this approach: “a person engaged in work that requires bodily strength rather than skill or training” (Dictionary.com) I will leave the discussion the term “unskilled” to the following chapters but here let me address the fact that agricultural work requires skills, knowledge and training which cannot be obtained through formal education as well as mental, psychological and analytical strength along with the bodily strength. The most comprehensive term covering all workers who engage in one branch of agriculture is “agricultural worker”.

The term “farm worker” is used mainly in the United States which is the first country whose agriculture became an “industry” which is mainly conducted in large scale farms. Although I do not know the track of etymological development of the term, making an educated guess, it could be claimed that it must have been the work place which determined the terminology of the labor type. Since “Farmworkers comprise 9 out of 10 agricultural workers” (Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations) in the United States, the term farm worker is also very

widespread. The term farm labor is not specific to the USA but is utilized in other contexts where the main production places are farms.

The next set of terms relates to the time span of the work, “seasonal”, “temporary” or “permanent”. The definition of “permanent workers” is more straightforward, it covers all workers who work throughout the year in agriculture. Since the time of harvest is generally more labor-intensive than other times of the year, the agricultural enterprises require more workers at the times of harvest. The term “seasonal” represents the season of harvest; however, the requirement of temporary workers may far exceed the harvest because there are other labor intensive tasks such as hoeing, weeding and pruning or even working in packing or food processing factories for some crops. Although the term “temporary worker” covers a more extensive range, I will stick with the term “seasonal worker” since it is the one that circulates more within the discourses that creates the workers engaged in this type of labor as an object of knowledge but I will also keep the term “temporary”.

The final set of terms in circulation is “resident”, “itinerant”, “migrant” “immigrant” and “non-immigrant”. The resident workers are workers who live close-by to the workplace and return home after a day of work; however this does not mean that they never go to another place for work which may make them migrant workers when they are away from home. The dictionary definition of migrant worker is “a person who moves from place to place to get work, esp. a farm laborer who harvests crops seasonally” (Dictionary.com) but there are several controversies over this term. “For Grammont (1986) migrants are laborers who

cannot return home at the weekend” (Torres 80). Torres distinguishes between internal migration (workers from the same state, who return home at the end of the work day) and external migration (workers from another state who stay in temporary shelters). However, this usage is not common and since the range of the time of work and the frequency of returning home cannot be pigeonholed into two categories, the term cannot be valid universally. Therefore it is better to stick with the dictionary definition and add further descriptions to narrow down the category. Migrant workers may move within the country they were born and where they live which creates the category of “regional migration” and Torres calls these types of workers “itinerant workers”. The Turkish translation *gezici işçiler* is also used frequently in the academic literature in Turkey. Yet, the migrant worker may also go for work to a place and return home after a short while instead of going to another place for work, yet there is no term coined specifically for this case therefore I prefer using the general term migrant without making a distinction between the two formerly explained categories. Migrant workers may also move across nation-state borders in which case they either become immigrant workers (who reside or aim to reside in the country they migrated to) or nonimmigrant workers (who aim to return to their home country after work is over). Unless mentioned otherwise, I will use the term migrant for workers who go to another place within their country of residence and use the subcategories of immigrant or nonimmigrant temporary workers for those who have crossed nation-state borders. I will discuss the specific usages of the terms in the Turkish context when I discuss the literature on seasonal agricultural workers in Turkey.

## Seasonal Agricultural Workers in the United States

Let me start with the guest worker programs concerning seasonal agricultural workers in the United States. In the USA, the practice of employing nonimmigrant temporary workers in railroad construction and agriculture began in 1942, to compensate for the lack of manual labor caused by the Second World War and initiated by a series of diplomatic agreements between the United States and Mexico (Bracero Program). It ended formally in 1964 when its substitute the H-2 program had already been in effect for twelve years. The current guest worker program covering non-immigrant and temporary agricultural workers is called by the code of the visa eligible workers are granted: the H-2A program (Greenwood). The law organizing the program “was first authorized as the H-2 program in 1952 and amended as the H-2A program in 1986” (Greenwood 4) under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Although there are a number of legal protections for the workers organized under these laws, such as housing and travelling reimbursements, Greenwood asserts that the enforcement of the law is weak. The conditions of housing, labor and travel are also organized by state laws in some states where a large number of temporary immigrant workers are employed but Benson states that “...because labor camps house people who belong to a marginalized social class, government neglect and noncompliance in the private sector are the norm. Farmers are rarely penalized for housing code violations. Workers often lack command of English and knowledge of their rights and they fear deportation and unemployment, such that compliance issues are underreported (Smith-Nonini 1999)” (Benson 592) Then, the program accounts to no more than having temporary visas, for which the application process is evaluated as ineffectual

both by the workers and the farmers, even by the US Department of Labor. Greenwood asserts: “The H-2A visa application process is slow, burdensome, duplicative, and expensive, *by the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) own reckoning.*” (Greenwood 4) The inefficiency of the program channels the farmers and the workers to illegal temporary migration and employment. “In what is believed by some to be a conservative figure, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) recently estimated that approximately 600,000 farm workers were working in the United States without legal authorization.” (Violet 1)

In 2007 the Bush administration proposed to replace the H-2A law with the Y-2A law which would slightly improve the program, raising the caps for the visas and reducing bureaucratic burdens both on side of the workers and the farmers. But the anti-immigration Republican activists organized a campaign with the support of which the Senate rejected the bill. (Greenwood 6)

Apart from the workers who are involved in the non-immigrant guest worker program and the undocumented temporary workers coming from outside the USA, there are also migrant workers of Latin American descent. Benson claims: “Although 95 percent of migrant farmworkers are of Mexican descent, others come from Central America (especially Guatemala and El Salvador) and the Caribbean (especially Haiti and Jamaica).” (Benson 592)

The studies on the temporary agricultural workers concentrate mainly on the fields of family and community medicine and public health, law and policy. The studies in the field of medicine focus mainly upon health hazards caused by lack of sanitation, pesticide exposure, occupational injury, overload of work and labor

camp safety (Arcury and Quandt; Oliphant; Sakala; Rabinowitz, Sircar and Tarabar; Anthony, Williams and Avery). There are also a few studies on mental and psychological health (Grzywacz; Hovey and Magana) as well as a few on the health of women and children (Quandt). The studies in law and policy concentrate upon the types of visas (Greenwood) and temporary worker employment policies of the governments (Kelsey; Briggs) and mostly stress the need for improvement in policy measures as well as in safety and health standards of housing and work.

Although their policy proposals would be helpful if the necessary investments and measures they point out to were regarded as desirable by the authorities, most of these studies miss or underemphasize the point that there is a direct correlation between the undesirability of work and the marginality of the social, political and economic status of the workers and it is not a matter of lack of information about the existing conditions or the know-how necessary for improvement of these conditions but a matter of power relations that bring about the systematic neglect of governments and the abuse of the farmers of the weak legal, social and economic status of the workers. Moreover, in these studies the workers the researchers have encountered are either reduced to numbers of visas or to the diseases they have. The two short-comings combined have even harsher consequences. Although the discourses and language to talk about “them”, “the seasonal agricultural workers” are not formed completely with reference to academic studies, the contribution of the statistics of illegal workers and their poor health conditions cannot be totally ignored in the formation of these discourses. With the circulation of these discourses “the issue of the seasonal agricultural workers” is reduced to a problem to be solved by technical interventions like

improving the sanitary conditions of the labor camps or by extending the caps of the H-2A visa. This discourse also contributes to the reproduction of negative stereotypes of dirty and diseased immigrant, at best a victim of the unfavorable economic conditions in her/his own country. What gets lost within the immigration statistics and the details of some skin disease is as important as what becomes visible: it is only through these people's labor that the "industry of agriculture" can be profitable and that it is an issue of labor and capital that is being discussed and not the remedy for the victims of a natural disaster. Therefore not seeing the power relations organizing the processes of this labor type does not only leave the picture incomplete but also distorts the whole picture.

However, there are also some academic studies which address the power relations and the larger framework within which migrant and immigrant agricultural labor is located as well as the power relations experienced within the field. I will cite two outstanding examples here, to explain what I mean by taking power relations into account. The first is an article called "Desire, work and transnational identity" by Altha J. Cravey, in which she "explores the daily lives of Latino/Latina transnational migrants in the United States" (Cravey 357). In this article, Cravey focuses on the multiple ways the bodies of the Mexican workers reside in a number of social spaces, "bars, nightclubs, pool halls, flea markets, as well as workplaces" (Cravey 357) and find creative ways to sustain themselves and their families as well as sustaining and reproducing social relationships and their transnational identities. She also elaborates upon expressions of desire, sexuality and gender and relates them to the strategies of the workers in creating social fields of caring, emotion and desire for freedom in the harsh environments of globalization in which they are

obliged to sustain themselves. Cravey asserts: “The Mexican immigrant body in the US South is a site of relentless contests, interpretation and struggle.” (Cravey 358) It is exactly these struggles over the Mexican bodies through which power relations are played out and experienced and Cravey’s exploration is extremely valuable in depicting the ways in which the body and space are inscribed with politics of work and daily life as well as transnational regulatory regimes and the resistance against it.

Another remarkable example is an article called “EL CAMPO: Faciality and Structural Violence in Farm Labor Camps” by Peter Benson in which he explores the encounters of the Mexican tobacco workers in the tobacco farms in North Carolina through the concept of faciality, a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari “whose analytic of power emphasizes the social production of faces, how faces are perceived in the light of media images, social typologies, and power relations” (Benson 596). He explores how the face of the Mexican farmworker is attached to the dirty, ill-mannered and culturally backward racialized stereotype, how the spaces he inhabits are avoided and the segregation of spaces are maintained through an economy of touch and how this “feeling of being “other” and on the “outside”...is produced and naturalized in relations of economic exploitation” as well as “the dialectics of domination and subordination in U.S. agriculture” (Benson 598).

The short-comings I have pointed out are not specific to the studies conducted in the USA but a common problem among academic studies worldwide. Therefore, in dealing further with the studies worldwide, I will concentrate more on

the ethnographic studies which do not fall into the same trap rather than disparaging a few studies in each country and praising others.

### Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Canada

SAWP (Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program) is the guest worker program of Canada similar to H2A in the United States, designed to recruit agricultural workers from the Commonwealth Caribbean and Mexico. The program “sends annually more than 20 000 Mexican and Caribbean workers to work in Canadian horticulture for periods of between six weeks and eight months” (Binford 504). The regulations of the program are more strict than in the United States but the conditions are also more favorable: “Participants in the C/MSAWP must be Mexican nationals, 25 years of age or older, in good health, experienced in agricultural work, and free of criminal records (HRSDC 2004b). Although there are no restrictions on the basis of gender, 97 percent of the participants are men. All are required to leave their families in Mexico and to live and work together on the farms to which they are assigned in Canada. There, they earn wages comparable to those of Canadian farm workers, are supplied with free housing, and are provided with medical coverage. After their contracts end, they are repatriated to Mexico until the following season.” (Mysyk, England and Gallegos 386)

Let me directly move on to the academic studies on the program. One of the most fruitful studies on SAWP is an M.A. thesis by Nelson Ferguson, entitled *[E]motions, Moments and Transnational Connections: The Lived Experiences of Two Labour Migrants in Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers’ Program*. As the title tells, the author has conducted an in-depth study with two Mexican workers in

addition to working in those farms as a summer job for three years and doing participant observation in the fourth year. The author begins his analysis by covering several approaches to transnational labor migration such as Network and Chain Migration, Development Theories and Dependency Theory and critiques these approaches for not representing the individual, representing the seasonal agricultural workers as a homogeneous group, and depicting them as “low-skilled” and “simplified economic entities” as a result of which “the individual is abstracted, and, at best, the migrant himself comes off as a victim of larger economic processes beyond his control or understanding” (Ferguson 34). He goes on to criticize the studies about SAWP and asserts that although these studies attempt “to bring to light the abuses and structural disregard for the working and living conditions of migrant workers” with good intentions, they end up representing a very limited part of the migrant worker experience and victimizing the “exploited worker”. He goes on to depict the creative and innovative tactics of the workers like faking documents to be involved in the program, rendering the work meaningful for themselves although it means reducing efficiency, taking pictures and building narratives over them to merge the two part of their lives parted between Mexico and Canada. He also depicts the power relations between the experienced and inexperienced workers and claims that the “groups” of migrants are only groups in as so far as we, as outsiders, classify them as such” (Ferguson 35).

Another accomplished study is an article of medical anthropology called “Nerves as Embodied Metaphor in the Canada/Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program” by Avis Mysyk, Margaret England and Juan Arturo Avila Gallegos. It is stated in the article that the Mexican workers use the idiom of “nerves” to

describe the distress they experience due to stressful and competitive work life, language barriers between the bosses and the workers, fear of losing the job, loss of security of community and unfavorable life conditions. The authors assert that rather than understanding nerves as pathology, it could also be interpreted as a tactic “to convey lived experience in a culturally meaningful way” (qtd in Mysyk, England and Gallegos 395). Although “nerves” may result in aggression there is another cultural mechanism of social control, *albur*, “an affirmation not just of masculinity but of identity, of the symbolic control of some men, a language of power used by the powerless.” If the “nerves” give the worker a sense of loss of control over her life and herself, *albur* gives her the symbolic control over the nerves. Approaching the subject of “nerves” as “an embodied metaphor for their awareness of the breakdown of self/society relations” (Mysyk, England and Gallegos 383) rather than as an abnormal state of mind, the authors take into account the power relations among the workers and between the workers and the bosses and the common problems they experience due to stress without victimizing or homogenizing them.

#### Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Mexico

The last example I would like to mention before moving on to Turkey is the employment of seasonal agricultural workers in Autlan, Mexico. Just like in United States and Canada, the seasonal agricultural workers are Mexican but this time it makes them migrant workers. In this section, I will refer solely to the published PhD thesis of Gabriel Torres: “The Force of Irony: Power In the Everyday Life of Mexican Tomato Workers”. Torres carried out an ethnographic research between the years 1987-94 in a district called Autlan, in the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

The tomato production process included: Preliminary Tasks (like preparing the soil for planting as well as germinating the seeds and taking care of the seedlings in the greenhouses until planting), Planting, Cultivation, Harvest and Tomato Packing and the workers carrying out these tasks came from all over Mexico and were highly heterogeneous in age, gender, ethnicity, skill level and permanence.

Although Torres reports that the 1988 census results were not precise, it could give a general idea about the statistics about workers in four main regional companies. According to the census, 64 percent of the workers were from the state of Jalisco and 35.5 percent were from ten other states in Mexico. The workers from Jalisco returned home after work and the workers from other states lived in camps and temporary shelters. Torres states that the migration routes of all workers are too heterogeneous to sketch and it is hard to take exact counts since the workers are highly mobile but he mentions two different types of workers from other states: 1) The highland inhabitants who work their lands for six months a year and look for work in other states, 2) Skilled tomato packing workers, "itinerant workers who follow the harvest to different regions" (Torres 80).

The main argument of the book is that practices of irony as well as other tactics employed by the workers play a huge part and have crucial consequences in power relations and in order to understand the power relations one has to analyze how power is exercised in the everyday life of the workers rather than abide by the fixed notions of domination and subordination. Torres states that tactics like ironic practices, games, jokes, apparent resignation, secret non-compliance to authority, harsh criticism of orders and impositions of authority are the ways in which

subordinated workers exercise power. He also notes that one should also trace what these practices as well as the desires, dreams and “contingent utopias” signify in the life-worlds of the workers since “there are multiple historical traces underlying tomato work, but no one history in which a preconceived utopia is triumphantly attained or tragically missed.” (Torres 185) Another strength of the study is that it neglects neither the global nor the local dynamics but emphasizes how embedded each is in the other. Also following S. B. Turner, Torres calls for “recognizing the full *embodiment* of social action” (Torres 194) and analyzes the everyday practices of Mexican tomato workers with this perspective which brings about a fruitful and genuine study.

#### Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Turkey

Although everyone who writes about seasonal agricultural workers in Turkey asserts that there is a lack of knowledge produced on the issue, the texts that make this assertion make up a whole literature once one is willing to include genres other than the academic texts (articles published in newspapers and journals, parliamentary proposals, NGO reports, documentaries...etc) into the literature as well. Including them in the context of Turkey is important since it is not only the academic texts that compose the discourse and the language available to talk about seasonal agricultural workers in a particular way and since these discourses in Turkey are directly related with the discourses I encountered during my fieldwork. In this section, I will analyze the two mainstream academic approaches to seasonal agricultural workers: 1) Modernization and social integration and 2) Social exclusion and poverty. Later on, I will analyze the reports written by several NGO’s and

political parties and concluding with less formal texts like journal and newspaper articles.

### Academic Literature on Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Turkey

#### Development, Modernization and Social Integration

The majority of the academic work on seasonal agricultural workers has adopted this perspective which classifies the society in line with the dichotomy of modern vs. traditional. One of the three books published that is majorly concerned with the issue is *Türkiye’de Tarım İşçilerinin Toplumsal Bütünleşmesi*<sup>5</sup> (Şeker). Şeker’s book is about the social integration of all agricultural workers to the “modern” society and a separate section is devoted to the seasonal agricultural workers. Şeker assumes that Turkish society overall is “evolving” from a traditional society to a modern society and Turkey’s agricultural sector is also following this trend. The main problematic of his study is whether or not the agricultural workers are adapting themselves to this modernizing process and catching up with the rest of the society.

He explains the relationship between modernization and social integration as such: “While conducting our research, we considered modernization as an inevitable process for countries and social integration as the symptom of modernization at the individual level.”<sup>6</sup> (Şeker 4) For him, at the other end of the dichotomy stands the traditional society in which traditional family is the most effective institution of spreading the traditional culture. Social integration which in his terms means modernization at the individual level occurs when the “traditional family” is replaced with the institutions of modern society. He defines the individual

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<sup>5</sup> The Social Integration of Agricultural Workers in Turkey

<sup>6</sup> “Çalışmamızı yaparken, modernleşmeyi ülkeler için kaçınılmaz bir süreç, toplumsal bütünleşmeyi de modernleşmenin kişiler düzeyinde bir belirtisi olarak görmüştük.”

socially integrated to the modern society as such: “the individual in a modern society is aware that she has a place among social classes and he is in emotional and behavioral ‘harmony’ with the society as a whole if not in ‘unity’”<sup>7</sup> (Şeker 11)

Therefore if an individual is not in harmony with society, then she is traditional. The criteria Şeker uses to measure social integration are the level of organization concerning labor (labor unionization), usage of mass communications media, awareness of the institutions of modern society, whether or not the place where people shop is connected to familial, ethnic, religious or regional affiliations and the embracement of democratic culture (joining the elections).

In this discourse, modernization and development are equated to each other and the process of their realization is not only considered within a nation-state as a linear and progressive process but also between the Western, modern, developed states and the Eastern traditional, underdeveloped states, the former as having achieved the goals and progressing further and the latter as on the road, following their big brothers’ footsteps. Therefore, the time of the “underdeveloped” nations is always calculated referring to the “developed” nations. The excerpt beneath is from the second book that was published about seasonal agricultural workers: “The health and social security problems of seasonal agricultural workers and the conditions under which they have to work in our country had remained in my memory in the breeding farm where I spent my childhood. It had significant

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<sup>7</sup> “...modern toplumda birey, toplumsal sınıflar içinde yer aldığı bilincinde toplumun bütünü ile duygu ve davranış ‘birliği’ değilse bile ‘yakınlaşması’ içindedir.”

parallels with the primitive and disorderly conduct of the 1800s in the Western countries.”<sup>8</sup> (Karacan 11)

Karacan’s book *Tarım Kesiminde Geçici Tarım İşçilerinin Çalışma Koşulları, Ücret Sistemleri ve Çalışanların Sosyal Güvenlikleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma: Manisa Örneği*<sup>9</sup> (Karacan) concentrates on the employment of particularly seasonal workers in Manisa (the city where I also carried out my fieldwork) at the time of cotton harvest. Karacan states the aim of the study as: “analysing working conditions, wages and social security for laborers in Turkey’s agricultural workers.” (Karacan 5) The empirical research of the book is quite strong in terms of statistical percentages and data concerning the types of accommodation, remuneration and travel, locality of work, persistence of work relations,...etc. and the descriptive part of labor laws and laws concerning social rights and benefits is also obviously based on detailed research. However the analysis is not satisfactory since it is based on a modernist perspective projecting the label “traditional and underdeveloped” on all the problems and therefore lacks some major variables like ethnicity, gender and class which can only be explored by taking power relations in the field into account.

The same problems of analysis appear in another study, a thesis written on the issue by Hatice Kaleci’s and submitted to the department of sociology of Anadolu University in 2007 is entitled *Mevsimlik Tarım İşçilerinin Sosyolojik Analizi: Eskişehir*

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<sup>8</sup> Ülkemizde tarım işçilerinin sağlık ve sosyal güvenlik sorunları ile çalışma koşulları, çocukluğumun geçtiği üretme çiftliğinde hafızama yerleşmişti. Batı ülkelerinin 1800’lü yıllarda yaşadığı ilkel ve örgütlenmemiş bir düzenin nitelikleri ile paralel çizgiler görülmekteydi.”

<sup>9</sup> A Research on the Working Conditions, Systems of Remuneration and The Social Security of the Temporary Workers in the Sector of Agriculture

Örneği<sup>10</sup> (Kaleci). Kaleci's statistical data on the age, gender, types of remuneration, the cities where they come from and the types of marriage is quite strong yet, the analysis of power relations is limited with the response to the question on who has the last word in the family, coming up with a result that generally older people and men have the power. Although she states that ethnicity takes first place in the worker's self-definition, she chooses not to deal with ethnicity in terms of power relations among various actors in the field. She persistently refers to workers utilizing the names of the cities they come from. In a 234 pages thesis we do not understand that the workers she referred to as *Bursalılar* (*those from Bursa*) are in fact Romany persons until the 111th page. Concerning the Arabs and the Kurds, she only refers to their "language problem" in communicating with the medical personnel and explains the differences between *Urfalılar* (*those from Urfa*) and others referring to their tendency to organize their lives according to the rule of their *aşiret* (tribe) which is the typical scapegoat blocking the modernization of its members in the development discourse. Another factor blocking her vision is that she is approaching power relationships only in terms of their effects on "social integration", which is a very loaded concept assuming that the society will start marching on the road to development as a whole when those who insistently stick to their traditions concede to modern ways of life.

For Şeker, Karacan and Kaleci, all the problems concerned with the seasonal agricultural workers stem from an overall lack of modernization either of the state or of the individual (and most of the time, that of both) and when the process of modernization is completed, the modern state and the individual will have the

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<sup>10</sup> The Sociological Analysis of Seasonal Agricultural Labourers: The Case of Eskişehir

necessary institutions like elections, the media and labor unions to deal with the remaining antagonisms.

The modernist perspective is very popular in the disciplines of medicine and architecture too. The thesis written by Evin Kasımoğlu submitted to the Department of Public Health of Dicle University in 2006 is entitled *Tarımda Çalışan Kadınların Sorunları*<sup>11</sup> and its focus is: “the socio-demographic qualities, health problems, reproductive health, conditions of life and work and job related future expectations of women agricultural workers” (Kasımoğlu 11) The strength of this study is that unlike the previous studies that ignore ethnic differences, she pays attention to the fact that the mother tongue of most of these women is Kurdish and states that not knowing Turkish causes further social isolation for these women, especially in terms of accessing healthcare information and contacting medical authorities. However, the medical language utilized in this study almost equates the women with their uterus, the social environment with the trap of tradition and religion and their physical environments with a swamp filled with salmonella, shigella, scorpions and centipedes deprived of disinfection and basic hygiene.

When “hygiene” is the question, kitchens and toilets are the favorite places to visit and this is where the medical attention is combined with an architectural tint<sup>12</sup> (Sahil and Özbekmezci, Çukurova Yöresindeki Mevsimlik Tarım İşçilerinin Yerleşim Dokuları ve Yaşam Üniteleri) (Sahil and Özbekmezci, Mevsimlik Tarım İşçilerinin Sosyal, Ekonomik Ve Barınma Sorunlarının Analizi). Sahil and Özbekmezci two

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<sup>11</sup> The Problems of Women Working in Agriculture

<sup>12</sup> Actually, all the studies mentioned until now devoted a formidable space to describe the “non-hygienic” and “primitive” toilets and the absence of proper toilet habits.

architects from Gazi University in the two articles that they co-authored state that there is no proper electricity, sewage and water infrastructure and also that the kitchen stalls do not fit the standards in the camp areas in Çukurova (Sahil and Özbekmezci, *Mevsimlik Tarım İşçilerinin Sosyal, Ekonomik Ve Barınma Sorunlarının Analizi* 270) . Sahil and Özbekmezci state that most of the toilets are outside the home, made of plastic and rubber cloth only good for visual protection in which no sewage, water and electricity infrastructure is built and no floortiles, no lavatories, no water closets, no shower trays or basins exist. The most common word used to adress the improperness of toilets is hygiene (*hijyen* in Turkish). The two areas that use the word *hijyen* are modern medical institutions but even more, TV commercials of disinfectants, bleaches, detergents and cleaning agents that address middle class housewives and claim to help them get rid of the viruses, bacteria, microbes or mites in their neat homes or those of personal hygiene products such as toothpastes or anti-bacterial soaps. In almost all the texts, the words hygiene, hygienic or unhygienic are used very frequently. However, for Sahil and Özbekmezci, it is not only the tents and camp areas that do not fit the standards but also the people in them: they do not have the knowledge or manners of eating at a table (which is hygienic), the clothes and dishes are not properly washed, they do not spend any effort to use home appliances like refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, dish-washers, irons or “even tables and bedsteads” (Sahil and Özbekmezci, *Mevsimlik Tarım İşçilerinin Sosyal, Ekonomik Ve Barınma Sorunlarının Analizi* 272) which would change their habits. The modernization project they come up with is building dormitories for the workers where the correct way to live, do housework,

spend their free time (by reading) and apply birth control and care for children can be taught to the workers!

As obvious, when hygiene and birth control are the ends desired to be met, the method that comes out is education. The fantasy of education is indispensable for the modernist ideology in which it is assumed that people would change their habits if they had “known better”. And the reason they don’t know better is the lack of education caused by the neglect of the state. Neglect is the only way the state can come into the picture anyway. According to this discourse, the state has neglected the labor laws, the social security schemes and the education of the workers which is further linked to the level of development of the country because even in the developed countries agriculture is the last sector to receive social security.

The discourse of “neglect” implies that the subject neglecting (unlike for example “ignoring”) does have the intention to pay attention yet, is for some reason unable to do so. Yet here, another question has to be asked: Is the state that this discourse is calling to the field, absent from the field, and is it this absence that makes the seasonal agricultural workers suffer? Obviously there is no way to claim that the state is totally absent from a field that makes one million Kurds and many others wander all around the country for a period ranging from four to eight months a year. Its presence is most visible in the gendarme identity checks mode “for the reasons of security” yet, especially in the case of Kurdish workers, the state does not only haunt the present as an entity which killed their friends and family, evacuated and burnt down their villages, fields, animals and homes, depriving them of any means of sustaining their lives but also is constantly present in the lifeworlds

of Kurdish people even when it is not physically represented by the gendarme. The development discourse, ignoring this presence, is calling the state to more presence in the field.

Once the state is called to exercise greater dominance, it is no wonder that ethnicity can only participate as a “language problem”, gender as a “birth control problem” and class as “a problem of lack of class consciousness combined with the prevalence of tradition and religion”. The discourse that views modernization as a remedy for all ills naturalizes many antagonisms and thus disguises modern power relations like the ones that exist between the Romany or Kurdish people and the Turkish nation state, one between the bodies of women and the state and informal labor and the state. Moreover, the workers are not only disdained as ill-mannered, dirty and ignorant objects but they are also imagined as objects whose lives should be intervened and changed. It is not only the agency of the workers (depicted only as victims of tradition, lack of education, social security and informal labor) that is thus undermined but also “their dignity” in my informants’ words.

#### Social Exclusion and Poverty

The second mainstream academic discourse is the discourse on poverty which emphasizes the definition of the seasonal agricultural workers as “poor citizens” rather than “workers”. The strength of this discourse is its potential to call the state to the letter of the law by using the category of “poor citizenship” to question the category of “equal citizenship” and to call for social policy making. However, the potential is precluded when the seasonal agricultural workers is reduced to an object “waiting” for the help of the subjects, state and society.

Özbek's thesis entitled *New Actors of New Poverty: The "Other" Children of Çukurova* submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of the Middle Eastern Technical University in 2007 is an example to the utilization of this discourse. Özbek's unique contribution to the literature is her addressing seasonal agricultural workers as Kurdish citizens, who are regarded by the state by no means as equal citizens. Among her predecessors there are no authors who have addressed the issue of ethnicity of the workers other than sprinkling a few remarks about "the language problem" (even in this case the majority do not refer to the language as "Kurdish") or simply stating that the employers are mostly Turkish and the workers Kurdish. Özbek states that the workers in Tuzla, Çukurova are internally displaced persons who have been subjected to social exclusion as a result of the spatial, cultural, political and economic exclusion they experienced and that these are the results of the poverty that is conceptualized as "new poverty". She defines social exclusion as the result of "miscommunication between the state and the individual".

However, the drawback of Özbek's thesis is that she subsumed the subjectivities she has addressed such as those formed through violent encounters with the state and society -the ethnic discrimination against the Kurdish internally displaced persons, their forced migration histories, the war between the state and the PKK that has destroyed their lives irreversibly, under the subject of "the poor and the needy" whom the state should help, without which the poor subject cannot break the cycle of poverty. Another problematic area is the explanation she gives for the reason why the state should form new social policies addressing these people: because they are the citizens of the Turkish State (so they do "deserve" attention)

and because their children are the future assets of the society just like all other children.

Özbek states this as follows: “The social state has the responsibility to provide education and health services for all citizens especially for the children who are the assets of developed countries...These people cannot eliminate their poverty, cannot become socially integrated into the society just by their own efforts. The role of the state is important for overcoming poverty and social exclusion....The concept of citizenship implies a notion of equality in that citizens are said to share a common status in respect of the rights and duties that they hold. Families from Şırnak are also the citizens of the Turkish Republic with their right to have healthy houses, live in a healthy environment, benefit from basic infrastructure services like education and health.” (Özbek 110-112)

The M.A. Thesis of Ercan Geçgin *The Sociological Analysis of Seasonal Agricultural Labor in Turkey: The Case of Ankara Polatlı*<sup>13</sup> (Geçgin) is another example of the discourse of poverty and exclusion. In this study, Geçgin describes many types of poverty like absolute poverty, relative poverty, underclass and deep poverty, new poverty and rural poverty and asserts that poverty should not be analyzed by referring only to economic indicators. When he analyzes the poverty, social exclusion and ethnic economy of seasonal agricultural workers, he concludes that the modernization process in Turkey has not been successful in creating the networks that would realize their social integration to the society and therefore the ethnic economy formed around this informal labor continues to reproduce the

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<sup>13</sup> Türkiye’de Mevsimlik Tarım işçiliğinin Sosyolojik Analizi: Ankara Polatlı Örneği

religious and traditional structures. He also asserts that the “Kurdish Problem” as it is called in the popular discourses, whose emergence he tracks since the Ottoman Empire, has intensified the social exclusion Kurdish workers are experiencing.

This study is quite insightful in the sense that it addresses the ethnic issues and that it does not presume the automatic resolution of antagonisms when modernization comes like the messiah. However, the drawback of this approach is that it sees the problems related to ethnicity as mere reflection of the larger ethnic antagonism and turns a blind eye to how the ethnic antagonisms are experienced daily within the field and that it is just another place where ethnicity is produced and reproduced in each and every encounter. Also, his analysis of the workers’ relation to their poverty depicts a lack of consciousness about the “reality” of poverty since they approach the issue in terms of religion which brings about “fatalism” about their poverty.

Although both of the studies address the structural inequalities and recognize the power relations organizing them, they fall short of realizing the potential for critical analysis of the concept of equal citizenship instead they call the state to the field as a care-giver rather than a political actor with whom the stakes of equality can be negotiated. The main reason for this is the victimizing language used to describe seasonal agricultural workers and the patronizing gaze which depicts the workers as “lacking” in modernity and being “excessive” in tradition and religion.

## Reports of NGOs

The representative branch of the International Labor Organization has released a report entitled *The Working and Living Conditions and Problems of Migrant and Temporary Agricultural Women Workers*<sup>14</sup> in 2002 (Yıldırak, Gülçubuk and Gün). This study is one of the most detailed studies conducted on seasonal agricultural workers, conducted in 11 cities on 1236 workers. Yet, it reaffirms that the quantity of informants does not guarantee the quality of the study. The report is an excellent case in which the subjectivities of workers both in terms of gender and ethnicity are made invisible through the development discourse and how they are represented both as victims and bodies devoid of agency. In setting out the aim of the study, the reason that the women agricultural workers are being exploited is given as their being trapped in traditional social structures and that they are far from being modernized: the study maintains that the problems of seasonal agricultural workers constitute an area to be addressed for Turkey as an EU candidate and it is within this statement that the importance of the study is situated. That the majority of the seasonal agricultural workers are Kurdish is totally left out of the study, while the “language problem” is presented as the result of lack of schooling among women. With this perspective, all the problems are depicted as the result of “the neglect of the state” whereas the solutions do not go further than calling for the education of women (especially on family planning) and the betterment of certain conditions such as wages or hygiene.

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<sup>14</sup> Türkiye’de Gezici ve Geçici Kadın Tarım İşçilerinin Çalışma ve Yaşam Koşulları ve Sorunları

The report prepared by ÇİFTÇİ-SEN (Aysu) is not a research report but an overall evaluation of the conditions such as low wages and low social security percentages. The unique contribution of the report is that it situates the exploitation of seasonal agricultural workers into the framework of neoliberal transformations of the capitalist system and its effects on the environment and agriculture in general and peasants (especially landless peasants) in particular. Aysu draws attention to the war in the southeastern region and the social exclusion the workers face. Although they imply that the workers are regarded as potential terrorists, they do not explicitly write that it is a Kurdish issue. In this report, we face a very interesting phenomenon: although they resort to the language of development while depicting the unfavorable conditions as “inhumanly” and “like those deemed fit for slaves” and the women as “unorganized, uneducated and at the lowest ranks of the social hierarchy”, the overall language of the report does not call for “development” but for the strengthening of the workers who they regard as active social agents. Another unique contribution is that they, as a farmers’ organization, put due blame on farmers in the exploitation of the workers.

I will next consider the two reports by two human rights organizations MAZLUM-DER (Solidarity Organization for Human Rights and the Oppressed<sup>15</sup>) Report (Çiçek, Argunağa ve Bilbil) and İHD (Human Rights Organization<sup>16</sup>) Report (Salihoğlu, Altay ve Yolsal) together. A large bulk of these two reports are composed of direct quotations from the interviews they conducted in their areas, which is exactly what gives these two reports their strength. While İHD started its

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<sup>15</sup> İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar İçin Dayanışma Derneği

<sup>16</sup> İnsan Hakları Derneği

research on a very specific event, when the governor of Ordu restricted the Kurdish workers' access to the city centre, MAZLUM-DER's report was initiated by the Batman branch of the organization to study the overall problems of the workers who go from Batman to the "Western" cities as agricultural workers. Both reports take into account the ethnic discrimination faced by Kurds as well as drawing attention to the discriminatory conduct of the security forces, namely the police and the gendarme. The Mazlum-Der report point to the fact that many seasonal workers were forcibly migrated, their villages were burnt and their means of survival was taken from them by the state.

#### Investigation Proposals by Political Parties

In the parliamentary investigation proposal (CHP`den Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri Önergesi) motioned by CHP in April 2008, only the bad conditions of travel, work and life for seasonal agricultural workers are depicted in a picturesque language. It is claimed that we only remember them in case of an accident that ends up in their death and calls for the betterment of "the primitive conditions that they have to live in Turkey in the 21<sup>st</sup> century". However, the reasons why these people (and not others) are to accept these conditions are not even touched upon. Neither the ethnicity, nor the problems the Kurdish workers experience because of their different ethnic identity are mentioned.

It is not surprising for a statist party in Turkey to write such a report. The discourse of the DTP, the Kurdish party, is not so different from that of CHP at first sight, yet their difference appears in what they call for. In August 2007, Akin Birdal and Gülten Kışanak, two DTP deputies, visited Adapazarı, a city where seasonal

agricultural workers are employed, and talked with the governor and the mayor of the city and issued a press release saying that there were forty three thousand seasonal agricultural workers who came to Adapazarı from the Southeastern Region of Turkey and their rights were being violated in every domain from travelling to sheltering (Korkut). The difference between their and CHP's discourse is that they demanded their inclusion in social security schemes and asked that they are allowed to organize. They also called for the enactment of the Agricultural Employment Law. They also stated that the workers were being given different wages according to the region they came from and that the violators of their rights should be exposed. In December 2008, Fatma Kurtulan, another DTP deputy, motioned a research proposal asking how many seasonal agricultural workers there were in Turkey and how many died in traffic accidents in 2008 (Kurtulan sordu Çelik yanıtladı). The Minister of Labour and Social Security, Faruk Çelik replied that there were five thousand three hundred ninety six seasonal workers, leaving the accident question unanswered. Although the actual number exceeded one million, the statement of the minister did not cause anything close to a scandal. In June 2009, Sevahir Bayındır, another DTP deputy, asked for the formation of a parliamentary commission to investigate the children informally working in industry and agriculture, claiming that child labour is the worst form of labor exploitation (DTP'den Çalışan Çocuklarla İlgili Araştırma Önergesi).

Four days later, AKP deputy Mehmet Emin Ekmen presented a report on seasonal agricultural workers to the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Ömer Dinçer claiming that seasonal agricultural workers were experiencing problems in travel, accommodation, health, wage, social security and other issues and proposed

the formation of a parliamentary monitoring commission for seasonal agricultural workers' movement. He further proposed using the railway for travelling, yet he claimed that highways would continue to be used, so he proposed the governors of the cities that give and receive seasonal migration to carry out stricter controls of conditions of travel. Among his proposals there were mobile education and health units as well as prefabricated houses to be used by the workers and a phone line to be established for the workers to deliver their complaints. He asked for temporary toilets and provision of healthy and clean drinking water to be provided ('Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri' raporu hazırlandı). This proposal research later on evolved into the memorandum issued by the Prime Ministry, which I will evaluate at length in the concluding chapter.

#### Articles in Newspapers and Journals

The texts produced and circulated most commonly on the seasonal agricultural workers comes from newspaper articles. These are either news of road accidents while being transported to the fields at the back of the trucks or the news about the "inhuman" conditions that they have to live in. One example of them is the news published by Radikal newspaper in 13.04.2008 entitled "Seasonal Catastrophe: Nine deaths" (Mevsimlik Felaket: Dokuz Ölüm). It draws attention to the fact that the previous year, a memorandum had been issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordering proper conditions of travel yet it became obvious that this memorandum was forgotten and was not being enforced when "the season for agricultural workers to be loaded into trucks like potato bags" came. Generally in the newspapers, the problems of the workers are depicted in terms of the tents

they live in, low salaries, in the children who are not fed and dressed properly, in daughters who are not allowed to go to school and instead are forced to get married at an early age. Another problem frequently seen in newspaper is that the workers who come from the Southeastern Region work in an “organized” way and threaten the owners of the fields or the shop owners in the region. Therefore the workers are depicted either as victims or as “dangerous” individuals. The several strikes the workers organize when their salaries are not paid, their numbers reaching 50.000 in Çukurova and 30.000 in Polatlı take place only in the leftist newspaper *Birgün*, or in leftist websites such as *iscimucadelesi.net* or *atilim.org*. We can conclude that the news in mainstream newspapers do all they can in order not to refer to the workers as political agents.

The issue of seasonal agricultural workers is handled in a more poetic way by the columnists in the newspapers as well as by the authors of the articles in social science or socio-political journals. But the language of these texts is also more cynical and also more victimizing than any text produced on the subject. The victimization in these texts is different than the ones that call for the betterment of the conditions and the provision of services by the state. On the other hand, the positive aspect of this language is that these texts use victimization as a tactic of politicizing the issue. Yıldırım Türker’s article is a good example in this sense. He starts his article published in *Radikal İki* in 12.08.2007 with the sentence: “Oh my mute brothers, seasonal slaves.”<sup>17</sup> (Türker) After vividly describing the awful conditions Kurdish agricultural workers experience (likening the place their tents are located to the worst of refugee camps), he describes deputies of the Kurdish

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<sup>17</sup> “Ah dilsiz kardeşlerim. Mevsimlik köleler.”

party (DTP) in the parliament as: “They are the representatives of the Kurdish slaves who are exiled from their homes to earn bread and butter, who suffer long journeys on the back of the trucks like cattle and stay in tents on top of each other and who are made to work under the surveillance of the police to pick your olives and hazelnuts” (Türker). Therefore he does not only recognize the Kurdish political identity of both the workers and the deputies but also acknowledges the adversities against it in every area from the fields to the parliament.

This language is utilized by other texts, such as those published as two episodes in the popular political magazine *Express* entitled “Hazelnuts of Wrath” and “Cottons of Wrath”<sup>18</sup> by Şahan Nuhoğlu. Nuhoğlu states that they will accompany the “expeditionary coolies”<sup>19</sup> on their way to the fields thousands of kilometers away and depicts the scene at the train station in Diyarbakır as “There are gunny bags all over the place. Homes that fit into a gunny bag and scattered lives carried on shoulders”<sup>20</sup> (Nuhoğlu, *Gazap Fındıkları* 26). Like the reports of human rights organizations I cited above, these texts make use of direct quotations from formal interviews and informal chats, ending up becoming much more powerful. For example a thirty years old man, Muhsin Özkan is quoted as saying:

They call this place the region of terror. What can we do? We are forced to take a weapon, go to the mountains and rebel. Still, this issue won't be solved. They are the terror, we are not. It is their shame, not of the citizen... Come, I'll give you this heavy bag, can you carry it? I'm calling out to them, the citizen here is wronged. They talk about human rights, is this human rights? How can the EU take us as a member? Do things like this happen in Europe? (...) Can you carry your family, your children around under these conditions? (...) We weren't educated like them in

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<sup>18</sup> “Gazap Fındıkları”, “Gazap Pamukları”

<sup>19</sup> “seferi ırgatlar”

<sup>20</sup> “Çuvallar var her tarafta. Bir çuvalın içine sığabilen evler ve omuzlarda taşınan savrulmuş hayatlar.”

Ankara. While they were studying, we were hoeing the fields. He carries the ID of the Turkish State and so do I. It's a shame. (...) When it comes to the military service, we also do it just like them. They should invest here, we also want to live like human beings.<sup>21</sup>

As we can see in the excerpt above, all the elements of the development discourse are utilized here as well: citizenship, human rights, awful conditions, the EU, education, children; even the elements of the discourse of the state: terror. Yet, the difference between the developmentalist texts and the words of this man lie in their potential either to conform to the dominant discourse or to subvert it. For example while the discourse of development would argue (as will be seen in the analysis below) that lack of education is the effect of traditional structures the workers are trapped in, Özkan draws attention to the inequality of opportunity which apparently is not the effect of tradition. Also, by naming the politico-economic violence of the state in the region as "terror", he subverts the dominant discourse on terror.

Another example is the words of Ahmet from Nusaybin: "We have some knowledge from journals and newspapers. We know what is going on. We don't have any bad thoughts but forget about it, there's no place for us, you see? Even if we get education till the end, it's in vain."<sup>22</sup> Ahmet's words situate education in an even more political context than equal opportunity when he states that the benefits

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<sup>21</sup> Buraya söylüyorlar terör bölgesi. Ne yapalım? Mecburen alacağız en sonunda bir silah, çıkacağız dağlara, isyan çıkartacağız. Yine bu şey bitmeyecek. Kendileri terördür, biz değiliz. Bu onların ayıbı, vatandaşın değil...Gel sana vereyim, bu çuvalın hamallığını yapabilir misin? Onlara sesleniyorum, bu vatandaş mağdurdur. İnsan hakları söylüyorlar, bu insan hakkı mı, ha? Avrupa birliği nasıl alacak bizi içine? Avrupa'da hiç böyle şeyler oluyor mu?...Sen aileni çoluk-çocuk demeden böyle taşıyabilir misin?.. Biz onlar gibi Ankara'larda okuyamadık. Onlar okurken biz tarlada çapa yapıyorduk. O da Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kimliği taşıyor, ben de. Ayıptır...Askerliğe geldi mi, biz de onlar gibi askerliğimizi yapıyoruz...Getirsinler buraya bir yatırım, biz de insan gibi yaşamak istiyoruz.

<sup>22</sup> "Biraz birikimimiz var dergilerden, gazetelerden olsun. Biz her şeyin ne olup bittiğini biliyoruz. Biz kötü bir düşünce taşımıyoruz, ama boşverelim, yine de yer yok bize, anlıyor musun? Sonuna kadar okusak da boştur yani."

of education cannot change much because of the fundamental alterity of the Kurdish political subjectivity. This political subjectivity is under siege, preventing its bearers from “having a place”. The dialogical voice of Nuhoğlu’s article by giving voice to Ahmet’s and Özkan’s (along with many others’) subversive language, opens up a space for other subjectivities to emerge, challenging the only subject position (namely that of the victim) of the monophonic discourse of modernity. Moreover, Nuhoğlu’s voice, just like Türker’s in his own text, is a voice bearing more fury and rebellion than the typical voice of the author writing from within the language of modernity which has a tone of pity and compassion.

### Conclusion

As we have observed, the most common problem with the literature on seasonal agricultural workers is both in Turkey and abroad is the victimizing gaze of the researcher/author on the workers. As Nelson Ferguson reminds us: “To victimize is often to dehumanize” (Ferguson 51) and we see quite a bit of dehumanizing especially when the authors describe the bodily conditions and environments of the workers. The “abject poverty” and “abject environments” described in these texts often turn into the description of dirty, diseased and “abject bodies” of the ill-mannered, ignorant workers trapped in tradition, fatalism and religion.

Another major consequence of these discourses is the depiction of structural inequalities resulting from state policies on gender, ethnicity and class, as the result of “miscommunication” between the state and the citizen, or of the underdevelopment and lack of modernization of both the state and the workers. What is foreclosed in this picture therefore is the structural violence of the state

and of capital on the very bodies of the workers. Furthermore, the power/knowledge produced by these studies serves further to the victimization and objectification of exacerbating their powerlessness.

Yet, there are other studies which neither ignore the power relations organizing the larger framework of employment of seasonal agricultural workers, nor the power relations within the field always in interaction with the former. They are based mostly on ethnographic research and written with an anthropological perspective on the everyday encounters of the workers within and outside the field exploring how the workers actively participate in power relations, negotiate their positions, find creative tactics to snatch power and utilize it. The following study is such an attempt exploring power relations experienced within the actual or imagined encounters through the bodies of the actors involved in the process of agricultural production.

## CHAPTER 3

### LABOR PROCESS

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the structure of the labor processes I encountered during my field research and the factors determining which worker is employed in which type of work. I have two aims in this chapter: the first is to unpack the homogeneous and empirical category of seasonal agricultural workers and to show how heterogeneous and detailed the agricultural work is contrary to its categorization as straightforward work requiring no skills or expertise. I will depict the processes of recruitment and organization of labor for each product in order to counter the thesis that any seasonal agricultural worker can be replaced arbitrarily with any other and show that the skills, expertise, ethnicity, age, gender and the place of residence of the workers are determining factors in the decision to recruit the workers. My second aim is to analyze these factors to see how far they can determine the structure of the labor processes and which parts of the labor processes remain unregulated and to-be-structured hands on in the everyday labor practice.

The chapter is composed of two sections: 1) Processes of Labor in the Harvest of Tobacco, Grapes, Tomatoes and Gherkins and 2) Attempts to Structure Labor Processes by Managing Encounters.

In the first section, I will depict in detail the labor conditions (which includes conditions of accommodation), the time spent in the specific field, the types of

work, the types of remuneration, whether they are migrant or not, and the route the migrant workers travel during the season. I will also describe the variety of middlemen included in the production process, especially farm labor intermediaries called *dayıbaşı*, who supply workers to the employers. In order to fully describe the labor process, I will also include in this section description of the agricultural enterprise, its owner(s) and the role they play in the production process, its scale and finally the workers employed in the enterprise for labor control. I will categorize the fields according to the agricultural product in order to see the patterns of production and employment organized according to the production process each product necessitates.

I will give this detailed picture also because it allowed me to see that there are many variables in determining which worker would be employed in which particular type of work and among them four are crucial to explain the process: 1) the scale of production, 2) whether the worker is migrant or non-migrant, 3) the ethnicity of the worker and 4) the gender of the worker. In the second section of this chapter, I will depict the attempts of managing encounters through these factors as well as through the roles of labor intermediaries and labor controllers, through the regulation of spaces of work and accommodation and through the interventions of the gendarme. With an analysis of these variables it becomes clear that different types of work bring different groups of actors together who encounter each other under different circumstances and engage in different power relations. Yet it will also clarify that the interplay of these variables cannot fully determine the structure of the labor processes, mobilizing the attempts of the actors to further structure them by managing and minimizing encounters.

## Processes of Labor in the Harvest of Tobacco, Grapes, Tomatoes and Gherkins

I will begin this section by depicting the production of tobacco and grapes which are generally produced on a smaller scale and within local networks, moving on to the production of tomatoes and gherkins organized on a larger scale and by mobilizing larger networks.

### Tobacco

In June 2009, for five days I stayed in a small village called Dualar 8 km away from Soma and participated in the harvest of tobacco. The family I stayed with was picking their own tobacco. The two daughters of the family Feyza and Sıdıka and the mother Gülcan worked as the household labor team harvesting the tobacco. They worked seven days a week and stayed in a tent pitched up next to their field but they also occasionally went back and forth to their house in the village (which is approximately ten minutes by foot) for some reproductive chores like washing the clothes in the washing machine and cooking bread. Nihat (the father) worked in the field very rarely but he did all the work that required driving the tractor, the usage of construction tools and carrying heavy loads or contacting the merchant and making decisions on selling the tobacco. And Şehim, the youngest child of the family, was only responsible for carrying objects back and forth to the field between their house in the village and the tent and feeding the lambs.

The next door neighbor was both the grocer of the town and a tobacco grower, employing ten women workers who lived in Soma and stayed in their homes and came to the field every day for work. They came from the center of the town 10 kilometers away from the village. Their labor intermediary (*dayıbaşı*) was

Fatma whose mother-in-law was from this village and she brought the ten women who are her friends and family. Unlike many other intermediaries, she worked in the field as well and did not receive any extra money for being the intermediary. She said they came to work for this family almost every summer. The grocer took them home in his minivan and took them from home to the field in the morning. They worked for a daily wage of 22 TL for approximately two months, six days a week, taking the sundays off.

The field across the next door neighbor was being harvested by Romany workers who live in Akhisar (approximately 50 km away from the field they work) and they stayed in a tent next to the field. They did not have a labor intermediary (*dayıbaşı*), the father and the eldest son had come to Soma to make the arrangements with the farmer and they had settled on a piece work rate of 280 TL per decare. The field they harvested was approximately 12 decares and the workers estimated that they would finish the harvest in approximately in 60 days and 6 workers were eligible to work in the field (of the 10 members of the family, the father could only work in aligning the tobacco since he was sick and the three kids were too young to work) therefore with a rough calculation, each worker was to work for 9.3 TL per day. The Romany workers had come to the field directly from home and were planning to return home before finding another job like “maybe cutting tomatoes” they said or in the fruit orchards in Akhisar. They said they also worked in picking olives in November but between these fields they first went home and then to another field. Another daughter of the family who is married worked in a field close by with her husband’s family and I also heard several stories of Romany worker groups working in the harvest of tobacco. Therefore, it can be claimed that

it is a custom to employ Romany people from close-by places in the harvest. I never heard any stories of Kurdish or Arab workers working in tobacco, the reasons for which will be elaborated in the second section.

Table 1: Tobacco workers –ethnicity

Group - Workplace	Worker's Ethnicity	Worker's place of origin	Type of Remuneration	Amount of Remuneration	Type of Accommodation
1 (soma)	Turkish (HH labor)	Soma village			Tent and Home
2 (soma)	Turkish	Soma city center	Daily wage	22 TL	Home
3 (Soma)	Romany	Akhisar	Piece rate	280TL/decare	Tent

Table 2: Tobacco workers-gender

Groups	Gender of the Worker	Type of Work
1	3 women& 1 man	Women- picking and aligning tobacco Men- aligning tobacco, carrying baskets and using machines
2	10 women	Picking and aligning tobacco
3	4 women& 2 men	Women- picking and aligning tobacco Men- aligning tobacco and carrying baskets

The steps of growing tobacco are as follows: the tobacco seedlings are planted by mid-April mostly by the members of the family. In the field that I worked, they told me that the father drives the tractor while the two girls sit at the two ends of a low carriage linked to the tractor and poke holes in the ground with a thick stick in the first round and clamp the leaves of the seedlings in a machine that plants them by rotating it. During may, the father and another man from the village apply the

pesticide and fertilizers. At the beginning of June, the family members hoe the ground to ensure greater growth. The harvest begins around mid-June and it goes on for 2-3 months. The harvest is the most labor intensive process, although all the previous processes like planting, fertilizing and applying pesticides are conducted by farmers themselves or by mobilizing family or acquaintances and necessitate at most 10 days of labor, the harvest and drying process necessitate 2-3 months of labor of 5-10 workers depending on the skill and speed of the workers involved in the production for approximately 15-20 decares of tobacco field.

The fully grown tobacco plant is harvested in three steps which are called *birinci el*, *ikinci el* and *üçüncü el*, which literally means first hand, second hand and third hand. The first hand is the first step of picking the lowest 4-5 leaves (about 10 centimeters above the ground), which become a yellowish green before the upper leaves (which is the correct time for picking them). All the first hand picking is done once the worker picks the first 4-5 leaves of a plant and moves on to the next plant to pick the same leaves of this plant and goes on picking the first hand leaves until the whole row of plants is picked and moves on to the next row. This process goes on for several days until all the first hand leaves are picked and then the workers start the second hand leaves which by this time have grown yellowish enough to be picked. The same process is repeated for the second hand leaves and third hand leaves moving upward each time in each plant.



third  
hand  
to be  
picked

first and  
second  
hand  
picked



Tobacco leaves  
aligned on skewers



Tobacco leaves  
transferred to bamboo  
sticks

When the tobacco leaves are harvested, the next task is to align the tobacco leaves on skewers (which are called *iğne*- needles). All the family members (or in the case of seasonal workers all workers) sit in a shady area and align the leaves on skewers, making sure that the skewer passes through the main vein of the leaf. The next task is to transfer the leaves from the skewers to strings. Only the one with highest skills and experience can do this, which is either the father of the worker family or the eldest woman worker. In skilled hands, this task lasts for about 10 minutes after which the younger workers attach both sides of the rope to the two ends of a cane and hang those canes horizontally in a plastic tent called the greenhouse (*sera*), letting the leaves dry. After all the leaves dry, the family members blend and bale up the leaves to be sold to the merchant who in turn sells them to the tobacco companies.

A regular day of tobacco harvest starts when workers wake up around 5 am and go right into the field. It goes on until 10.30 – 11.00 am with only one break

around 9 am for half an hour for breakfast. Until 11.00 am, three baskets of tobacco each weighing approximately 30 kilograms is picked. Afterwards, the full baskets are taken to the porch in front of the tent/house and the leaves are aligned on the skewers and transferred to the strings. Around 12 am, the workers have lunch and later they drink tea while aligning the leaves. This lasts until 4 pm and around 5 pm the workers go back to the field picking 2-3 baskets of tobacco until 8 pm. Then, they have dinner and align the leaves picked in the afternoon until 10 pm and they go to bed immediately after the work is done to wake up at 5 am the next morning.

### Grapes

I worked in the harvest of grapes in a field in Sazova, a village approximately 10 kilometers. from Akhisar and for one day in Göbekli which is in Alaşehir, and I also participated in the grape production in Killik, Alaşehir for one day and observed it for another.

Table 3: Grape Workers- Ethnicity

Group Number & Place of Work	Worker Ethnicity	Worker's place of origin	Type of Remuneration	Amount of Remuneration	Distance home-workplace	Type of Accommodation
4 Akhisar	Turkish - Bulgarian Turk	Akhisar center	Daily wage	Cutter 22 Rack 25	10 kilometers	home
5 Hampaşa	Yürük (Turkish)	Akhisar mountain village	Daily wage	Cutter 20 Box carrier 25	55 kilometers	home
6 Göbekli	Turkish	Göbekli	Piece rate and reciprocated labor	Equivalent labor or 20 TL	0 kilometers	home
7 Killik	Roman	Aydın	Daily wage	Cutter 20	220	tent

	y			Box carrier 23	kilomete rs	
8 Killik	Kurdish	Diyarba kır	Daily wage	Cutter 20 Box carrier 23	1400 kilomete rs	tent
9 Killik	Turkish	Akhisar	Daily wage and piece rate	20 TL/ camion	100 kilomete rs	Room at the coffeehouse

Table 4: Grape Workers - Gender

Group Number& Place of Work	Gender of the Worker	Type of Work
4 Akhisar	3 women& 1 man	Women- picking and aligning tobacco Men- aligning tobacco, carrying baskets and using machines
5 Hampaşa	10 women	Women- Picking and aligning tobacco
6 Göbekli	4 women& 2 men	Women- picking and aligning tobacco Men- aligning tobacco and carrying baskets

Grapes unlike the other agricultural products I worked in the harvest of, are not planted each year as seedlings but the grape vines are planted once and the same vines produce grapes every summer. Therefore, the labor necessary before the harvest is not to plant new seedlings but to tend the vines, clear the weeds around them and apply pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. It is either the farmer and his family who do all these pre-harvest jobs or he does them with the help of the *kahya* the man employed for the whole year helping the farmer in all the jobs to be performed.

When it is time for harvest, seasonal labor is employed. The grapes in Manisa are produced only for drying so in the harvest there are three tasks that different groups of the majority of hired workers perform simultaneously during the harvest: 1) cutting bunches of grapes loose from the vines and collecting them in plastic boxes, 2) loading the boxes that weigh approximately 50 kilograms on the cart pulled by the tractor and unloading and emptying the boxes when the tractor arrives at the area where a white plastic rack<sup>23</sup> is stretched, 3) spreading the grapes with the correct density evenly on the rack.

Both men and women work in the first process and the number of workers vary from ten to twenty and they are called *kesimcis* (cutters). The second task, which contains carrying heavy loads, is performed only by men who are called *kasacıs* (box-carriers<sup>24</sup>) and usually fewer workers than half of the first group is sufficient. And in the third, which is spreading the grapes on the rack, three to six women work depending on the size of the group doing the first task and they are called *sergicis* (meaning working on the rack).

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<sup>23</sup> What I call a rack is a porous fabric made of white plastic. It is spread on the ground and the fruit and vegetables to be dried are spread on it and left in the sun for drying. The rack used in the drying of grapes comes as rolls and is unrolled as its top is filled with grapes to be dried. The rack used in tomatoes is much larger in width and length and it is spread on and pinned to the ground over a whole field with huge pins and it is durable enough to allow tractors to drive on it for the whole season.

<sup>24</sup> Although some tasks like working on the rack, cutting tomatoes precisely in the middle and fast or transferring tobaccos aligned on the needles to ropes are counted among the tasks that require skill, carrying heavy loads of boxes and baskets are never categorized as tasks requiring skill but as tasks requiring muscular strength. I have never encountered a woman working as a box-carrier; it is categorized strictly as a man's job. I will elaborate further on the gendering of labor in the chapter called Family and Home.



Cutter



Rack workers in the front and  
box carriers at the back

Depending on whether the grapes are dried organically or not, the third task may change. If they are dried organically, the task is as I depicted above, and the grapes dry in 20 days. Yet the risk of rain increases as drying time increases and some farmers prefer not to take the risk if they do not already have connections with customers who specifically ask for organically dried grapes. In non-organic drying, the drying time is reduced to 10 days and since the grapes dry in less time, they are aligned more densely, requiring less space for the drying process. For this type of drying, a huge tank filled with a mixture of water, potassium carbonate ( $KCO_3$ ) and olive oil (to make the grapes look shiny) is set up. The grapes are then dipped into this mixture called *potas* (potash). Next to the tank is located a metal slide where the boxes slide down and where the excess liquid flows down into a bucket later to be added to the original mixture. Therefore if the drying process is non-organic drying, after the grapes are put into the boxes, they are dipped into the potassium carbonate mixture, and after a few minutes, they are carried to the rack and emptied on it.

Working on the rack requires more skill than working as a cutter because the thickness<sup>25</sup> with which the grapes should be aligned varies depending on whether the grapes would be dried organically or after being dipped into potash. The worker has to know both thicknesses by rule of thumb in order to distinguish between them. If the grapes are aligned too thinly, they fly away with the wind, if they are aligned too thickly, the drying time would be too long and they could rot. If part of the grapes is aligned thinly and another thickly, the grapes would dry at different times, making it impossible to end the drying process at the right time for both groups of grapes. So the workers have to watch the thickness with which the other workers align the grapes and warn each other if necessary. In order for this kind of teamwork to operate smoothly, the workers on the rack should work as a team. Moreover, since the rack is mostly far from the field, the small groups working on the rack eat their lunch and have their breaks together, which require the workers to get along well with one another.

In Sazova in İbrahim Abi's field, there were two groups of workers: the Yürük workers from the mountain village called Hampaşa and the neighbors of the *kahya*<sup>26</sup> of İbrahim Abi. Most of the neighbors of İbrahim Abi's *kahya*, were Bulgarian Turks<sup>27</sup> and two or three others were Turkish like the *kahya* himself.

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<sup>25</sup> Thickness is used to describe how densely the grapes should be placed on the rack.

<sup>26</sup> İbrahim Abi was the only boss who had a *kahya* (a permanent and trusted wage worker who has knowledge and experience about all the processes in the field, who also drives the pick-up van or the tractor when needed). I believe the reason for this is the fact that İbrahim Abi is also in charge of his father's rock salt business and Ali Abi, *kahya*, also helped İbrahim Abi with that business.

<sup>27</sup> Turkish people who migrated from Bulgaria to Turkey.

The majority of the cutters were *Yürük* workers but five to seven workers who are neighbors of the *kahya* worked as cutters as well. All the rack workers were from the group of neighbors of İbrahim Abi's *kahya*. And all the box carriers were *Yürük* men. The labor intermediary of the *Yürük* workers was also the owner and the driver of the minibus which took them 55 kilometers. from the mountain village they live in, (Hampaşa, the mountain village of Akhisar which is farthest away from the center) to the field and back every day. He received all the salaries of the *Yürük* workers and distributed it to them at the end of the job. He received 5 liras from the farmer for each worker's transportation expenses and as the price of being the labor intermediary. The *Yürük* workers who were cutters were paid 20 TL and those who were the box carriers were paid 25 TL.

The *kahya* was the one who arranged the job for his neighbors. He was also the one who drove them home with the pick-up van of the farmer as he went home. However, he did not receive any extra money for transportation or as the intermediary wage. He also did not interfere with the problems between the farmer and the worker, although some workers expected him to. Yet, some others had met the farmer the year before or had known him for a longer time, the farmer also knew them by their names and they communicated their issues (such as a worker who was supposed to inform the boss that she would not be able to come the next day) to him personally. The workers who were the neighbors of the *kahya* were all women and the cutters received 22 TL and the ones who worked on the rack received 25 TL.

Neither the Yürük workers nor the neighbor of the *kahya* knew what the others' daily wage and the farmer warned me not to tell them anything since it could cause the *Yürüks* to protest against the two liras difference between the wages of the two groups of cutters. Everyone knew that working on the rack or as a box carrier was paid higher but few tried to switch to the higher-paying job since in order to carry boxes one had to be a strong man and in order to work on the rack, one had to be an experienced woman.

The *Yürüks* had good and lasting relations with the farmers around this region. The brother of the *Yürüks'* dayıbaşı owned a minibus too and he had brought workers for another farmer from Sazova (the same village) for picking tomatoes a few weeks before. A few of the workers here had also worked in that field. Apart from that, the *Yürüks* also owned tobacco fields and olive trees of their own and they came to work in the field in Sazova if their own fields did not require any or required little attention at that moment. Some of the neighbors of the *kahya* also had other jobs like a winter job as a cleaning worker at a school or doing piece-work jobs at home for the market and two were students. Moreover, their husbands had permanent jobs: one was a retired cook, another owned an auto-repairs shop and another was a gardener at the municipality. So neither groups totally depended on seasonal work for a living although all definitely needed the money they would receive.

Later on, I went to a town called Göbekli in Alaşehir to observe the grape harvest. I participated in the picking of grapes of the family I stayed with, with the workers from the same village. Sirman calls this type of labor village labor and notes

that the mechanisms of recruitment of village labor “are based on a rationality that significantly differs from the rationality of the market: I call this ‘the rationality of the community’.” (Sirman 320) As Sirman further notes, it is the rationality of community that distinguishes the circulation of labor within the village (which cannot be explained on basis of simple economic terms) from the circulation of labor as seasonal labor for the recruitment of which non-market “relations [are] much reduced” (Sirman 341).

For village labor, the general remuneration type was equivalent labor in each other’s field. But there were also workers working for a daily wage. Among them, only a woman who had very little land, whose husband had died and whose child was mentally disabled was paid immediately. The others were to be paid later on. The relationships in this field were much smoother than the ones I experienced in the case of hired labor. The farmer himself worked as long as the workers did, the farmer’s wife did the hardest job, working on the rack beneath the sun (whereas the workers were in the shade of the vines) and two of the workers even yelled at the farmer for not doing his job properly: one for not cleaning the weeds that stick to clothes and irritate the skin (she even threatened him that she will not work in his field again if he does not clean them) and the other for not buying him cigarettes. The farmer apologized to the woman and said that he had a legitimate excuse for not cleaning the weeds, he did not have time because the harvest of cucumbers he had planted went bad and that he had to dedicate all his time to it. And he responded to the guy demanding cigarettes with all kinds of jokes, saying that I was the one responsible for tobacco, or saying that his son who had left that day for İzmir would bring him cigarettes...etc. and all the workers laughed and had a

lot of fun. The farmer also ate with the workers and everyone shared the food they had with each other. It was also the shortest working day I ever came across: we started at 05.30 am had a break for an hour at 9 am and ended the work at 2 pm. Later, when we came home, the farmer told me, showing the Kurdish cucumber workers' tents: "You know what? These guys work from sunrise to sunset, no one from our village works so long under the sun even if you kill them!"

Another town I worked in the harvest of grapes was called Killik in Alaşehir, surrounded with a large number of vineyards. There were two groups of seasonal migrant workers: Romany workers from Aydın and Kurdish workers from Diyarbakır. The workers there had come to the region without a specific arrangement with a specific farmer. Both groups stayed in an area close to the village that was reserved for their tents and the farmers contacted their *dayıbaşıs* daily when they needed workers. They also found daily wage jobs in food processing factories and in some cold storage houses. I did not have the chance to work with them, yet, I visited the tents of the workers and we had long chats. I also visited them in the field they worked in and observed their daily routine.

Killik was different from the other places I observed where grapes were produced. The harvest of grapes necessitates short term labor and vineyards are generally small therefore the labor necessary for the harvest is supplied by mobilizing local or regional labor. However in Killik, there are so many vineyards and they are packed together making it impossible for local labor to supply the labor demand. Therefore, in Killik both Kurdish and Romany labor is employed.

When I arrived at Killik, at the beginning of September, it was almost the end of the harvest season and both Kurdish and Romany workers informed me that there had been more workers previously but they had left a few days before I arrived. The Kurdish workers said that there had been almost 150 tents before and there were only 15 left. The group whose tents I visited were from Diyarbakır and their *dayıbaşı*, Dayıbaşı Mehmet was the intermediary of five tents, which amounts to more or less thirty workers. He said that they used to pick cotton in Söke in previous years but a few years ago the cotton-picking machine replaced them. He said that there were still a few fields where cotton was hand-picked and he was planning to go there but the day before they called him from a pepper processing factory and demanded twenty-five workers to cut thirty tons of peppers. Dayıbaşı Mehmet expected that job to last for a week and maybe later, they were going to go to Söke.

There were approximately 20 tents of Romany workers. They said that the majority of the workers had left for home and that the remaining would leave in 3-5 days. They had come five weeks before from Aydın, their hometown, and they would return there without going anywhere else for work. The *dayıbaşı* responsible for them said that the following year they would look for other places for work because they were not paid well enough this year. Both groups told me that daily wages were higher the previous year since there were less workers but they were reduced this year because more workers came to the region. In Killik the wages were daily and fixed: 20 TL for cutters and drying rack workers and 23 TL for box carriers.

The *dayıbaşı*s in this region played an important part not only in labor recruitment but also in moderating the relationship between the farmers and workers. Dayıbaşı Mehmet told me that the process of recruitment was as follows: the farmer with whom the *dayıbaşı* is already in contact, calls him and asks for a certain number of workers for the following day and the *dayıbaşı* provides the necessary number of workers if they are available or negotiates the time he can supply them. But this is not all; he is also responsible for making the workers arrive in the field on time and work properly. If any problems arise between the farmer and the worker, he warns both the workers and the farmer not to address the other party directly but tell her/his problem to him (*dayıbaşı*) first and wait for him to solve the problem. The same was the case for Romany workers in this field (although it was not so in the Romany tobacco workers' case in Dualar). I will elaborate further on the role of *dayıbaşı*s in general in mediating the encounter but here suffice it to say that the farmers explained the role of *dayıbaşı* as: "The boss cannot deal with every worker one by one, so there is a need for *dayıbaşı*"<sup>28</sup> Dayıbaşı Mehmet said that it is harder to be a Dayıbaşı in Killik than in Söke: "It is better in Söke, there you deal only with one boss, here you have to deal with all of them since you work for many bosses."<sup>29</sup> The workers also believed in the need for a *dayıbaşı*, they said: "You need someone you know to trust here, Mehmet Amca,

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<sup>28</sup> "Patron her işçiyle tek tek uğraşamaz, o yüzden dayıbaşıya ihtiyaç var."

<sup>29</sup> "Söke'de daha iyiydi, en azından bir kişiyle uğraşıyordun, burada birçok patron var, hepsiyle ayrı ayrı uğraşıyorsun."

God bless him, deals with all our problems. He takes us to the hospital when we are sick and solves the problems with the bosses.”<sup>30</sup>

Since I arrived at Killik late in the harvest season, I also worked for a day in the process after the drying of grapes. When all the grapes on the rack dry, they are collected in carts. From the carts the grapes are transferred into a machine that separates the small branches dried on the grapes from the grapes themselves. In this process, I worked with Savran Amca, my host in Killik, his daughter, son and wife. There were also two men from Demirci, a village close by, who received the highest price I had seen, 20 TL per cart and the two men emptied three carts in six hours, from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. including a break of half an hour and each received 30 TL. They had another job to go to in the afternoon, too.

The process of separating the branches called *üzüm savurma*<sup>31</sup> is as follows: The cart full of grapes is towed next to a machine called *Patoz*. The *patoz* has four major parts: 1) a container in which the grapes are placed, 2) a centrifuge tumbler that separates the branches from the grapes, 3) a container below the centrifuge tumbler where the separated branches as well as some branches which are not separated from grapes fall, 4) the assembly line on which the clear grapes separated from their branches fall. The two workers’ task is to fill their shovels with the grapes with branches on them and empty their shovels into the first container at a regular pace. The son stands next to the container beneath the centrifuge tumbler, throws

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<sup>30</sup> “Burada insanın tanıdığı, güvendiği birisi olması lazım. Mehmet Amca’dan Allah razı olsun, her işimize koşar. Hasta olunca hastaneye götürür, patronlarla sorun olunca o çözer.”

<sup>31</sup> It translates literally as throwing the grapes in the air because before the usage of *patoz* was common, the task of separating from branches was done by pressing hardly on the grapes which are dried on the rack with a club while at the same time swinging the club horizontally from one side to the other. This act made the grapes rise in the air, which gave the process its name.

away the branches and puts the branches not separated from the grapes into the first container to be centrifuged again. The grapes which are separated from their branches fall on the assembly line at the end of which stand two workers (me, Savran Amca's daughter and wife did this job alternatingly) holding big plastic bags at the end of the line and shaking the bags as they fill with grapes for an even distribution of the grapes. When the bag fills, a worker blocks the end of the assembly line while the other gives a final shake to the bag and replaces it with a new empty bag. The bag thus filled is then sawn with a thick plastic thread by an experienced worker which was either Savran Amca or his wife. When all the grapes are filled into plastic bags, they are ready to be sold to the merchant.

### Tomatoes

Table 5: Tomato Workers- Ethnicity

Group Number& Place of Work	Worker's Ethnicity	Worker's place of origin	Type of Remuneration	Amount of Remuneration	Distance home-workplace	Type of Accommodation
10 Akhisar	Kurdish	Kızıltepe	Piece rate	40 kuruş/box	1383 kilometers	Tractor shelter
11 Macolive	Kurdish	Siverek	Piece rate	35 kuruş/box	1310 kilometers	tent
12 Macolive	Kurdish	Diyarbakır	Piece rate	35 kuruş/box	1395 kilometers	tent
11 Macolive	Kurdish	Viranşehir	Piece rate	35 kuruş/box	1310 kilometers	tent

Table 6: Tomato Workers- Gender

Group Number& Place of Work	Gender of the Worker	Type of Work
10 Akhisar	13 women& 6 men	Women- cutting tomato 2 men- cutting tomato 4 men – box-carriers
11 Macolive	7 women & 3 men	Women- cutting tomato 2 Men- <i>çavuş</i> (family middleman) 1 man –box carrier
12 Macolive	6 women& 2 men	Women- cutting tomato Men –box carrier
11 Macolive	1 woman & 2 men	Woman- cutting tomato 1 man- cutting tomato 1 man- <i>çavuş</i> (family middleman)

In Sazova, the first village I described in the section on grapes, I worked in a field owned by two brothers, Faruk and Caner, in picking tomatoes with a group of workers from a *Yürük* village called Hampaşa, the village where *Yürük* workers who worked in İbrahim Abi’s vineyard had also come from, and in the cutting of tomatoes (for the production of dried tomatoes) with Kurdish workers from Mardin Kızıltepe.

The *Yürük* workers worked in the picking of tomatoes. There are two tasks that the group conducts: 1) picking the ripe tomatoes from the branches on the ground and putting them into boxes, 2) loading the full boxes on the cart at the back of the truck and unloading and distributing empty boxes when they arrive. All the *Yürük* workers receive daily wages, the pickers 23 TL and the box carriers 25 TL. Again the *dayıbaşı* is the driver and the owner of the minibus in which the workers come from and go back to their village every day and the boss pays an extra 5 TL

per worker to the *dayıbaşı* for transportation expenses and *dayıbaşı* services. When I asked the *dayıbaşı* if he also solves the problems among the workers and the bosses, he said that they have known the boss over several years and they have no problems with him. I did not witness any such controversies either. They work from 8 am to 5 pm with a break of an hour at lunch time.

The tomatoes picked and loaded by the *Yürük* workers in the field are brought over to the rack area and unloaded by Kurdish box-carriers. The Kurdish box carriers first unload five or six boxes at a place on the rack, moving half a meter forward they unload five or six more. When all the boxes are unloaded, they first empty the first row of boxes, turning them upside down on the rack, again leaving half a meter between the piles formed by the tomatoes emptied from the boxes. If we call this a row, then, they make five to six columns placing the four or five boxes they had unloaded behind the first box in the row, again leaving half a meter between the boxes. When all the boxes are unloaded, they load the empty boxes in the truck and start waiting and resting a bit until the next round.

Each cutter squats behind the first pile in one column and starts cutting the tomatoes in half, placing them on the rack the cut side facing upwards. They move backward while still squatting and cutting the tomatoes and the pull their pile backward leaving the cut tomatoes in front of them. This is really hard work since one has to squat all day and still keep one's speed up because although the *Yürüks* and Kurdish box carriers are paid daily wages, the cutters are paid per box of tomato they cut. The cutter is paid 40 kuruş per box. These workers were very experienced cutters and they managed to cut 16 boxes of big tomatoes or 8 boxes

of small tomatoes per hour. On average, they were able to cut 12 boxes of tomatoes per hour making 4.8 liras per hour. However, since they have to wait between rounds and also collect the dried tomatoes (which is 45 kuruş per box and one can collect only up to four or five per hour), the daily income is almost never higher than 30 liras. They work from 8 am to 6 pm, until they finish cutting all the tomatoes picked by the *Yürük* workers.

The role of the *dayıbaşı*, Niyazi, is to count the number of boxes of tomatoes each worker cuts and keep its record. He also makes all the travel and accommodation arrangements, as well as making sure that the relationship between the farmers and the bosses runs smoothly. Again, all parties agreed on the need for a *dayıbaşı* and his role in solving the problems between the workers and the farmers.

Niyazi was once a cotton worker, working for the same farmers but later he had to move in to this region with his family in the 1990s, since he was suspected by the Turkish state of being a PKK member. Now, Niyazi's brother takes care of Faruk's animals and Niyazi helps the two brothers tend the fields until the harvest time. Niyazi has a house in the village and next to it, there is a building for keeping the tractors in winter time which is used as a shelter for the workers in the summer. So Niyazi's workers, unlike all the other Kurdish workers I had encountered, did not stay in tents and they were allowed to use the toilet, the water and the electricity in Niyazi's house.

In this field there was also another position between the worker and the *dayıbaşı*, namely *çavuş*. *Çavuş* is basically the head of the family, negotiating the

prices and watching over the *dayıbaşı*'s records. But the *çavuş* is also a worker and works no less than any other worker. In Niyazi's group there was one woman *çavuş* Fadile, the oldest woman in her family (there were no men in her family working in the field) and another young man Emrah, who was in charge of his aunt and her daughters (the neighbors of Fadile in Kızıltepe and relatives of Niyazi). However, in this field, *çavuş* was not as critical a category as the worker, *dayıbaşı* or the farmer since the relationship between Niyazi and other workers was one based on mutual social obligations such as kinship and I have never seen or heard a *çavuş* negotiate or argue with Niyazi. There were also workers who had no *çavuş* but were directly related to Niyazi.

There was also another man working on the rack, Kalo<sup>32</sup>, a very old Turkish man from Balıkesir, who stayed on the rack at night to watch over it and whose other responsibility was to sprinkle rock salt on the cut tomatoes. The Kurdish workers called him Kalo since they found him sympathetic and joked with him saying that he threw salt on their faces to make them blind. They also called the *Yürük* workers his children and joked about it.

The processing of tomatoes is completed after the tomatoes are cut and salted and two box-carriers spray another potassium carbonate mixture on them to make them dry more quickly and to them from rotting. When the tomatoes dry, they are swept with the help of big brushes to the middle to make one big row and then they are swept back into the boxes and either packed into big porous plastic bags or sold in boxes, depending on the preference of the merchant.

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<sup>32</sup> "Grandfather" in Kurdish, I was never able to learn his real name since all the workers referred to him as such.

The next field in which I worked in the processing of tomatoes was one of the most unsettling places I have ever been to. It was a tomato processing facility owned by a multinational corporation called Macolive which employed 400 Kurdish workers seasonally. The facility was like an open air factory, with a white plastic rack was stretched over and pinned to the ground over a huge track of land. On the edges of the rack, there were areas reserved for the tents of the workers. I participated in the cutting of tomatoes for three days with a family from Urfa Siverek, for another day with a family from Diyarbakır and for another day with a young woman from Urfa Viranşehir.

The workers here saw the employer (the partner of Macolive who lives in İzmir and who is of Italian origin) only a few times when he was going around the field in his 4x4 pickup, so he was no longer the person they were accountable for, therefore the figure of the farmer with whom the workers could negotiate or at least have “problems” with, disappeared from the picture. They also did not have a close relationship with their *dayıbaşı*; here *dayıbaşı* was only responsible for making sure that Macolive received a large number of workers at the exact time that they needed them.

Mehmet Amca, the father of the family from Urfa Siverek told me that they had seen their *dayıbaşı* once when they first came to Macolive and his next visit had been three weeks later. It had been almost seven weeks since they came to Macolive and he had not shown up again. There were just a few *dayıbaşıs* who supplied labor for Macolive and one of the farmers I had talked to told me that one of those *dayıbaşıs* brought 5000 workers to the region. Each worker earns

approximately 20 TL per day, the *dayıbaşı* takes %10 of each worker's income and with a rough calculation, the *dayıbaşı* who brings 5000 workers to the region earns 300,000 TL per month. Let's exaggerate immensely and say that he spends one third of this money for the expenses. Still, the money he makes by supplying workers to the region for three months is 600.000 TL and this is an amount that a worker could earn in 333 years by working as a seasonal agricultural worker for three months every year!

Since the *dayıbaşı* was virtually absent from the picture, the worker-dayıbaşı-farmer triangle is broken here and new positions for the tasks formerly accomplished by this triangle were created. The role of the farmer who is also in charge of labor control was transmitted to interlocutors called *sergi sorumlusu*, young men employed by the company responsible for attaching certain group of workers to a specific type of work every day and controlling the quality of their work. There was no need to control the quantity since the workers were paid by piece-rate and the more a worker produced, the more she/he would earn. The head of these men was a Turkish man experienced in this job and the rest of the men employed under him were all young Kurdish men whose families had migrated to nearby towns or cities when they were children, who were at least high school graduates and whose Turkish did not contain a tint of Kurdish accent. They all understood Kurdish but talked to the workers in Turkish, except when they requested a favor from the workers.

The other position that gained importance in the absence of *dayıbaşı* was the *çavuş*, the head of the worker family. As I mentioned above, the category of

*çavuş* existed in the previous field I had been to, yet, it was not a critical category since the relationship of the *dayıbaşı* to the workers was much more personal and there were mutual social obligations of each party to the other. In Macolive since the *dayıbaşı* did not take up the role of protecting the worker in their relationship with those in charge of labor control, the *çavuş* adopted that task. The other task that the *çavuş* undertook was record keeping for each worker or family he was in charge of. The *çavuş* was generally the oldest man in the family. He did not work as was the case in Niyazi's workers but negotiated the arrangements the *sergi sorumlusu* made, kept the record and acted as the middle man between his workers and the *sergi sorumlusu*.

At first, Mehmet Amca was the *çavuş* of his four daughters, his son and his daughter-in-law. But later when his brother Sinan Amca had to return home (to Urfa Siverek) since his youngest son got seriously ill, Mehmet Amca took charge of his brother's four daughters as well. The workers from Diyarbakır were a small family, Hêvîdar Teyze, Pîrê<sup>33</sup> (Hêvîdar Teyze's mother), Emrah (her son) and Ümmühan (her daughter) they were the only ones whose *çavuş* Emrah worked for. But it was easy for him since Pîrê was too old to work but only cooked for them and did the cleaning and Hêvîdar and Ümmühan were very careful with their own records. The *çavuş* of the workers from Urfa Viranşehir was Abdullah Amca, the father of seven children including Neriman, a twenty year old woman I worked with and her thirteen years old brother Dicle.

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<sup>33</sup> "Grandmother" in Kurdish, I never learnt her name as well, since everyone referred to her as Pîrê

In Macolive there were two different ways to cut tomatoes: *el kesimi* (hand-cutting) and *makine kesimi* (machine-cutting). *Hand-cutting* was basically the same process with the process I described above. Only, this time, the tomatoes are not brought from one field across the rack but they are carried into the facility with huge trucks and then loaded into boxes and box carriers unload and empty the box on the rack areas designated by the *sergi sorumlusu*, making the piles ready for the cutters. *Machine-cutting* could only be applied to the middle size tomatoes, if they were a few centimeters bigger or smaller, they had to be hand-cut. Moreover, the machine-cut tomatoes were ranked as second quality since the machine could not cut them as precisely in the middle as hand cutting does. I did not work at the machine part of the *machine-cutting* process but as far as I saw, the machine necessitated no more than 10 workers at a time and all the workers were men because it meant carrying heavy loads. The huge machine was fed uncut tomatoes at one side and put out cut tomatoes at the other. So the work was basically emptying the boxes of uncut tomatoes at one end and filling them at the other and loading the cut tomatoes on the truck. Yet cutting was not enough, they had to be inspected for any rotten, smashed or badly cut tomatoes to be thrown away and spread the cut side facing upwards on the rack for drying. This is what was called working in *machine-cutting*.

The box-carriers bring the machine cut tomatoes to the rack and prepare the piles just like it is in the hand-cutting. Then, the machine-cutting rack worker squats behind a pile just like in hand-cutting, but this time, she or he only turns the already-cut tomatoes over and sorts out and throws away the bad ones. As a result of both hand-cutting and machine cutting, tomatoes are formed into rows at least

two hundred meters in length and six or seven meters in width. Then a space enough for a truck or a tractor to pass is left and parallel rows are formed in this way.

The workers in Macolive received 35 kuruş for hand-cutting a box of tomatoes (for which Niyazi's workers received 40 kuruş) and 20 kuruş for spreading machine-cut tomatoes on the rack. The box-carriers were paid a daily wage of 23 TL.

Leyla, Mehmet Amca's 14 years old daughter, had no experience in cutting tomatoes when she first came to Macolive and could barely earn 10-12 TL per day although she tried really hard. By the time I met her, she had six weeks of experience and she was now making 20 TL per day. Leyla does not remember the first time they did seasonal agricultural work, neither do her older sisters. They had stopped working in the fields when her family had migrated from Siverek to Istanbul a few years ago and Leyla started working in Istanbul in a textiles sweatshop. But then, her father lost his job and they directly came to Macolive in May. It was the end of June when I went to Macolive and she knew that it was just the beginning of the journey. Later in September, I phoned her sister Ramize and learnt that they had gone to Kırıkkale to harvest lentils. They knew that they would go to another work from there but they did not know when their work there would be finished neither did they know where they would go.

Macolive was the first stop of the season for the workers from Diyarbakır as well as those from Viranşehir. The workers from Diyarbakır said that they would go on until no work is left in Macolive and then they would go wherever the *dayıbaşı* tells them to go. Neriman from Viranşehir had high hopes of going home right after

the work in Macolive was over but she said it all depended on her father's decision.

One thing was common for all these workers: they were all looking forward to going back home.

### Gherkins

Table 7: Gherkin Workers- Ethnicity

Group	Worker's Ethnicity	Worker's place of origin	Type of Remuneration	Amount of Remuneration	Distance home-workplace	Type of Accommodation
14 göbekli	Kurdish	Suruç	Piece rate in share cropping	1 TL, 45 krş, 22.5 krş/kilo (according to gherkin size)	1125 kilometers	tent
15 göbekli	Kurdish	Derik	-	-	1310 kilometers	tent

I will not be able to tell a detailed story of the production process of the gherkins since I did not expect to come across them in Göbekli, where I expected to participate in the production of grapes. Yet, I listened to the story and felt the need to depict it for two reasons: 1) the deal the workers made in this field resembles none of the above and is a weird version of contract farming which includes the workers as sharecroppers and 2) the owner went bankrupt and the workers could not, and probably would not receive the amount that was promised. These two factors underline the job insecurity and instability of seasonal agricultural work and this is what I will try to depict here.

In the summer of 2008, a man who had money, let's call him Mr. A, hired a huge amount of land from the ağa of the village for five years. He invested in the land, bringing water and electricity, applying pesticides and tending the land to make it ready for cultivation. He made a deal with the Penguen Pickles Company in Balıkesir for them to buy his products. He also made a deal with a man who had migrated to Balıkesir 15 years before and he, Çeto, became the *dayıbaşı*. Çeto went to the Kurdish region that winter and took the potential workers' mobile phone numbers and when it was time to start production, he made the necessary arrangements to bring them to the field. He did not pay for the transportation expenses but he also did not demand the ten percent *dayıbaşı* share from the workers; instead he agreed with Penguen to get twenty per cent of the total cost.

The sharecropping agreement was as follows: Mr. A and the workers agreed that Mr. A would pay for the tractor, oil, electricity and water expenses, the wages for applying pesticides and the rent of the field and the expenses of fertilizers, pesticides and seeds would be shared. In return, they would share the total revenue Mr. A receives from Penguen Pickles Company. In the summer of 2008, Mr. A paid the workers' share and we know this from Çeto's account. In 2009, another man from the village, Mr. B, took over the rented field from Mr. A to run the business for the next four years but at that time, Mr. B did not know that Mr. A had not paid for the expenses of the electricity and water of the previous year and of course by the time he found out Mr. A had already disappeared. Abdullah Amca, the *çavuş* of the family from Suruç said: "He took over a wreck, he was cheated and therefore we

were cheated. We see his children on the street and *they* ask for a piece of bread from *us* saying that they are hungry.”<sup>34</sup>

It was the end of August when I arrived there and they had been in that field for four months and the only money they had received was the expenses for food. Mr. B asked them to wait for another fifteen days and he promised to pay at the end of that period and they were waiting for that day to come. All the gherkins were already harvested and they could not look for any other jobs anywhere else since if they went away, they would never receive their money. Metê Peyam (Abdullah Amca’s wife) said: “There was snow on the tops of the mountains when we arrived, the whole summer passed, now it is getting cold again at night and we are still here, waiting for some money that we are not sure we will receive.”<sup>35</sup> At the beginning there were more than fifty tents in the area, some other workers had threatened Mr. B and received some money and left, but Abdullah Amca thought that it was a better tactic to wait and get along well with him since Mr. B would run the business for the next three years and if all went well, they would have a guaranteed job for the next three years.

There, I met another group of workers from Mardin Derik. First, they went to Lüleburgaz to hoe forest saplings and then they went to Ankara Atatürk Ormanı to work in the growing of saplings as well. Then, Çeto called them and said that they would cultivate the whole land, but when they came, there was work only for five days and then, there were no more gherkins to pick. The whole family was talking

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<sup>34</sup> “O da enkaz devraldı, o kandırıldı, biz de kandırılmış olduk. Biz yolda çocuklarını görüyoruz, açız diyorlar, bir parça ekmeğiniz yok mu?”

<sup>35</sup> “Biz geldiğimizde şu dağların başında kar vardı, koca yaz geçti, şimdi geceleri yine soğuk oluyor. Biz hâlâ buradayız, alacağımız bile garanti olmayan bir parayı bekliyoruz.”

about their son with gratitude because it was him who made the effort to make connections with the *muhtar* and find a few daily jobs in grapes. In total they stayed for two weeks in Göbekli and left for home in joy when I was still there. They were planning to stay at home for a month and then go to Hatay to work in the harvest of oranges.

#### Attempts to Structure Labor Processes by Managing Encounters

The first point to underline is that although seasonal agricultural labor seems to be a homogeneous category, the actual conditions, the time-spans of labor, the types of remuneration as well as all labor relations with the employers and the middle men vary immensely depending upon many factors which I would like to analyze by starting with the scale of production and how regulated the production process is.

When we consider the production processes of the four agricultural products, tobacco, grapes, tomatoes and gherkins, we observe a pattern of increasing scale respectively. Tobacco is produced in relatively small farms in which no more than fifteen workers are employed, depending more on household and regional labor, depending less on middlemen and more on household and communal relations, and if migrant labor is to be employed, the arrangements depend on direct and personal contact with the employer. When we consider the production of grapes, the scale gets a little larger, but still it is mainly regional labor that is employed and it is always the farmer who is the owner of the land and who is in charge of labor control directly. Only when there are too many small farms next to each other can migrant labor be employed in the production process of grapes since it is only then that continuity over a long time and the large number of

workers, which are the two main assets of migrant labor, can be put to good use. Neither of the two products necessitates regulation of the production process, reducing both the number and the role of the middlemen involved in the process.

However, when we consider the production of tomatoes and gherkins, the scale increases immensely and it necessitates the labor of at least forty but sometimes four hundred workers in one production complex, over long periods of time. In large agricultural enterprises, migrant labor is employed almost exclusively and the number, variety and the roles of the middlemen increase. As the networks of circulation of both the product and the labor reach national or even global levels, the regulation of the production process also increases and tends to involve companies or even multi-national firms, which in turn boosts not only the revenues of the employers but also the levels of exploitation of the workers.

Sketching the labor processes allows us to roughly identify a correlation between the scale of production, employment of migrant or non-migrant workers and the types of their recruitment. When the scale of production is small, a smaller number of workers is needed for a shorter period of time in which case generally non-migrant workers are recruited and the recruitment is organized via familial or regional relations which in turn reduce both the number and the role of the labor intermediaries and labor controllers. As the scale of production gets larger, a larger number of workers is needed for a longer period of time in the case of which migrant labor is employed and both the recruitment processes and the labor control involves a variety of middlemen and larger and more impersonal networks are utilized.

As mentioned before, the experience of migrant or non-migrant labor is further differentiated along ethnic lines: whereas Turkish workers work mostly in places close to their homes and therefore become non-migrant workers, it is almost always the Romany, Kurdish or Arab workers who become migrant workers, travel with their families and stay in the region until the work is over. The distinction between migrant and non-migrant workers overlapping with the ethnic differentiation has many consequences, further determining the type of accommodation, the type of remuneration, duration of labor and labor conditions.

Let me begin with the type of accommodation. During the preliminary research I conducted in Söke, the farmers I interviewed had told me that Kurdish workers as well as Turkish workers from around the region used to come to stay in the region and work in the cotton fields. They said that the Kurdish workers used to stay in the tents pitched up next to the fields where they worked whereas the Turkish workers used to stay in the empty houses in the village rented for a few months. During my fieldwork in Manisa, I observed a similar pattern. The Kurdish and Romany<sup>36</sup> workers generally stayed in tents which they pitch up in the unused areas close to the road and outside the village. The Turkish workers, on the other hand, generally stayed home and came to the field only for the day time. If Turkish workers ever come from far away provinces, an empty house (if they came with their families) or a room at the back of the coffeehouse (especially for the young men who came without their families) in the village is hired for them.

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<sup>36</sup> I also encountered a few Arab families who also stayed in the tents but I didn't have the chance to spend much time with them.

The differential types of accommodation of Turkish workers in the village and the Romany and Kurdish workers outside the village obviously operates through the ethnically differential recognition of the workers: whereas the Turkish workers are regarded as eligible for inhabiting proximate space, the Romany and Kurdish workers are evaluated as bodies to be kept outside. I will expand on this issue further in Chapter 4 (Theft and Terrorism) but here let me touch upon how this distinction works in structuring the labor process through materializing spaces.

First of all, the boundaries between the inside and the outside of the village are always blurred which can shift immensely through every 'event', discourse or narrative. One such event is the arrival of the workers in the region where the village is located. The networks that bring the workers to the area are formed through the connection of the *dayıbaşı*s with the employers and with the workers so the workers do not arbitrarily wander from place to place for work but travel on the basis of their agreement with the *dayıbaşı*. Yet the oral agreement of the *dayıbaşı* is also ambivalent in terms of the duration of work, the social and physical conditions of labor and accommodation as well as the expected remuneration, so neither the workers nor the employers know exactly what and whom they will encounter physically.

Here I should note once again that I use the concept of encounter in a broad sense that contains the physical encounter but cannot be equated with it. In other words, when I claim that the boundaries of the village or the mutual expectations of the workers and employers are ambivalent, I do not mean that the bodies of the actors in the physical encounter, or the spaces through which the encounters take

place come into the encounter as a tabula rasa. On the contrary, these bodies and spaces are already marked through past encounters and within power relations that constitute them. This is why the employers can immediately recognize the Turkish workers' bodies as eligible to be taken into the village and the Kurdish and Romany workers as bodies to be kept outside. Yet, this ambivalence never fully disappears even after the initial physical encounter and it is what prevents the labor processes from being fully structured, motivating further attempts to structure, categorize and recognize the other bodies and places.

Let me now return to the initial physical encounters of the workers with other places and other actors in order to observe how the initial attempts to structure this labor process works through the differential materialization of the bodies and places. In this sense, settling Turkish and non-Turkish bodies in different places does not only materialize (and render intelligible) these bodies as already in different ranks in the social hierarchy, but also materializes the boundaries of the inside and outside of the village. What enforced these boundaries and hierarchies even further was the ID checks of the gendarme. According to the Law on the Notification of Identity<sup>37</sup>, all citizens who stay outside their registered place of accommodation are bound by the law to report their temporary residence to the police or the gendarme. The law specifically states that it covers all migrant workers among many other categories such as tourists, boarding students, guests visiting their relatives...etc. Although the coding of the law covered all migrant workers, the implementation of the law covered only the non-Turkish ones. Whereas the Kurdish, Romany and Arab workers' ID numbers were checked by the gendarme

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<sup>37</sup> Kimlik Bildirme Kanunu

immediately after they arrived at their temporary accommodation *outside* the village, the Turkish workers settled *inside* the village were not at all visited by the gendarme.

The outside of the village was further differentiated from the inside with the movements of the different bodies within and across these places. Once the Kurdish, Romany or Arab workers settled in the areas outside the village, the Turkish villagers start refraining from going there as much as they can in addition to expecting the workers to come inside the village as little as they can. Therefore for the Turkish villagers, the fields or the tent areas where Kurdish, Romany or Arab workers stay become places which should *contain* those bodies.

The tent as well as the articles placed around it such as the *tandır*<sup>38</sup> and kitchen utensils, the mattresses workers sit on, the large pans used for washing clothes, the toilets built by digging a deep hole in the ground and covering the four sides with plastic cloth transformed the spaces the workers inhabited for the time they stayed in the region. The workers also acknowledged that it was their space during their time of stay and any intrusions of workers from another ethnic group or from the locals were not welcome. Yet, the space never became fully theirs even for the time they inhabit it not only because the gendarme goes on with its regular ID checks but also because they knew that they were constantly being “watched over” by the villagers.

Other spaces the workers were ‘righteously’ present in were the work places, the fields or the drying rack areas. Yet also in the fields, most of the ethnic groups,

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<sup>38</sup>A heating arrangement consisting of a brazier and a convex metal sheet placed on top of the brazier supported by 3-4 metal rods, it is typically used by Kurdish people for making fetils.

namely the Kurdish, the Romany or the Turkish, did not work together in the same field. The only mixed group I encountered was the *Yürük* workers and the Turkish workers of Bulgarian origin and since the two groups defined themselves as Turkish, this cannot be counted as an ethnically mixed group. The other mixed group that I had heard about was the workers from Derik who had a problem with their pre-arranged jobs and arranged daily jobs in which they worked with Turkish workers of the region. Therefore, it could be claimed that the fields and the spaces of accommodation were aimed to be structured in a way to minimize the encounters among the actors of seasonal agricultural labor. Yet, no structural arrangement succeeded in totally preventing the encounters of the Turkish, Romany or Kurdish groups. One of the main reasons for this was that the workers moved outside the tent areas and the fields and these movements brought about the contestation of the boundaries, challenged by the workers and reinforced by the Turkish villagers and the gendarme.

Another structural difference between the Turkish and non-Turkish workers was that it was generally the Turkish workers who worked over long years with the same employer whereas Romany and Kurdish workers generally worked for a different employer every year. There are two main reasons for this: 1) Turkish non-migrant workers have more limited opportunities of work without moving too far away from home whereas the Kurdish and Romany migrant workers who have to cover hundreds of kilometers anyway and who are involved in networks mobilizing thousands of workers have more opportunities and 2) the class antagonism is coupled with the ethnic antagonism in the case of Kurdish and Romany workers and Turkish employers and this renders the social relationship between the workers and

employers less sustainable than the relationship between Turkish workers and Turkish employers. Although this is a general pattern, it should also be mentioned that ethnic difference does not totally determine the level of sincerity of the relationship between the employer and the workers. An example could be the Kurdish tomato workers from Kızıltepe who had been working for the same boss and with the same *dayıbaşı* for over long years.

Here, I should also note that the sincerity of the relationship between employers and workers is also reflected in the amount and patterns of labor control. There are two ways to regulate labor control: 1) Type of Remuneration and 2) Employing Labor Controllers. The type of remuneration is not used as a labor control method for every product, every type of work or every work arrangement. For example box carrying is always paid a daily wage since the number of boxes a box-carrier can carry totally depends on the number of boxes prepared by the pickers and since the work is not finished until all the boxes are carried. However, there are also tasks that can be remunerated either by piece rate or by daily wage, in which case, piece rate payment becomes a labor control method.

The differences of the ethnicity of the workers and employers as well as the sincerity of the relationship between them also introduce another structural difference: whereas Turkish workers are generally paid a daily wage, the Kurdish and the Romany workers are generally paid on a piece-rate basis (per kilo, per box or per decare). The only time I encountered Kurdish and Romany workers being paid daily wages was in Killik and there, the number of labor controllers was higher than usual. Also, the only time I observed Turkish workers being paid by a piece rate

was the two young Turkish men emptying carts of grapes into the *patoz* and they earned three times the usual daily wage for the task. The farmers explained the difference in types of remuneration which is ethnically organized as: “If you pay them (the Kurds or the Romanys) daily wages, they sneak out of work at every opportunity.” I will return to this issue when I discuss the ethnic recognition of the bodies of the Kurdish and Romany workers through ethnic stereotypes, in Chapter 4.

Until now, I have only commented upon how the ethnic difference between Turkish and non-Turkish workers differentiate the experience of labor but the Romany and Kurdish workers’ conditions of work, travel and labor arrangements are not the same either. The Romany workers travel shorter distances with smaller groups and stay away from home for a shorter time than Kurdish workers in general. They also generally work in lower scale and less regulated products namely the tobacco and the grapes. The *dayıbaşı* also plays a smaller role in the organization of Romany labor than in Kurdish labor.

Moreover, Romany workers migrate to a region for work and return home after the work is complete, whereas the Kurdish workers mostly make several consecutive work arrangements in a season, going from place to place for work before they go back home. There are several reasons for this. The first one is that since the distance covered by the Romany workers is shorter, they spend less for the road and going back home does not necessarily mean the end of work, they can make yet another work agreement after returning home and the cost of travelling from home to the new workplace would be marginal. However, for the Kurdish

workers, going back home necessitates spending a lot of money and time which cannot be afforded in between work periods. Therefore, the Kurdish workers make several work arrangements and aim to earn as much as possible in a season before going back home. Another reason is that agricultural work in other regions is not the only way of subsistence for the Romany as it is for most of the Kurdish workers. The Romany do other jobs like selling flowers or collecting recyclable materials such as paper and metals in their hometowns, whereas there are few other job opportunities for Kurdish men and much fewer opportunities for Kurdish women in Kurdistan.

Therefore, the farmers/employers who need a large group of workers to work for a long time contact the Kurdish *dayıbaşıs* who in turn contact the Kurdish workers and make labor arrangements starting from the winter on. The farmers who need relatively less workers for a relatively shorter time and relatively smaller group contact the Romanys a few weeks before the harvest. The farmers who need the least number of workers contact the regional Turkish workers. Of course there are many exceptions to this generalization but the overall pattern hints at the existence of an ethnic labor market. The networks of workers and *dayıbaşıs* are established on an ethnic basis, the types of remuneration are determined depending on the ethnicity and the products on which the workers specialize are also grouped based on ethnicity.

Although these general patterns explain a lot about how the labor processes of seasonal agricultural workers are structured, they are also too mechanistic and crude to explain the power relations organizing this labor practice especially since

these attempts to structure the processes never work fully and stimulate further attempts to regulate everyday power relations through everyday encounters. Therefore in order to find out how the terms of these patterns are negotiated among all the parties involved, how they harden into systems and where cracks are opened in these systems, we now need to turn to exploring the everyday power struggles among not only the visible actors such as the farmers, the workers and the *dayıbaşıs* but also the not-so-easily-visible ones such as the state and capital.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEFT AND TERRORISM

#### Three Stories of "Theft"

##### The Story of Romany Workers

The father and the elder son in the Romany worker family went to the grocer to buy food supplies in the village where they harvested tobacco and wanted to buy flour, tea, sugar and other food supplies. Emrah, the elder son of the Romany family, told me the incident as follows: "We went to the grocer yesterday, we asked for flour, sugar and tea. He [the grocer] said he doesn't sell sugar or tea by kilograms, he said that there were packs and they were expensive, he said that we couldn't afford them. He doesn't want to sell us anything because we are Romany. He told us to go to the city centre and buy tea there. We just started work, the boss hasn't paid us yet, we don't have money. We would pay it to the grocer when the boss gives us money. We are clean<sup>39</sup> people but they see us like monsters. Now, we don't have flour, how can we make bread?" That night, a house in the village was broken into and food supplies including flour and sugar were stolen. The Romany were suspected, the gendarme "raided" the Romany's tent, checked their ID's for any criminal records, searched for the stolen supplies and "interrogated" them but they couldn't find anything. Emrah said: "The gendarme came, they ask me: "where were you?" I said: "I was here, where could I be in the middle of the night?" They couldn't

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<sup>39</sup> Here clean means honest.

find anything; they returned looking at their asses.”<sup>40</sup> Gülcan Abla, the mother of the farmer family that I was staying with, upon hearing the incident commented on it saying that there was a Romany woman whom they employed, she used to steal their tea and sugar no matter where Gülcan Abla hid them. Later, she said: “Aren’t they Gypsies? They steal and rob and do everything else!”<sup>41</sup>

### The Story of Kurdish Workers

It was the holy month of Ramadan when Muslims fast. The Kurdish workers from Derik returned to their tents after a tiring day of work in the vineyard and still it was not time to break the fast. The father said to his children: “Let’s go for a walk in the vineyards, we will both spend time until sunset<sup>42</sup> and pick some vine leaves enough for a dish.” A villager living next to the vineyards saw them go there and called the village headman on the phone and told him that the Kurds had gone into the vineyards belonging to someone else from the village and that they were thieving. The village headman took the owner of the vineyard and the gendarme with him and “raided<sup>43</sup>” the tent of the Kurdish workers. The gendarme checked the ID’s of the workers, searching for any criminal records. The owner of the vineyard reproached the workers and yelled at them, calling them thieves. The *muhtar*<sup>44</sup> mitigated the tension by convincing the owner of the vineyard to take back his

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<sup>40</sup> “Jandarma gelmiş bana diyor nerdeydin. Dedim buradaydım nerde olucam gecenin yarısı? Bir şey bulamadılar götlerine baka baka döndüler.”

<sup>41</sup> “Çingen değil mi? Çalar da çırpır da her şeyi de yapar!”

<sup>42</sup> Time to break the fast

<sup>43</sup> Çadırı *basmak*-the word used by Kurdish and Romany workers when the gendarme comes to their tents.

<sup>44</sup> Village headman

official complaint and warning the workers not to do it again. The workers thought that it was Gökhan Abi, the farmer I was staying with, who “notified” the *muhtar*.

When I was sitting at the workers’ tent, Gökhan Abi stopped by on his way to the village and greeted the workers. The father of the Kurdish workers stood up and walked to the road to shake his hand and apologized, maybe a hundred times.

Gökhan Abi said it wasn’t himself who “called” the *muhtar* and it was a misunderstanding and there was nothing to apologize for. Yet, he went on apologizing saying that they were not thieves and they didn’t know it would be misunderstood like that. When Gökhan Abi left, the father went on telling the incident to me and he said over and over again: “We did a wrong unintentionally and unknowingly. In our region, everyone collects whatever they need from each other’s garden and it is not counted as theft. But it was counted as theft around here. We didn’t know that. If we were to steal, why would I go there in the daylight with all my children? You could not guess how embarrassed we were, we are not that kind of people, they got us wrong.”<sup>45</sup>

### The Story of the Yürük Workers

Yürük workers were from a mountain village 55 km. away from the field they worked in and they travelled 110 km. back and forth every day in the minivan of the middle-man from their village. One day, their boss (the farmer) saw a woman worker placing the plastic bag she had filled with grapes into the minivan. He directly went to the middle-man and started yelling at the top of his voice: “Tell

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<sup>45</sup> “Biz bilmeden bir ayıp yaptık. Bizim oralarda kimse ‘geldin, aldın’ demez, herkes gider birbirinin bahçesinden ihtiyacını alır. Ama burada hırsızlık sayılırmış, biz bilemedik. Zaten hırsızlık edecek olsak niye gündüz vakti çoluk çocuk gidelim? Nası utandık bilemezsin, biz öyle insanlar değiliz, bizi yanlış anladılar.”

them not to steal the grapes! She didn't take one or two bunches of grapes, she filled the whole bag! If I catch her again, it won't be good for her!"<sup>46</sup> The middle-man replied with a calm and low voice: "I'm sorry about that, I'll tell them, they won't do it again."<sup>47</sup> I was working next to the woman the boss saw and she started mumbling and when the boss left, she and a few women started talking about the incident. She said: "This one [the boss] doesn't know good manners at all! How bad he yelled at the old man! Is this stealing? There is something called *göz hakkı*<sup>48</sup>! I took only enough to feed my kids. [He yells] as if I tore down his vineyard! I'm really angry now, I will fill two bags tomorrow!"<sup>49</sup> The next day, everyone was more careful about the boss's whereabouts while they were carrying the bagfuls of grapes to the minivan.

### Recognizing Strangers

The first thing to underline in the three stories above is the resemblance of the *Yürüks'* story to that of the Kurdish workers in the sense that *Yürük* workers picked a bag of grapes from the field, only enough for their children to eat and the Kurdish workers picked a bag of vine leaves, to suffice for a meal whereas in the Romany workers' story, a house was broken into. However, this resemblance was not reflected in determining the "criminality" of the three events. While the *Yürüks*

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<sup>46</sup> "Şunlara söyle, üzümleri çalmasınlar, bir iki salkım almamış, koca torbayı doldurmuş! Söyle ona, bi daha yakalarsam fena olur!"

<sup>47</sup> "Kusurumuza bakma, söylerim bir daha yapmazlar."

<sup>48</sup> The word to word translation of the idiom *göz hakkı* is "due share of the eye". It means the share of the food that should be given to those who saw the food and may have an appetite for it.

<sup>49</sup> "Nasıl bağırdı koca adama, bunun da hiç terbiyesi yok. Şimdi bu çalmak mı yani? Göz hakkı diye bir şey vardır, ben de çoluğuma çocuğuma yetecek kadar aldım, sanki herifin bağını kökünden koparmışız, sinir oldum bak, yarın iki torba doldurucam!"

were only warned with a brotherly attitude by their boss, the tents in which the Romany workers and the Kurdish workers stayed were “raided” by the gendarme, and their ID’s were checked for previous criminal records.<sup>50</sup>

Butler claims: “That the body invariably comes up against the outside world is a sign of general predicament of unwilling proximity to others and to circumstances beyond one’s control.” (Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* 34) In the stories above, the unwilling proximity was sensed by the bodies of the villagers as well as those of the workers. The villager who saw the Kurdish workers in the vineyard immediately perceived their presence in the vineyard as excessive and as a violation of the places which should contain them, namely, the tent areas and the fields. Thus, the Kurdish bodies were recognized not only as bodies that did not belong but also as threats. In the story of the Romany workers, once a violation of space was detected (breaking into the house), the suspects were immediately declared to be the Romany workers; they were recognized as potential threats too.

According to Sara Ahmed, recognizing means “to know again”. She asks the question: “How do you recognize a stranger?” (Ahmed 21) One has to know who can be a stranger before the encounter, in order for her to be able to recognize the other within the category of stranger during the encounter. Therefore, in the encounter with a stranger, rather than assuming that recognition is prevented by a

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<sup>50</sup> It could also be claimed that what grouped the Kurdish and the Romany workers so as to include the gendarme in their encounters with the bosses was their staying in the fields as opposed to the Yürük workers who returned home after work. However, it should also be noted that the allocation of space itself is already ethnically organized therefore; the Yürük workers did not have the time to roam in the fields other than the one they worked in anyway. Moreover, what characterizes an event as theft, “the wrongful taking and carrying away of the personal goods or property of another” as defined by Random House dictionary, is whether or not the property taken away belongs to oneself or not rather than where it takes place and to whom (other than the self) it belongs.

lack of knowledge of the other, which leads to the conceptualization of the stranger as “*any-body* whom we do not know”, Sara Ahmed proposes that “the stranger is *some-body* whom we have already recognized in the very moment in which they are seen or faced as a stranger” (Ahmed 21) Recognizing the stranger corresponds to a very specific form of recognition, allowing the stranger to emerge as a figure who has been “*already recognized as not belonging, as being out of place*” (Ahmed 21).

In the stories told above, the Kurdish and Romany workers were already recognized as not belonging, as bodies out of place prior to the encounter. Their actions were interpreted as theft not because of the characteristics of the action but because they were bodies recognized as potential threats whose simplest action could cause trouble. Also, what made them bodies-out-of-place was not that they actually were (or were predicted to be) in the places that they were not supposed to be but that they could be out-of-place in any place since their presence in or proximity to the place of the locals already materialized as threatening.

But how was the place of the locals determined? The difference in the patterns of occupying the space of the locals (body-in-its-place) and the Kurdish and Romany workers (body-out-of-place) is informative in this sense. Let us remember de Certeau’s definition of strategy: “A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (*propre*) and thus serves as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it” (Certeau xix). In this sense, we could call the locals’ pattern of occupying space a strategy. The locals assumed the village and the surrounding sites as their proper place of managing relations, not only distinguishing the inside from the outside but also organizing the different places

composing the inside or the outside. This is a relationship of “owning” a place and managing the flows between the inside and the outside is what makes it their *property*. The locals set the rules of this place and designated the fields (at work time) and the tent areas (at non-work time) as places which should contain the Kurdish and Romany workers’ bodies.

In the encounters discussed above, whenever the rules of these spaces were violated, the locals needed to reassert those rules and re-draw the boundaries. However, the locals did not set the rules of the proper place on their own; instead they based their claims on the law of the state, one of the most important mechanisms which draws heavily on strategies to set its rule on its proper place, namely, the homeland. I will elaborate further on the ethnic antagonisms in Turkey and the role of the state in managing them at the end of the chapter but here let me move on to what the presence of the gendarme changed in these specific encounters.

The role of the gendarme in the encounter was to empower the farmers or the locals who “owned” the place. The villagers therefore, with the arrival of the gendarme, marked not only the space as theirs again but also their bodies as belonging to that place. As a result, their body space expanded, re-covering and permeating the place. On the other hand, the Kurdish and Romany workers’ body space more or less contracted. The Kurdish workers were embarrassed, ashamed and they constantly apologized, which are affects that contract the body itself. The Romany workers did not display shame but the knowledge of their bodies as posing unwilling proximity had already contracted their space. The marking of the space the Kurdish and Romany workers inhabit as belonging to the villagers had withdrawn

the border of the space towards their bodies, contracting the space they could roam in and it was reasserted with the arrival of the gendarme.

This role of the gendarme was not specific to these encounters. First of all, it was not a coincidence that whenever the encounter included Kurdish or Romany workers, the gendarme almost automatically got involved in the encounter and became an element of it. Although I never heard the gendarme checking the identities of the Turkish workers, it was common practice for them to conduct ID checks the very day the Romany or Kurdish workers arrived at the workplace and most of the time regularly from then on<sup>51</sup>. Within these encounters, the state always emerged as an element, constructing the space as its “proper place”, marking it as the place of the Turkish State. Also with the inclusion of the gendarme in an encounter, not only was the event characterized as theft and criminalized but also the bodies of the Romany and Kurdish workers were re-cognized as dangerous and prone to criminality.

This is not to suggest that the border was drawn permanently and was never challenged again. It was neither the first nor the last time that the workers were made into bodies out of place. Their recognition as bodies-out-of-place had begun even before the first day that the workers arrived on the field. Yet, willingly or unwillingly the borders the villagers drew were always violated by the workers.

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<sup>51</sup> Only one group of Kurdish workers whose Dayıbaşı migrated to the region twenty years before and had a house in the village stayed in a building next to their dayıbaşı's house used for keeping the tractors in winter time and as a shelter for the workers in the summer rather than staying in a tent. The gendarme checked their ID's as well.

The main element that differentiated the Kurdish and the Romany workers' stories from that of the *Yürük* workers was that the only way the bodies of the Kurdish or Romany workers became intelligible was through threat. While talking to the farmers, whenever the subject came to the Kurdish and Romany workers, it was not theft per se that they perceived as violation but the threat of their bodies in general and the threat was articulated through two themes: dirt and danger. Therefore, before I move on to the specific elaborations of the three groups' encounters in the workplaces, I will portray the general perception of the farmers focusing on the themes of dirt and danger.

#### The Dirty and the Dangerous

Mary Douglas asserts, in her book *Purity and Danger*: "As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder...Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment." (Douglas 2) Douglas also refers to dirt as matter-out-of-place: "If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements." (Douglas 36)

We had claimed that the bodies of the Kurdish and Romany workers turned into bodies-out-of-place through the claims of the locals upon the village as their

“proper place” and through the re-ordering of the places designating the interior and the exterior of the village accordingly. Similarly, the claims to the purity or the dirtiness of matter always refer to an order and it is a matter of distinguishing the appropriate from the inappropriate while at the same time categorizing them in a hierarchy.

This order does not only place the dirty below the pure in the hierarchy but also aims to secure the purity of the pure one by avoiding its contact with the dirty one. In this sense, the dirty one is a constant threat to the pure one and therefore it is dangerous for the pure. “A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone.” (Douglas 114)

Although dirt is most of the time characterized with its power to pollute and therefore is dangerous, all danger does not come from dirt. Yet, the dangerous one always possesses an imperiousness with which she can inflict the proper one, the one in the higher ranks of the social order. In this sense, although the dirty and the dangerous are categorized in the lower ranks, they are seen as powerful, yet this power is always a power to be fought against by the protectors of the order and the proper place whose order this power threatens and it is this very protecting, cleaning and bringing order back that keeps the order going. In this sense, the order is always a fantasy that constantly produces its symptoms of dirt and danger. This is exactly why Douglas calls dirt the by-product of systematic ordering, for without dirt

(which is disorder), there would be nothing to order, which is the only way an order can re-institute itself.

In this sense, it could be claimed that the bodies of the Kurdish and Romany workers were not recognized as bodies-out-of-place because they were dirty and dangerous, they were recognized as dirty and dangerous because they had already been recognized as bodies-out-of-place. In other words, recognizing their bodies as dirty and dangerous was part of the act of ordering, the act of claiming a proper place, instituting an order in that place and pointing to its exteriority, where the bodies threatening that order come from. Let me now turn to how those bodies were *made* dirty and dangerous.

In my literature review, I had touched upon how seeing seasonal agricultural workers as dirty, dehumanized victims worked at the level of knowledge production and for forging public representations of the workers as dirty, ignorant and wretched victims of the broad socio-economic processes outside themselves. Yet, these representations also worked at the everyday level, and this time, dirt made them intelligible in a specific way to underline the danger they pose for the ones they encounter every day.

While I was staying with the Turkish family cultivating tobacco, I asserted that I would also talk to the Romany working in the adjacent field. This assertion brought not only a great shock but also quite a degree of uneasiness to all the members of the family. They had been observing the Romany and chatting about them since I had come to the field. Remarks like “Look, the gypsies are flying the kite”, “Look, the gypsies also stopped working”, “Look, the gypsies lit a fire, they will

have lunch”, “Look, the gypsies are building an oven” were more than common. However, the Romany were always talked *about* and never talked *to*. The border of the two fields was almost composed of a glass wall, which no one but me aimed to cross. And my attempt was found rather inappropriate by the members of the Turkish farmer family.

After a long chat about the necessity of talking to all groups of workers for my research, I made myself quite clear that I would go to the Romanys’ tent and that I would go alone, politely refusing Nihat Abi’s offer to escort me. One noon after lunch, I went there and when I returned, they asked me how it went and we started chatting about it. Throughout this conversation Nihat Abi and Gülcan Abla told me about the Romany workers they had hired a few years ago. The language was quite politically correct, every time someone uttered the word “gypsy”, Nihat Abi would correct him/her saying that it’s rude to call Romany people “gypsy” since they were offended by that word. Then, they started telling me that many people around the village had been fooled by Romany workers. They said Romany workers took their money and fled one night without completing their work. Although Nihat Abi later said that their Romany workers had had the right to flee because he had realized that he had miscalculated the money they were supposed to receive, it did not change the general picture of the Romany as the crook.

Gülcan Abla was even more suspicious towards the Romany and her concerns were mostly expressed in terms of dirt and danger. Although she agreed with Nihat Abi’s story, she always had a “but”. For example, when Nihat Abi said: “They have a hard life, too” Gülcan Abla would say: “Yes, yes, but some of them are

very dirty. The clean Romanys are very clean but the dirty ones are very dirty. They also work dirty, they don't care if they drop the leaves, and they don't pick them up if they drop them.<sup>52</sup> She also said that there was a Romany woman worker they had employed and she used to steal their flour and tea. No matter where Gülcan Abla hid them, she used to come and find them. Then, Gülcan Abla said that there was a Romany woman that they hired and she worked very properly and did not steal but she also immediately added: "But that woman wasn't like the Romany at all, her skin was light." The three indicators of the stereotype of Romany had already appeared: dirt, dark skin and theft (therefore danger).

In the afternoon, when I visited the Romany once again, Altın Abla, the eldest woman in the Romany family told me that their boss, who was also a friend of Nihat Abi, had asked them who I was and she had said that I was a relative of theirs visiting them but he hadn't believed it. Altın Abla said: "He said that you can't be Romany because your skin is light. If only he knew! There are Romany girls who are blond with blue eyes! Believe me, they are more beautiful than actresses on TV."

Both the skin and hair color of the Romany people were assumed to be darker (although no such material generalization can be made). Anyway, our point is not whose skin color is darker but it is the ethnic recognition of bodies, the clues of which are sought in the skin/hair color. By ethnic recognition, I mean the legibility of a body's ethnicity on the first physical encounter. This legibility is sustained through reading and attaching a particular set of signs to a particular

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<sup>52</sup> Here, dirty means untidily, unattentively, carelessly. Yet, the choice of the word dirt to stand in for the lack of order is informative.

body. And skin and hair color are very common indicators. But these indicators have to be discursively constructed in order to be read as dark skin equals Romany equals dirt equals ugliness versus light skin equals non-Romany equals cleanliness equals beauty.

The recognition of the Romany as bodies out of place was realized in terms of dangerousness and safety as well as the terms of dirt and cleanliness. On my last visit to Romany workers' tents, I was carried away with the chat and I stayed until after it got dark. It was the day after the theft issue mentioned above had happened. That day, I had heard several comments that it was the Romany who did it, although no evidence was found. In a short while after it got dark, I saw Şemsi (the son of the farmer family I stayed with) approaching us. He looked uneasy and terrified. He told me that his mother had sent him to bring me back. I found it pretty weird that an eleven year old boy was sent to accompany me but I went back with him anyway. On the way back, I asked Şemsi why he looked terrified. He denied that he was afraid and he said: "You say that the Romany are good people but they say it was them who broke into that house in the village yesterday." I responded that it was not for certain, we went on walking. When we arrived at the tent Gülcan Abla was very angry with me. She said: "My girl, why don't you come home early? What would we do if something happened to you?" I said was sorry that I made them worried but also there was nothing to be afraid of. She frowned and did not utter a word for fifteen minutes but when Feyza asked me where the Romany were from Gülcan Abla yelled: "I don't care wherever they are from. Aren't they Gypsies? They steal and rob and do everything else!" After this incident, she was not really happy with my presence and she also complained to Ali Bülent Abi (the Çiftçi-Sen

representative who had taken me there) when he came to fetch me: “This one is never afraid of anything, she goes to the Gypsies’ tents late at night!”

Marking certain bodies as dangerous was one way of forming “the other” and it was experienced affectively as fear in the body of the Turkish people who encounter the Romany. Moreover, the discourse of danger almost always overlapped with the discourse of dirt and cleanliness which always referred to a social hierarchy. I never heard anyone refer to Turkish workers as dirty yet it was almost the common sense way to talk about both the Romany and the Kurdish workers.

Smell was one of the most important signifiers of dirt since it carried the dirty one close to the pure one. While I was staying in Göbekli, a guest of the family had told me that he had to close the windows of his car while he was passing by the area where the Romany workers’ tents were installed because it smelled so bad. He said: “You can smell them from one kilometer away”. Again in the same village, the Kurdish workers told me that a woman who was the owner of the field sharecropped by a man from the village had refused to let the Kurdish workers harvest her crop saying: “I don’t eat the grapes these ones touch” and the sharecropper had to find different workers. The discursively constructed dirt did not only mark the other as improper but also was imagined to be contagious, hence turning the “dirty” bodies into entities to be kept away from.

Sometimes, smell was accompanied by sight. There was another group of Kurdish workers who came from Derik and their tents were much closer to the house we were staying in. They had arrived two weeks before so neither Gökhan

Abi nor Kiraz Abla knew them. There was a riverbed between the house and their tents. This riverbed was the place where the garbage of the houses around it was dumped in plastic bags. When I asked whether the municipality collected the garbage or not, they said the garbage is collected only once a week and one has to carry it to the village which is around a kilometer away, they added that in a month the river would fill with water and it would take the garbage away anyway. But one day when an old man from the tent went into the riverbed to excrete, Kiraz Abla looked and said: "Oh my God, I know that they're good people and they're in bad conditions, but can't they do this somewhere else! It smells bad you know, the weather is hot and it smells! Also, everyone sees him doing that!" Although Kiraz only saw him going to the riverbed (the riverbed itself was out of our sight) she was disturbed by the sight. But she acquired the image that disturbed her not through her eyes but through her imagination that completed the picture, but it was no less material than the actual image since the image mattered only through its affect of danger and the image was dangerous because it brought dirt close to her.

In addition to smell and sight, actual bodies were also carrying dirt closer to pure bodies. When Gökhan Abi and Kiraz Abla took me to the tents of the Kurdish workers from Suruç to introduce me to them, Kiraz Abla and I went inside the tent to sit with the women. When we came back, Kiraz Abla told me that she saw baby poop right next to the tent so from then on, whenever I came back from the tents of those or other workers, I was to take off my socks at the porch, move right into the living room to change my trousers and T-shirt and only after changing all my outfit was I allowed to sit in the couch or on the mattress on the veranda. After

three days she also made me wash all my clothes and I could hardly postpone taking a shower until the day we worked in the field.

As depicted above, the terms of properness and improperness were almost always translated into terms of dirt and danger and thus not only the dirt and dangerous bodies but also the pure ones materialized. Dirt itself being disorder, the practices of making some bodies dirty and others pure was always also an attempt of placing the dirty ones below the pure ones in the social order. In the next chapter, I will elaborate further on the kind of wholeness and purity the practice of keeping away from dirt and danger brings about and what this suggests about the social hierarchies and power relations organizing the encounters of the actors in the field.

But here let me make one last clarification on the notion of fantasy and how I will use it in this chapter before I move on to how these dirty and dangerous bodies turn into the stereotypes of the Romany thief and the Kurdish terrorist. In the analyses of the encounters of the three groups below, I will argue that one of the most important elements in forging these stereotypes is how each group relates to the state. I will elaborate on these relations by using the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy and I will investigate the individual or collective attachments to the state of the actors in the field.

I could have equally approached this framework through discourse analysis and analyzed the erasures and exclusions performed by discourse to render the ethnic and class antagonisms invisible. However, my aim in introducing the framework of fantasy is to include the element of *jouissance* in the imagined

wholeness of the self as well as in the harmony of reality; the element that motivates the subject to invest in or grow attachments to a particular discourse that enables one to imagine a particular wholeness. By approaching this relation to the state through fantasy, I aim to answer three main questions: 1) How do subjects make their reality into a harmonious whole by relating to the state? 2) Which antagonisms do they leave out from the fantasy scenario in order for their reality to be coherent and harmonious? 3) How do the elements left out reemerge as symptoms preventing that harmony? Yet, it is important to note that when we say fantasy, it does not mean it is not real or material, on the contrary analyzing fantasy contributes to understanding of how power relations materialize on and through the bodies of the actors in the field.

Let me now turn to the question of how the dirty and dangerous bodies easily translate into the stereotypes of the Romany Thief and the Kurdish Terrorist.

#### Romany Workers- "Thieves" in the Field

Although in the stories above both the Romany and the Kurdish workers were identified as thieves, the stereotype is usually associated with the Romany than the Kurds. It was this very recognition of the Romany as potential thieves that brought both the owners of the house that was broken into and the gendarme to the Romanys' tents for interrogation and the search for the stolen items. It was also not a coincidence that Gülcan Abla remembered specifically the Romany worker who used to steal her tea and generalized improperness as a common trait of the Romany. The dirt and the danger, at least potential dirt and potential danger, were associated with being Romany. Yet, it was neither Gülcan Abla, nor the gendarme

who invented this association, it was the general ethnic antagonism which informed the particular encounter.

In Turkey in general and in Manisa in particular, the ethnic antagonism between the Romany and the Turks is no secret. About six months after I completed my field work, an argument that took place in a town called Selendi in Manisa between a Romany man and some Turkish men resulted in the Turkish inhabitants of Selendi burning down the houses and the cars of all the Romany people living in the town. The Turkish group shouted slogans like: "Selendi is ours and so it will remain," "Gypsies out!" and "Death to Gypsies" while they attacked the Romany. The officials of the state "solved" the problem by deporting about one thousand Romany people and scattering them to other towns of Manisa. The report prepared by the human rights organization, İHD, states that the attitude of the Turkish people was obviously prejudiced against the Romany and they often tried to legitimize their actions by saying that the Romany were "thieves, junk collectors and usurers". The report also asserts that the officials referred to the Romany who were subjected to the lynching of Turkish people as "them" whereas they talked about the Turkish people as "us." Such incidents are also frequent in my mother's hometown, Akhisar.

The reason why it took almost no time for the locals or the authorities to recognize the dirty and the dangerous one as the Romany Thief was that it was a stereotype already in circulation. So the transition from the dirty and dangerous to the thief worked through ethnic recognition. If the dirty and dangerous one was Romany, the stereotype of the Romany Thief was almost automatically invoked.

Let's turn to the story of 'theft' and see what went on, on the side of the Romany. We do not know whether or not it was the Romany who broke into the house, but even if it was them, this would not make them embarrassed or ashamed. According to the Romany, it was the villagers who 'did them a wrong'. Their employer did not give them money for supplies, the grocer did not sell them the supplies and when Emrah, the son of the Romany family, was talking about these issues, he said: "The entire village is like this", identifying the wrong doer as the Turkish villagers, the wrong being regarding them as inferior in general and not selling them food and not giving them cash to buy food in particular. Moreover, they never used the word "theft" but preferred "pilfering" and it was not as embarrassing an act as it was for the Kurdish workers. When I asked them to teach me some Romany words, the tenth one they came up with was pilfering. The list itself is informative in the sense that these are the first ten words that come to their minds:

- 1) Ave: Come
- 2) Sokırdan: How are you?
- 3) Laço: Good.
- 4) Laço sino: I'm good.
- 5) Pane: water
- 6) Maru: bread
- 7) Kali: Tea
- 8) Bu kali: I'm (left) hungry
- 9) Bavde: Money
- 10) Ley/Çor: To pilfer.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Since neither I nor my informants had any knowledge of the Romany words' spelling, I wrote them as they would be spelled in Turkish.

- 1) Ave: Gel
- 2) Sokırdan: Nasılsın?
- 3) Laço: iyi
- 4) Laço sino: iyiyim
- 5) Pane: su

At this point let us turn to de Certeau's definition of tactic. Unlike a strategy, a tactic does not have a 'proper place' on which to depend to set its rules. De Certeau claims that a tactic is "a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (Certeau xx). De Certeau asserts that most of our daily practices are composed of tactics; talking, reading and walking on the street in this sense are as much tactical as stealing is. Walking on the street does not violate the rules of the street per se, but it also does not guarantee their reproduction. Walking is characterized with the unpredictability of the next step as talking is characterized with the ambivalence of the next word. They are different in character from activities like writing, inhabiting, owning and making/implementing the rule. The latter are characterized with their aim of reducing ambivalence as much as possible.

"A tactic insinuates oneself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking over its entirety... it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing"" (Certeau xix). It would not be wrong therefore to claim that pilfering, especially when one is hungry, deprived of tea, bread and money, was a tactic for the Romany workers. Realized by insinuating oneself into the other's place and

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- 6) Maru: ekmek
  - 7) Kali: çay
  - 8) Bu kali: aç kaldım
  - 9) Bavde: para
  - 10) Ley/Çor: çalmak

aiming to seize opportunities to achieve de facto gains, pilfering contested boundaries in a very particular way. It did not aim to take over the place and transform it perennially. Yet, it also proved that ambivalence could not be totally foreclosed and that the boundaries 'protecting' the villagers' place and separating them from the 'dirty' and 'dangerous' Romany were highly porous. The only de facto gain that was acquired by the Romany was not the articles which we still do not know whether or not were 'pilfered' by the Romany, but also the fact that the gendarme went away empty handed after the tent search and the interrogation. When Emrah, their son was telling me the story, he had had a proud tone in his voice especially when he said: "They [the gendarme] returned looking at their asses."<sup>54</sup> Therefore it was not only the act of pilfering but the act of getting away with it and proving themselves innocent that characterized the pride. Moreover, the word choice of "pilfering" over "stealing" is informative; it rendered the act intelligible in a way that did not necessitate a change in their narrative to depict themselves as "clean, honorable" people. Emrah's brother put it most clearly after Emrah's comment (while talking about the gendarme "raid" and the villagers regarding them as monsters) that they are "clean and honorable people", he said: "We were so until now; I do not know what will happen from now on."<sup>55</sup>

Therefore as a result of these encounters, neither the stereotype of the Romany as the thief, nor that of the Turkish villager who looks down upon the Romany and is miserly and cruel changes, on the contrary, the two stereotypes were mutually reinforced. While the 'good examples' such as the Romany worker who worked very

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<sup>54</sup> "Götlerine baka baka döndüler."

<sup>55</sup> "Şimdiye kadar öyleydik ama şimdiden sonra ne olur bilmem."

cleanly for Gülcan Abla are fended off as singular cases (she had also stressed that the good Romany worker she had once employed was not really like the Romany since her skin color was light), the general stereotype of the Romany is drawn as the 'dirty thief' whereas for the workers, the general stereotype of the miserly and cruel Turkish villager extends to all Turkish people aiming to exploit the Romany. Moreover, the class relations were also experienced through these stereotypes, not only confining the Romany worker to piece work rate but also the piece work rate was reduced (or if a daily wage is given excessive labor control is applied) since she was recognized as a thief who would sneak at every opportunity to grab more even if she is paid a daily wage at the normal rate. The Romany workers in return for being paid such a low price or being subjected to excessive labor control, seize every opportunity to form a tactic to reduce their exploitation, further reinforcing the stereotype of the Romany thief. As a result, class relations were experienced and articulated always by referring to the ethnicity of the worker, in other words, the class antagonism was articulated through ethnic antagonism and both the ethnic and class antagonisms were displaced.

One last point to emphasize here remains: the gendarme appeared in the narratives of the Romany workers as a force that further protects the strong which is the Turkish villagers. The gendarme was the protector of the hierarchy between the Romany and the Turk and Altın Abla expressed this hierarchy in the following way: "Can you ever think that Romany and Turk can be regarded as one and the same? Romany is like a slave to the Turk."<sup>56</sup> Yet, the connection between the

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<sup>56</sup>"Türk'le Roman hiç bir olur mu? Roman Türk'ün kölesi gibidir."

gendarme and the state was not emphasized and the gendarme appeared almost as the private guards of the Turkish villagers. The state, on the other hand, was an entity whose existence was not to be challenged; rather it was a wholeness into which they invested.

While they talked about the gendarme who checked their IDs and searched their tents with a mocking language, they talked about the soldier protecting the country as a totally different figure representing the wholeness of the state they invested in. Moreover, this figure of the soldier was invoked not while talking about the gendarme in the story of theft but when the subject came to Kurds. Altın Abla said: “The Romany are clean people, they wouldn’t harm you but those Kurds, they are dirt. They kill our Turkish soldiers and they are terrorists. Be careful, don’t believe everyone who treats you nicely. They kill each other, will they pity you?”<sup>57</sup>

The Romany I had met in Killik had had a similar view of the Kurds. One day while I was moving from the Romany part of the tent area to the Kurdish part, the Romany workers I was talking to warned me: “Don’t go over there, they are dangerous, they are terrorists! The gendarme comes here for them every day. They come once for us but every day for them!” Through this narrative, not only the Kurds materialized as terrorists but also the frequent gendarme visits materialized as proof that the Kurds were terrorists. Also through the stereotype of the terrorist

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<sup>57</sup>“Bizim Romanlar, iyidir, temiz insanlardır ama o Kürtler pisliktir. Bizim Türk askerlerini öldürüyorlar, terörist onlar. Dikkatli ol, sana iyi davranan herkese inanma. Onlar birbirlerini öldürüyor, sana mı acıyacaklar?”

Kurd, the Romany distinguished themselves from the Kurds and at the same time invested in the state as loyal citizens, clean and pure.<sup>58</sup>

The discourse on the Kurds being the terrorists was far from being an exception used by the Romany. The element of terrorism did not work in a singular way in constructing a monolithic discourse about Kurdish people but became an empty signifier that fit in the majority of the discourses which are utilized to render some Kurdish bodies intelligible. Let us now move on to the encounters of the Kurdish workers with other actors in the field to investigate how the Kurdish body recognized as dirty and dangerous translated into the Kurdish terrorist stereotype.

#### Kurdish Workers – “Terrorists” in the Field

The stereotype of ‘thief’ was usually associated with Romany people whereas whenever Kurdish people were involved in the encounter, the famous stereotype was ‘terrorist’. Although the word terrorist accomplished totally different tasks depending on who says the word, in which context she says it and in what kind of a discourse it is situated, there are a few general tasks of the word that must be noted before moving on to its analysis within particular encounters. The act of terrorism is categorically an organized action done by an organized group, while theft can be an individual attempt (although it was formulated as an ethnic characteristic behavior shared by the Romany, it can still categorically be an individual act). In this sense, the terrorist is more dangerous than the thief and

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<sup>58</sup>The Kurds in Killik were not particularly fond of the Romany either and unsurprisingly, they too advised me not to cross to the Romany side of the tent area. Engin said: “Why would you talk to them? They know nothing else but stealing and dancing! Be careful with your things, they are thieves!”

whereas all terrorists retain the potential to be thieves, all thieves cannot be terrorists.

This brings us to the most important commonality of the discourses forming and circulating the terrorist. Even before any other materializations of the state, in order for the word 'terrorist' to be uttered, a relation to the state, its boundaries, its law and therefore the subject's relationship to it has to be imagined. Yet, neither can the discourses conjuring up its object as 'the terrorist' be reduced to a single discourse nor can there be a single way people become subjects by utilizing (or avoiding) this discourse. The person adopting, utilizing, avoiding, subverting or challenging the discourse has to engage with this relation to the state and further deal with it while at the same time becoming a subject through the same relation. This is what I call the fantasies of the state, through which not only the subject comes into being but also the state materializes.

In Turkey, there has been an ongoing war between the Kurdish resistance forces and the Turkish state for over thirty years and 'terrorism' is the major element of the discourses not only of the state but also of the mass media that constructs the Kurdish armed resistance as a fierce, irrational, separatist force threatening the unity of the country. Although other groups and organizations have also been declared to be terrorists, none has ever approached the scale and impact of the Kurdish resistance forces. Therefore, the discourses through which the word 'terrorist' circulate in Turkey have more connotations pointing at the Kurdish body more than any other body. So it is no surprise that the stereotype of the Kurdish

terrorist circulates within the discourses that organize seasonal agricultural labor and becomes an element in establishing a fantasmatic relation to the Turkish state.

As I had noted before, the circulation of discourses of terrorism do have their effects on the recognition of Kurdish people even when the word is not uttered in a particular encounter. Yet, their commonality was not to directly materialize all Kurdish bodies as the body of the terrorist; their commonality was that they obliged each and every actor encountering a Kurdish body to relate to the fantasy of the state as a holistic entity. In other words, the state was carried into the particular encounter long before the arrival of the gendarme.

Sometimes, the state was directly carried into the encounter clearly with its name and boundaries transforming the Kurdish bodies into bodies already recognized as not belonging. In Killik, Engin, a Kurdish worker from Diyarbakır, told me about such an encounter. Engin and a friend of his were walking in the village to go to the market and were talking in Kurdish among themselves when a car stopped by and an angry man got off the car and started yelling. He said: “You cannot talk in any language other than Turkish here. It is the Republic of Turkey. If you want to talk in another language, go to another country!”<sup>59</sup> For this man to hear what two people were talking among themselves, he must have paid special attention to the bodies producing this sound while driving by. Moreover, he probably would not do the same thing to two blond tourists who were speaking in French among themselves. Therefore, “any other language” is not just any language but Kurdish

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<sup>59</sup>“Burda Türkçe hariç hiçbi dil konuşamazsın. Burası Türkiye Cumhuriyeti. Başka dil konuşmak istiyorsan başka ülkeye git!”

spoken by two young men of dark complexion and as he had stated clearly, he had already recognized them as bodies out of place.

At other times, the state was carried into the encounter by uttering the word 'terrorism'. Let us now turn to the discourses through which 'terrorism' circulates and analyze their various functions in each particular encounter.

Let me start with the story of Niyazi, the *dayıbaşı* who provided Kurdish workers from Kızıltepe for the shared tomato field of the brothers from Akhisar, Faruk and Caner. Caner told me that when Niyazi first came to Akhisar, he was so young that they did not let him work. By that time, Caner and his brother used to plant cotton. In mid-1990s when the war between the Turkish Army and the PKK was most intense, Niyazi had to leave the Kurdish region and "be out of sight" for a while (the gaze, of course, belongs to the state). So he and his family migrated to Akhisar, and there they stayed. Niyazi became the *dayıbaşı* bringing approximately 20 workers from Kızıltepe every season for Caner and Faruk's field. Moreover, Niyazi's brother also works for Faruk, looking after his animals, the two families are connected through several economic relations.

Caner told the story of Niyazi and his family's migration as follows: "These are very clean people. When they first came, Niyazi was just a kid. He was so young that we didn't allow him to work. Then, they all grew up and had their own children. They came here escaping the terror over there. They came and they stayed for good. Sometimes I tease Yusuf (Niyazi's cousin) saying: "OK you came, but it's been too long, it's enough, now return!" But he says: "What am I going to do there if I return?" Because there's nothing. There's nothing over there."

Caner identified not only the bodies of the workers but also the place they come from with a lack, turning 'over there' into a place where there is nothing but terror, and 'here' into a place where there is no terror but a refuge for the 'victims' of terror. The lack of the Kurdish bodies was not only a lack of power which turned them into victims but also a lack of 'cultivation' since he said in another conversation:

When these ones first came here, they were like animals; they did not even understand 'halt!' or 'whoa!'"<sup>60</sup> But he explicitly stated that this was when they first came 'here', which indicated that it is different now. In this sense, it was the emptiness combined with the terror which had made them into the animals they were then. But since they had come 'here', they had changed and it was 'here' what changed them; so, 'here' was not only a refuge from terror but also a transformative, 'cultivating' place. And Yusuf, who had undergone this change, did not want to go back 'there' and for Caner this reaffirmed that there was 'nothing' over there.<sup>61</sup>

The transformative power of 'here' was limited though. It could cultivate and help them get rid of their lack, but how about their excesses? Caner saw not only a lack in Niyazi and his family which turned them into victims but also an excess that made them into supporters of terrorism. He went on: "But anyway they support the PKK even if you chop their arms off. Actually, that's why that region is backward. One reason is terrorism and the other is the sheikhs and such religious leaders. I observe these ones, they do whatever the sheikh says."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Bunlar buraya ilk geldiklerinde hayvan gibilerdi. Ne ne durdan anlıyorlardı ne çüşten anlıyorlardı."

<sup>61</sup> Bunlar çok temiz insanlar. İlk geldiklerinde Nurettin daha çocuktu. Biz onu çalıştırmıyorduk çocuk diye. Sonra hepsi büyüdü, koca adam oldu, bunların çocukları oldu. Bunlar oradaki terör davasından kaçıp geldiler. Bir geldiler, artık temelli kaldılar. Ben Yusuf'a sataşıyorum arada (Nurettin'in amcaoğlu) "Tamam geldiniz, çok oldu, hadi dönün artık geri" diye. "Dönsem orada ne yapacağım?" diyor. Çünkü yok. Hiçbir şey yok orada.

<sup>62</sup> Ama kolunu kessen destekliyorlar PKK'yı. Zaten orası da bu yüzden geri kaldı. Bir terör, bir de bu şeyhler şihlar yüzünden. Ben bakıyorum bizimkilere, şeyh ne derse o. Onun her dediğini yapıyorlar."

Caner established a direct causal relationship between the excess of the PKK combined with the religious excess, (and that of the Kurdish people supporting both) causing the lack named “backwardness”. At first sight, Caner’s discourse seems to be a simple reproduction of the popular discourses and the official discourse of the state, in which the “backwardness” of the region and the people and the excess of terror and sheikhs have a circular presence: The region was backward because there was terror and religious excess which caused further backwardness and the ‘nothing’ over there. In this vicious circle of backwardness, religious excess and terrorism, the state seems to have dropped out of the picture, but it is actually what holds these elements together.

The improperness (the combination of the lacks and the excesses) Caner saw in ‘these ones’ and ‘there’ was always juxtaposed with the properness of ‘here’ and ‘us’. What prevented them and us from being one was an essential difference of backwardness causing and caused by the PKK (terror) and the religious excess, the two famous symptoms commonly referred to as preventing the indivisible and harmonious unity of the Turkish State. By seeing this lack and excess in the other’s body and their homeland, Caner was not only accounting for their improperness but also for the properness of his body and of the homeland in relation to the state. He never pronounced the words Turkish or Kurdish, making sure that the difference was not one caused by ethnic antagonism but by the level of backwardness.

And unsurprisingly Caner’s offer for a way out of this situation was education. Once, after he hugged Rojbîn and called her his bride as a show of intimacy, he said to her: “This is not proper work. Neither our money nor your work ends. You should

study and break loose of this work, never leave the pen down.” He turned to me and said: “The kids can’t go to school out of destitution.” And then he turned to Rojbîn’s mother, Fadile and said: “And you as a mother support this one, always back her up.”<sup>63</sup> But education was not only the remedy for the particular case of Rojbîn but a general way out because later he said: “These ones are good but in general they don’t send their daughters to school, they marry them off too soon, they’re ignorant you know, they’re backward.”<sup>64</sup>

It was not only the ethnic antagonism that was displaced by his discourse but also the class antagonism. Within his discourse destitution was the result of the backwardness and the ‘nothing’ over there. This destitution caused these people to accept this “improper job”. This not-proper-job and Caner’s money would continue to exist whether it was them or not filling this “position”. In other words, what became invisible through this discourse was that it was their labor which had allowed this job and Caner’s money to sustain itself if not increase. Through this discourse Caner did not only emerge as a figure naturally endowed with money, culture, civility and proper citizenship relation with the state, but also as an elder brother who gave them the opportunity to work and advice to educate their children properly.

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<sup>63</sup> Rojbîn’e sarılıp “Bu benim gelin, bunu alacam ben!” dedikten sonra “Bu işler iş değil, ne bizim paramız biter ne sizin işiniz biter. Oku da kurtul, kalemi elinden hiç bırakma.” dedi. Bana dönüp: “Yokluktan çocuklar okuyamıyor.” Fadile Abla’ya: “ Sen de anne olarak bunun arkasında ol, destekle.”

<sup>64</sup> “ Bizimkiler yine iyi de bunlar kızlarını filan hiç okutmuyor, erken erken evlendiriyor, cahil işte, geri kalmış.”

Let us remember his first sentence: “These are very clean people.” So, they are different from the dirty and dangerous terrorists from whom one must keep away. Caner emphasized his workers’ difference from *other ones*, namely, the other Kurds, by saying: “These ones are clean” and “These ones are good”. But Caner also emphasized that they are not-quite-so-different since they support the religious excess of the sheikhs and the excess of terror of the PKK. This discourse did not only allow him to be close enough to them to sustain the economic and social relationship that had lasted for decades without giving up his superior ethnic and class position and without changing his perception of the Kurds in general or ‘these ones’ in particular. They were backward, this was a fact. Backwardness was the cause and result of all the other ills, and the only intervention to break this vicious cycle was education that could only be possible with the combined effort of the state and the Kurdish families.

The appropriation of the discourses involving terrorism was mostly accompanied by a discourse on education and progress. This was also the case in Davut’s story. Davut is one of the twelve Kurdish rack assistants who work under the Turkish chief rack assistant in the tomato drying facility of the transnational company Macolive where 400 Kurdish workers are employed seasonally. When I asked Davut about how long he had been working as an assistant, he replied: “It is my third year in Macolive. I began as a purchaser for the company and climbed my way up to here. But I worked really hard. Now I have a permanent position in Macolive.”<sup>65</sup> He refrained from answering certain questions that he found

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<sup>65</sup>“Üçüncü yılım bu Macolive’de. Ben mal alımcılığından ta buralara yükseldim. Ama çok çalıştım. Allahın sıcağında köy köy dolaşıyordum. Şimdi kadrolu çalışaniyim Macolive’in.”

“dangerous” for the company such as how many workers work in Macolive and whether the workers in the factory were employed formally or informally. He never referred to himself as a worker, neither as a Kurd. Rather he chose to call himself an employee on a career track and said nothing about being Kurdish referring to himself as a member of the community, apart from saying that his family migrated to Akhisar from Muş when he was very young and that he learnt Kurdish from his parents.

When I asked him: “Who takes care of the gendarme controls here?”<sup>66</sup>, he employed a discourse that acknowledged the exploitation of Kurdish people but also claimed that it resulted from their being uneducated. He distinguished himself from the workers by accentuating his being educated and by underlining the effort he spent to achieve his class position. He said:

The rack assistants take care of it [the ID checks of the gendarme]. He collects everyone’s ID card one by one, he photocopies them, and the gendarme runs a GBT<sup>67</sup>. If there’s a problem in the GBT, the gendarme takes that worker under custody. Because I take the responsibility of these workers. How can I know whether one of them is a terrorist or not? There’s a NATO airport a few kilometers away, it is a military airport. What do I do if someone from here attacks it? They say that someone was caught before. I suppose he said that he took the weapon he used for a murder from a worker who came around here. I guess they make these searches since then. These people are really ignorant and uneducated. Everyone cheats and abuses them. Just like Macolive abuses them. Why doesn’t Macolive employ the people of this region but employs these ones bringing them here from such long distances?<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>“Burada jandarma kontrollerine kim bakıyor?”

<sup>67</sup> GBT is the abbreviation for Genel Bilgi Taraması which means General Information Scan. It shows whether one is being sought by the police and all the criminal records in the past.

<sup>68</sup>Sergi sorumluları ilgilenir. Herkesten kimliğini teker teker toplar, fotokopilerini çektirir, jandarmada GBT yapılır. GBT’de bir sorun çıkarsa jandarma gelir o işçiyi gözaltına alır. Çünkü ben bu işçilerin sorumluluğunu alıyorum. İçlerinde terörist var mı ben ne bileyim? Birkaç kilometre ötesi NATO havaalanı, askeri havaalanı yani. Oraya birisi saldırsa ben ne yaparım? Daha önce birisi yakalanmış.

In Davut's discourse education did not only function in distinguishing himself from the 'ignorant Kurds' but also in accounting for the cause of terrorism as well as their exploitation. Davut insinuated that the PKK cheated the ignorant Kurds into being 'terrorists' just like Macolive cheated them and made them work for low wages which the 'people of this region' would not accept. The reason for all that cheating going on was their ignorance. Thus, he could disregard his role in the process of exploitation, naturalizing the hierarchy between educated and 'ignorant' Kurds. The hierarchies were also reinforced through space by remaking the place of the state. The potential terrorist among the Kurdish workers would be especially dangerous in case of her imagined movement into and destruction of the military place, the NATO airport. Davut, by helping the gendarme check the ID's of the Kurdish workers, was protecting the place of the state from Kurdish potential terrorists.

The discourse of terrorism was also active in formulating the relationship of the Kurdish workers themselves with the state. While I was walking back to the tent area for lunch, I helped a very old woman carry the box of half-rotten tomatoes (occasionally given to the workers for them to make tomato paste) and she invited me to her tent for drinking tea, we started chatting with her and her family. I spent quite some time with them and learnt that they were supporters of the PKK. But before going on with my encounter with them, I would like to elaborate on the response of Mehmet Amca, the head of the family I usually worked with in Macolive. After I came back from my visit to the other familys' tent to Mehmet

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Suikast silahlarından birini buralara gelen işçilerden aldığını söylemiş galiba. Herhalde o zamandan beri yapılıyor bu aramalar. Bu insanlar çok cahil, eğitimsiz. Herkes bunları kandırıyor, kullanıyor. Aynen Macolive'in kullandığı gibi. Macolive neden Ege halkını çalıştırmıyor da ta nerelerden getirip bunları çalıştırıyor?

Amca's tent, he acted a little distantly and said sarcastically: "You got along really well with those ones!" Later when I asked him whether he got angry with me for talking to them, he said:

"Come on, what for are you going to talk to them, they are terrorists, enemies of the state. If there were no state in this country, the country would not last for 10 minutes. What is the problem? We are Kurdish too. Do we go to the mountains<sup>69</sup>? Why do they? Your state gives every right to you. Alright, Kurdish cannot be spoken with ease but the state gave us the TV channel in Kurdish, it is getting better step by step... The majority of the army is Kurdish, too. Turkish people bear one or two children, our Kurds bear six or seven."<sup>70</sup>

Mehmet Amca told me that one of the AKP deputies, Eyüp Cenap Gülpınar, was a distant relative of theirs and that they supported the AKP. His discourse was close to that of the AKP, promising the enhancement of 'cultural' rights and freedoms for Kurds without 'damaging the indivisible wholeness of the country'. Mehmet Amca, through this discourse, distinguished between terrorist Kurds and themselves as Kurds loyal to the Turkish State. The absence of cultural rights of Kurds could not be attained through terror but through being loyal to the State Almighty, the protector of the country. In his fantasy of the state, the terrorist was again the symptom, preventing the unity of the country kept together by the Turkish State. Mehmet Amca also utilized a very original idea of transforming the Turkish Army to an entity populated mostly by the Kurdish people, therefore keeping high hopes for 'belonging.'

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<sup>69</sup> The idiomatic usage of *dağa çıkmak* which literally means 'going to the mountains' refers to joining the armed resistance of the PKK.

<sup>70</sup> "Ya bırak ne konuşacaksın onlarla, terörist onlar, devlet düşmanı. Bu ülkede devlet olmasa, ülke 10 dakika dayanamaz. Ne var yani ? biz de Kürt'üz. Biz çıkıyor muyuz dağa? Sen ne çıkıyorsun, devlet senin her hakkını vermiş. Evet Kürtçe filan rahat rahat konuşulamıyor ama işte televizyonu da verdi, oluyor yavaş yavaş... Zaten ordunun da çoğunluğu Kürt. Türkler 1-2 doğuruyor, bizim Kürtler 6-7."

However, neither the State nor the terrorist emerged in the narratives of all the Kurdish workers in the same way. The daughter of the woman I helped carry her tomatoes, Hêvîdar Teyze and Hêvîdar Teyze's son Emrah were active supporters of the DTP, the Kurdish political party later closed down by the Supreme Court for "becoming the center of acts against the indivisible wholeness of the state with its homeland and its nation" just like its six predecessor, the six Kurdish parties which were either closed down or abrogated themselves just before an anticipated close down. Emrah and Hêvîdar told me much more antagonistic stories between themselves and the state which they called "T.C."<sup>71</sup> "T.C." appeared in their narratives through the violence it applied on their bodies. For example Emrah told at length that he was tortured by the soldiers for two days when he was 6 years old because he had accidentally gone into the territory of the Diyarbakır military airport while playing around their house. Yet, T.C. was not only brought into the conversation through personal narratives but also through the stories of guerilla resistance and of the street resistance confronting the police and in these stories, T.C. appeared as a powerful but not invincible external enemy.

Adopting the discourse of Kurdish political resistance, Hêvîdar and Emrah called the actors of the Kurdish armed resistance "guerillas" rather than "terrorists", they referred to the PKK as "the organization"<sup>72</sup> and to the land inhabited by Kurds in Turkey as "the region". They also separated the Kurdish people into two groups: 1) those who support the DTP and the PKK and 2) those who don't. They named the

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<sup>71</sup> The abbreviation for Türkiye Cumhuriyeti meaning the Republic of Turkey

<sup>72</sup> Örgüt

latter *korucu*<sup>73</sup>, extending the term to all Kurdish people who do not oppose but make actual or imaginary alliances with the state. They said that most of the Kurdish workers in Macolive were *korucu* and that they did not have much contact with them.

Within their narratives, it was no longer the state which provided and protected the fantasmatic unity of a people and land but the PKK. But although the PKK and the State emerged both as fantasmatic unities, neither the operations of the two entities nor the operations of the fantasies of the two entities can be equated to each other. The main reason was that the Turkish State operated through strategies and by depending on a proper place, while the PKK and its supporters had to operate through tactics, always on the watch for the actions of the State. I will further elaborate on this difference in the conclusion of this chapter but now let me clarify my point with the narratives of the family from Derik, the ones subject to the story of 'theft'.

One of the first things we talked about with the son of the family Serko was their hometown Derik. He asked me whether I had ever been to Derik or not. I said that I may have passed through it but maybe I forgot so he said: "If someone passes through Derik, he can never forget it. It is located in the middle of a very smooth and straight plain and you go through it for a long time and then Derik appears. It is also well-known for a protest we had once organized. We stood up for 48 hours for our mayor, this is never forgotten." He was proud of being from Derik and supporting the DTP. He was also proud of 'the guerilla', 'the heroes and heroines of

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<sup>73</sup> *Geçici ve Gönüllü köy korucuları* literally "the temporary and voluntary village guards" denotes the villagers armed by the state for "fighting terrorism".

Kurdistan'. At night, while we were drinking tea in front of the tent, he read us poems which were texted to his cell phone by his friends as SMS and Rojîn, his sister accompanied him reading the poems she had written in her notebook. They were mostly lyric poems with an epic tint, depicting the bravery of the guerillas or the hard conditions they endure for their people. Then, we moved on to listening to 'guerilla songs' and we started chatting. Since many guerillas join the PKK while they are in the university, they wondered whether or not I had any such intention. When I said that I would not but had the intention to live in 'the region' for a while, Xalo Hekîm (the father) said that I could become a teacher there and went on:

You know they say that the guerilla kills teachers, it is a lie. The state kills them. The state is the real terrorist. The guerillas come to the village and we tell them, don't harm this teacher, he is good, they don't kill him. The teacher or the doctor who comes to our region never eats at home, one day some invites him over for dinner, the next day someone else invites him, they take food to her house and so on. It's not that way here, everyone ostracizes us.<sup>74</sup>

Xalo Hekîm utilized the term 'terrorist' with all its derogatory connotations, yet, detached it from the 'guerilla' and attached it to the state. He also detached the civil servants from the state and transformed them into 'their guests' who are killed by their own state. Within this discourse, the state no longer appeared as an entity that unites the homeland and its nation; on the contrary, it became a criminal organization, the real terrorist, which has insidious plans including killing its own civil servants in order to put the blame on the 'guerilla'. The PKK also adopted a fantasmatic presence as the heroes and heroines of Kurds, but it was not at all like

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<sup>74</sup> Anlatıyorlar ya gerilla öğretmen öldürdü diye, yalan. Devlet öldürüyor. Asıl terörist devlettir. Gerilla köye gelir, biz deriz bu iyidir, öğretmendir, dokunma, öldürmez yani. Bizim oraya gelen öğretmen, doktor hiç evinde yemek yemez, bir gün biri çağırır bir gün biri çağırır, yemek götürürler, ohooo. Burada öyle değil, herkes bizi dışlıyor.

the Turkish state which killed its own citizens but it was an entity which listens to the advice of their supporters and values their knowledge. Another operation of his discourse was that it equated the Kurdish workers in Turkish regions and the civil servants in Kurdistan by regarding both groups as guests. Therefore the unequal treatment each received could be judged through the moral category of hospitality.

In the discourses of Hêvîdar, Emrah, Xalo Hekîm and Serko both the ethnic and class antagonisms in Turkey became visible. This group told me more stories of Turkish people looking down on them and turning down their requests for help because they were Kurds. But then, how could they manage them within their encounters and allow for the continuation of the labor relationship? They did this by employing tactics in the everyday encounters with the other actors in the field.

One of the tactics was translating the ethnic antagonism into a moral language. This is what prevented the Kurdish workers from creating a monolithic category of 'the Turks' as exploiters and discriminators. They distinguished between good Turks and bad Turks, hospitable Turks and inhospitable Turks. For example for the family from Derik, the *muhtar* was a good Turk. The family's prearranged jobs had gone wrong and they had to search for daily jobs in the fields around the village. After the event that was referred to as the story of 'theft' had occurred, Xalo Hekîm and Serko went to visit the *muhtar* to apologize for what happened the day before and they developed close relationships with him. The *muhtar* himself owned vineyards and he gave them work there. Rojîn said: "The people here would not give us work had they not liked my brother. We worked here in the *muhtar's* vineyard, the *muhtar* is a very good man. And we worked in his vineyard as if it were our own

yard. When one works as if it were his own, people trust one more and give you work.”<sup>75</sup> Serko said: “*Muhtar* tells me: ‘Don’t go back, stay here, be my son’, he loves me and trusts me. ‘You’re the boss now, you will look after the vineyard as your own’ he says and we work carefully in his vineyard.”<sup>76</sup> Their relationship with the *muhtar* was not limited to working in his field. When Serko’s sister got ill, it was the *muhtar* who took them to the hospital and Rojîn and Serko worked half a day in his field free of charge which according to Rojîn was “helping” him. Concerning the ethnic antagonism, the *muhtar* and İbo were recognized as singular cases through the moral category of ‘good men’ and the class antagonism was thus circumvented with the translation of the labor relationship into a kinship relationship.

Also, since they worked along with Turkish workers in his vineyard, they developed friendships with Turkish people as well. One day when I mispronounced a word in Kurdish, Serko said that their sister-in-law who is Turkish and learnt Kurdish after she got married with his brother pronounces that word just the way I do. Then he said: “I have a friend from here İbo, he can repeat whatever I say in Kurdish. I tell him ‘you are Kurdish for sure!’ His friends tell him: ‘We can’t believe you, how can you make friends with Kurds?’ He says: ‘What is there not to believe?’ You see, how they regard us, as if we were dogs!”<sup>77</sup> Right after that, Serko started

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<sup>75</sup> “Eğer abimi sevmeselerdi bize iş vermezlerdi. Biz burada muhtar’ın tarlasında çalıştık, muhtar valla çok iyi insan, bize çok yardım etti. Biz de onun tarlasında kendimizinmiş gibi çalıştık. Şimdi sen birinin tarlasına kendi tarlan gibi bakarsan, insanlar sana daha çok güveniyor, iş veriyor.”

<sup>76</sup> “Muhtar bana diyor ki: ‘Sen gitme, burada kal, benim oğlum ol’, beni seviyor bir de bana çok güveniyor. ‘Artık patron sensin diyor, bu tarlaya kendininmiş gibi bakacaksın’ biz de çok dikkatli çalışıyoruz onun tarlasında.”

<sup>77</sup> “Benim buradan bir arkadaşım var İbo, aynı benim söylediğimi tekrarlayabiliyor. Ben diyorum ona sen kesin Kürt’sün! Onun arkadaşları da ona sen nasıl Kürtlerle arkadaşlık ediyorsun diyormuş, inanamıyormuş! O da diyormuş neyine inanamıyorsun? Ya işte böyle bakıyorlar bize, sanki biz köpeğiz.”

telling heroic stories of guerillas like that of Berivan who fought backing up to the edge of a cliff and fighting the Turkish soldiers till she fired her last bullet, and then broke her weapon and threw herself off the cliff in order not to surrender to the soldiers.

While the close relationship Serko had with the *muhtar* and *ibo* cracked the image of the cruel Turk who looks down upon them and ostracizes them, it could not totally get rid of the humiliation and the perpetuation of being 'out-of-place' in the majority their encounters with the locals. Therefore, they felt the need to emphasize that there was a place that they belonged to and that it was 'their place' in which, let alone themselves, even the inhospitable people from 'this place' are not ostracized. As we saw in the story of 'theft', *in this place* the state appeared as an entity that intensified their being 'out-of-place' through the gendarme 'raiding' their tents while, *in their place*, 'the region', the state was the entity that did not allow the region to be their place. For the workers from Derik, what made the wholeness of 'the region' imaginable, was the guerilla, the only force resisting the violence of the state, but that was still haunted by the violence of the state. Therefore, Serko by telling the stories of the guerilla's bravery right after the story of their being regarded as dogs, was trying to reassure the wholeness of the 'place' where he belonged and where he is regarded as a respectable and dignified person without ever being humiliated for being Kurdish and he was empowering this image with the heroism of the guerilla.

Another tactic to survive in the Turkish region was 'rampaging'. As we said, the Kurdish workers were not the passive receivers of the fearful image of the terrorist

but they always negotiated their positions in reference to the discourses through which it circulated. If one way of negotiation was to name some other Kurds or the state as terrorist, another was to use this fearful image to oblige the opponent to respond to their demands. One of the terms agreed upon both by the workers and the employers to represent such acts of the workers was “rampaging”<sup>78</sup>. During my preliminary research in Söke, the farmers told me that the Kurdish workers (unlike the Turkish ones) used to “rampage” and demand a higher price for picking cotton and the farmers were afraid of them since they had a “rough culture” and since they were “ill-mannered people.” The farmers said that they solved their problems with Turkish workers by “talking to them” whereas it was not possible to do the same with the Kurdish workers. In my fieldwork, many farmers had a similar idea of the Kurdish workers and said that they were afraid of them since they were “aggressive and belligerent” and they identified no other ethnic groups in this way. And the Kurdish workers utilized this image to empower themselves.

When I asked Dayıbaşı Abdullah from Diyarbakır whether they would experience any problems in receiving their money, he said: “No, I guess we won’t. They should pay it. We did a job worth 40000 liras for him. Now, he owes me four thousand. If he doesn’t pay it, we will drive him to a corner, are there no corners in this place? He shouldn’t do us wrong.”<sup>79</sup>

Yet, ‘rampaging’ was a tactic, not a strategy; therefore it could not be applied for each and every case. Xalo Apo from Suruç put it quite clearly:

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<sup>78</sup> Tantana çıkarmak

<sup>79</sup> Yok olmaz, sanmıyorum. Ödemeleri lazım. O Ahmet’e 40 milyarlık iş yaptık. 4 milyar da borcu var onun bana. Ödemezse bir köşede sıkıştırırız, yok mu yani burada bir köşe? Yanlış yapmaması lazım.

“Two months ago, he [the employer] was supposed to give us some money to cover our expenses here. A week passed, he didn’t pay it, two weeks passed,... We have no money, what are we going to buy our food with? We went to his office, we yelled at him and took on him a little, we received the money the next day. Now, he is supposed to pay again but he asked for a two weeks extension, he said he will pay two weeks later. Now we are waiting. He will till this land for the next three years, we can’t yell at him every time. A friend of ours rampaged, yelled and took him on and went away. What happened? He couldn’t receive his money either.”<sup>80</sup>

Tactics function by focusing on immediate gains, without assuming a proper place and aiming to build one. In this sense, “rampaging” was a tactic to be used when necessary in order to increase immediate gains and to be avoided at other times not to fetter future possibilities. But avoidance also always kept the option of reverting to rampaging open, since possible future gains could not be certain enough to be privileged over immediate gains. Most of the Kurdish workers did not have close relations with their employers lasting over long years which prevented them from calculating and investing in future gains worth sacrificing part of the immediate gains. However, this tactic also had a surplus; just like in the story of the Romany workers, their act of ‘pilfering’ contributed further to their recognition as thieves by nature, the act of ‘rampaging’ reinforced the Kurdish stereotype as a wild, rough-natured, ill-mannered and uncivilized therefore, allowing the discourse to slide easily into the Kurd as potential terrorist.

As I claimed above, the tactic of the Romany workers used for the same purposes was ‘pilfering’ or escaping without completing the work which is based on the choice to avoid confrontation, the tactic of the Kurdish workers was based on

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<sup>80</sup> İki ay önce masraflarımızı karşılayacak bir para vermesi gerekiyordu. Bir hafta geçti vermedi, iki hafta,...Yok paramız neyle alcaz yemeği içmeyi? Gittik adamın yazıhanesine, biraz bağırдық çağırdık, ertesi gün geldi para. Şimdi iki hafta istedi, dedi iki hafta sonra verecem. Biz de bekliyoruz. Bu toprak daha üç sene bu adamın elinde, şimdi hep bağırarak çağırmak olmaz. Bizim buradan bir arkadaş tantana çıkardı, bağırıldı, çağırdı gitti. Ne oldu? O da alamadı parasını.

'rampaging' and confrontation, or at best, on delaying confrontation and extending deadlines. The different choice of tactics of the two groups has a close relation with how they experience and perceive state power and authority in general. To counter these tactics, the employers developed strategies that involved actual or imagined alliances with the state and appropriated strategies that resembled and mostly merged with those of the state. Therefore it is no surprise that the element of the state, whether implicitly or explicitly, always plays a part in the class relations experienced through the encounters in the fields.

Now, I will elaborate upon one last tactic of ultra-simultaneous translation used to fend off a strategy in which yelling is used by the bosses and in which Kurdish workers choose to avoid confrontation in the power struggles of every working day. Here though, the yelling of the bosses never translated into 'rampaging'.

Let us remember Caner, one of the two brothers who had a close relationship with Niyazi's workers from Kızıltepe. His elder brother Faruk had a much more formal and distant relationship with the workers. First of all, he didn't spend much time in the field. In the three days that I spent there, I just saw him four times for a few minutes. When he came, he appeared in his 4X4 jeep, stopped the car approximately 100 meters away from the workers, got out of the car, picked a wrongly cut tomato in his hands, threw it away angrily and started yelling at Niyazi and at the workers, saying that they did their jobs awfully and that Niyazi should tell them to work carefully and cut the tomatoes right in the middle, not to rush the job..etc., he then got into his car, banged the door and drove away aggressively. He did the same thing three times in three days, once on the first day and twice on the

third. (In his second visit on the third day there was a man next to him whom I later learnt to be from Macolive and who said that he would buy only one half of the tomatoes since he didn't like the other half. Faruk yelled loudest after that visit.)

However, what was most curious in this encounter was not Faruk's but Niyazi's performance. Whenever Faruk started yelling at him and the workers, Niyazi turned to the workers and started translating Faruk's words into Kurdish in a moderate tone of voice. He went on until Faruk stopped and the very moment Faruk stopped, he stopped and said to Faruk in Turkish: "That's what I'm telling them. I'm telling them to cut right in the middle...etc." The curious thing was that every single worker understood Turkish perfectly although the old women had some trouble speaking it. So it was not the meaning of the words but the performance which mattered.

When I first discovered the pattern, it seemed to be an interesting tactic to me. The performance of translation was not only replacing the silence of the workers who were being reprimanded but also turning the scolding into simple instructions on how to do the work. This performance also reaffirmed the need for a middle man (on the side of the bosses) without whom the tension would increase and it was also a performance of protecting the worker which was seen as the job of *dayıbaşı* by the workers. Yet, what shocked me the most was to observe the same tactic in another field.

Davut, the rack assistant in charge of Mehmet Amca's (Leyla's father, the *çavuş* in charge of his and his brother's children) workers, strolled around these workers to control the work and give them commands. Sometimes, he talked

directly to the workers but when he was angry, he always started yelling in the presence of Mehmet Amca and quite a few times (although not every time) Mehmet Amca also started translating his words into Kurdish. In this performance Mehmet Amca also stopped the translation exactly the moment Davut stopped yelling and he also said to him in Turkish: "That's what I am telling them, cut evenly."

I did not observe it in all the fields where Kurdish workers worked so I cannot generalize it as a common practice among Kurdish *çavuş* and *dayıbaşı*, but in the two cases I described it seemed to be a tactic developed to moderate both the anger of the one in charge of labor control and its effects on the workers. The translation was obviously not done for the workers to understand the meaning since all the workers in this field also knew Turkish and understood every word. Moreover, both Mehmet Amca and Niyazi translated only half of the commands including no derogatory terms and stopping exactly when 'the boss' stops even if they were in the middle of a sentence. The bosses yelled at the workers for no apparent particular reason but about the quality of work they conduct. Both were tomato workers receiving a piece-rate so it was not the speed (which was self imposed due to low rates paid per piece) but the quality of work those in charge of labor control had to make sure. So their yelling was almost regular since the aim of the workers was always increasing their speed which in the end meant reducing the quality of work. So yelling was a part of the labor control process however, since it was a very affective part, it could be degrading for the workers. This is exactly why the middlemen, either the *çavuş* or the *dayıbaşı* was to be included in the process bearing the scolding and reducing the tension of the confrontation.

When Davut started yelling, I was working next to Leyla and I asked her why he yelled and if he yelled like this all the time. She said he did and she believed that he was doing it in vain since they already knew how to do their job. I also told her that I had observed it in another field and told her that the boss over there had had a habit of throwing tomatoes around in addition to yelling. She said the owner of the facility did the same thing: "The rack responsables don't do so, they just yell. But the owner of this place throws the tomatoes." First of all, it was not only the yelling but throwing the tomatoes away that was part of the performance. Moreover, since Leyla said Davut's yelling was in vain, she was not affected by it too much, which shows us that the translation performance worked at least partly.

Although preserving mutual dignity was also an important element in many other workers' encounters with the bosses as well, in the Kurdish workers' encounters, it was the primary element. The ethnic antagonism between the Turkish and the Kurdish people was so severe that no other antagonisms in the field could escape being dominated by the former. Being reconstructed through each and every encounter, the state also appeared as a more strictly ethnic entity in the encounters of Kurdish workers. The element of terrorism was so dominant in the discourses through which it circulated that every Kurdish person as well as those who encounter them had to deal with it one way or another and situate themselves in 'a place' vis-à-vis the state. These discourses which distinguished the Kurdish workers' experiences from others, nevertheless could not fully determine their experiences so the discourses had to be unmade and remade in each and every encounter.

For everyone included in an encounter with Kurds, the state was a colossal being with a life of its own. If it was regarded as a benefactor who grants rights or who maintains the safety and protects the unity of the country, it was to be supported and not to be rebelled against. On the other hand, if it was regarded as an entity which targets and destroys the bodies, the places and the lives of the Kurds, it was to be confronted and resisted, and the forces that struggled against it, such as the PKK, were to be supported. Whichever was the case; the state could never be circumvented, hesitated about, avoided or ignored. This wholeness with which the state was imagined and experienced was reflected in the encounters since the violence of the state (which is the very element that makes it into a whole), is carried into the particular encounter through the broader power relations. So the Kurdish workers could never evade the encounter with the gendarme nor could they avoid the stereotype of the 'terrorist'. They had to re-situate themselves in relation to these discourses and encounters and subvert and reverse them.

Now I will move on to the encounters of the *Yürük* workers who were labeled neither as thieves nor as terrorists and analyze their encounters with the Turkish bosses.

#### *Yürük* Workers – “Uncultivated Peasants” in the Field

We had distinguished the story of 'theft' in which *Yürük* workers took place from that of the Romany and the Kurdish workers by the absence of the gendarme in the encounter and the low level of 'criminality' of it. It's true that when both the boss's and the workers' ethnicity (as well as the official ethnicity of the state) was Turkish,

neither did the event get so serious nor did the relationship get so tense. However, it does not mean that they lived in peace happily ever after. In this section, I will analyze the tactics of the *Yürük* workers, and explore how power relations (which are never absent from the fields) are experienced between the workers and the boss as well as between the *Yürük* workers and their co-workers, a smaller group of Bulgarian-Turks working in the same field along with them.

Let me begin with the most surprising tactic I had encountered. While I was working with the *Yürük* workers I was surprised to hear exclamations like “the bird perched” and “the bird flew”<sup>81</sup>. Generally I, the stupid city girl, would be the only one caring about the “beauty of nature” whereas what was nature for me was a space of exploitation for the workers. And such remarks, if they came from me, would be regarded as romantic outbursts of a stupid city girl. It was later that I understood that it was a coded message among the workers so “the bird perched” meant “the boss is around” and “the bird flew” meant “the boss went away, relax.” Later on, I heard the “little bird perched/flew” version of the same exclamation and it referred to the boss’ son.

But why was whether the boss was there or not important for the workers? First of all, *Yürük* workers were paid daily wages so if they worked slowly, they would work for longer days, which means earning more money. But if the boss saw them working slowly, he would not employ them again. Moreover, he checked not only the speed of work but also its quality. In grape picking, quality meant losing as few grapes as possible. The worker had to place the basket right under the bunch of

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<sup>81</sup> Kuş kondu, kuş uçtu.

grapes and cut the bunch loose from the branch and let it fall right into the basket. However, carrying the basket got harder since the basket got heavier as it filled with grapes and it also required much more than just holding the bunch with one hand and later throwing it into the basket. Yet, the latter method resulted in grapes getting loose from the bunch and spreading on the ground and if that happened, the worker was supposed to pick them up and place them into the basket. Actually there would be a problem not if the grapes fell on the ground but if the boss saw them. So the workers developed methods to avoid such encounters, one of them was the bird perched/flew code and the other was “being practical” or “digging a grave”<sup>82</sup>. It meant: If a grape falls on the ground, the worker should push some soil on it with her foot, which saves the time and energy that would otherwise be spent in picking it up and putting it into the basket and still catch up with the other workers. The time saved by being practical or by digging a grave would be spent to rest in the shade and eat grapes. Yet, if the big bird or the little bird had perched, none of these methods would be put into practice and this was the reason they had to watch out for the boss and invent new ways of alerting the others without letting the boss understand.

The boss also knew that the workers would slack if he was not around so he was around most of the time. In addition, his *kahya* drove the tractor carrying the full grape baskets to the rack and the empty ones back to the vineyard and he was also in charge of labor control. But he was not feared as much as the boss himself since he was perceived by the workers as a worker rather than a boss. He behaved in line with this perception and did not tell on the workers most of the time. Yet the

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<sup>82</sup> “Pratik olmak” ya da “Mezar kazmak”

eleven year old son of the boss knew perfectly on which side he was. He was not around all the time but he knew his mission when he was in the vineyard. One day he had come to the rack on his bike to chat with me but after a few minutes he said: “I am going to the vineyard, the workers work harder when I am around”<sup>83</sup> and went.

The class antagonism was always experienced through indirect and subtle acts on the field and the workers not only because it was not complicated by the ethnic antagonism but also because the workers wanted to keep the relationship smooth not only because they worked for this farmer as well as for other farmers in this region for many years. Yet, there was another stereotype that worked here too, not only between the boss and the workers but also among the workers. Yürük workers worked together with a group of Bulgarian Turks who were neighbors of İbrahim Abi's *kahya* Ali Abi. They lived in a relatively big town whereas *Yürüks* lived in a small mountain village. The Bulgarian-Turkish workers just like other people in Akhisar looked down upon the *Yürüks* and they associated their every move with a lack of manners. The stereotype at work was the rude/uncultivated but sneaky peasant and in this region it was associated especially with the *Yürüks* living in the mountain villages.

Once we were working in the field when Güler, a Bulgarian-Turkish worker looked at the Yürük workers who were left behind in their rows and said: “These peasant folks are really cunning, you know! Look they are all slowing down work.

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<sup>83</sup> “Ben amelenin başına gidiyorum, ben orada olunca daha çok çalışıyorlar.”

We are looking forward to the end of work, they are looking forward to more work.”<sup>84</sup>

But, this difference of manners towards work was not associated with their difference in terms of how much each need the work’s monetary returns but was read as a sneaky act of making the most out of work. Yet, if there was such a difference [which I did not see] it must have stemmed from a difference of need rather than a difference in their level of being ‘cultivated’. Güler herself frequently emphasized that she was doing this job as an extra to “support her family” and said: “Actually this is no job to endure for this money but you know, life is expensive”<sup>85</sup> When I asked her what she was going to do with the money, she said: “*Bayram* is coming and the schools will open, all cost money.”

It was not only the ‘cunning’ acts, or as we may call them the tactics, of the Yürük workers that made them uncivilized in the eyes of the Bulgarian-Turks but also every single move of the Yürük from walking to eating was recognized as crude. The following conversation between me and Sultan is exemplary in this regard:

Sultan: Where did you have breakfast in the morning break?

Deniz: You know Türkan from Hampaşa (the village of the Yürük workers), I had breakfast with her family.

Sultan: You can’t feel comfortable next to them, come eat with us. They eat and drink and do everything else differently. We call them *Gocuyürük*<sup>86</sup>, they’re coarse and rude. You also see the difference, it’s one thing to eat with them and another with us, isn’t it?

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<sup>84</sup> Güler: “Bu köylü milleti de çok kurnaz ha! Bak hepsi iş yavaşlatıyor. Biz iş bitse de gitsek diye bakıyoruz, onlar iş olsa da çalışsak diye bakıyor.”

<sup>85</sup> Aslında bu iş, bu paraya çekilecek dert değil de işte ne yapacaksın, hayat pahalı.

<sup>86</sup> A derogatory term used to denote the ‘rough’ and ‘uncultivated’ manners of *Yürüks*.

Deniz: No, actually, they eat cheese and bread and so do we here...

Sultan: Of course you don't want to denigrate anyone but we know it anyway. No need for saying.<sup>87</sup>

However, it does not mean that the Bulgarian-Turks employed the same discourse each and every time. During the incident we called the story of 'theft', the Bulgarian workers did agree with the Yürük workers that the boss yelled at the *dayıbaşı* too loudly and that it was rude. They also agreed that it was just a bunch of grapes and said: "What happens if she takes a few bunches, he has the whole vineyard!" emphasizing that according to the correct cultural codes, the boss was supposed to grant them some.

In the encounters of the *Yürük* workers, we observed that the class antagonism is experienced more smoothly and the element of the state is kept out of it. The Yürüks were recognized neither as thieves nor as terrorists therefore although their action was interpreted by the boss as 'theft', the stereotype did not stick to their bodies as easily as it did to Kurdish and Romany workers' bodies. Moreover, the antagonism was not translated into an ethnic antagonism; instead it was discussed and judged through the criteria of the appropriateness of the action to 'shared' cultural codes. Another factor that distinguished the encounter of the

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<sup>87</sup> Sultan: Sen nerede kahvaltı ettin sabah?

Deniz: Hampaşalılardan Türkan var ya onunla yedim.

Sultan: Onların yanında rahat edemezsin, gel bizle ye sen. Yemesi içmesi her şeyi başka onların. Gocuyürük deriz, kaba saba oluyorlar. Yani zaten sen de görüyorsundur farkı, onlarla yiince başka, buraya gelince başka di mi?

Deniz: Yoo aslında onlar da ekmek peynir yiyor, biz de, ne fark eder?

Sultan: "Tabii sen şimdi kimseyi kötülemek istemiyorsun. Biz zaten biliyoruz. Gerek yok.

Yürük workers from that of the majority of the Kurdish and Romany workers was that the Yürük workers had economic relations lasting for over many years with not only their current boss but also his friends from the same village who employed them therefore, the Yürük workers were ready to sacrifice part of the immediate gains for the sustainability of the relationship.

The power relations between the Bulgarian-Turkish workers and the Yürüks became antagonistic when the Bulgarian-Turkish workers adopting the age-old stereotype of the unmannered peasant who is unlike the well-mannered townsmen. Yet the effects of this stereotype were not reason enough to label the Yürüks as dirty and dangerous bodies.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on how the notions of dirt and danger are utilized to define the strangers in the field and how they turned into ethnic stereotypes of “thieves” for identifying the Romany workers and of “terrorists” the Kurdish workers. The discourses of theft and terrorism operated by systematically forming the objects of which they spoke and served the specific form of recognizing the stranger: the one already recognized as not belonging. One major commonality of the discourses was that they operated through seeing either a lack or an excess in the other. Through this operation, the ethnic antagonisms could remain unaddressed and were normalized. Explaining the lack or excess in the other in terms of dirt and danger served not only to converge terms of dirt and danger and terms of ethnicity and to reproduce the ethnic stereotypes but also to gloss over the ethnic antagonism at the same time: the other was not improper because she

was Romany or Kurdish but because she was (at least a potentially) a thief or a terrorist. The class antagonism was also organized in the same manner: the worker was exploited not because she lacked any other means of livelihood but because she was ignorant, uneducated or cheated by terrorist organizations or religion.

Yet, the bodies defined as such were passive victims neither of the discourses defining them as terrorists or thieves nor of the processes of exploitation outside them, on the contrary, they were active subjects negotiating their positions, subverting or rendering the discourses that defined them as lacking or excessive ineffective, coming up with tactics and innovative ways, to live, which they consider to be “decent human lives”. However, it does not cancel out the fact that the tactics they employed, the pilfering of the Romany and the rampaging of the Kurds, further reinforced the ethnic stereotypes.

The discourses marking the bodies of the Kurdish and Romany workers as dirty and dangerous in general and as thieves and terrorists in particular produced them as bodies to be kept away from. As a result, the efforts of the locals to minimize encounters with them were maximized. The Kurdish and Romany workers also responded in a similar way to their being seen as dirty and dangerous; they did not particularly enjoy the encounters. Yet unlike the locals they lacked ‘the place’ and the means to draw boundaries around a space to prevent others from coming in and keep the bodies like them inside and the different outside. They were already in the other’s place, therefore it was impossible to keep away. However, ironically, for this very reason it became impossible for the locals to keep the other away and encounters happened. But within these very encounters, the aim of being one,

keeping harmony and coherence was never left aside and each group made the other intelligible by reaffirming the social boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

Yet, equating these groups' exclusionary practices towards each other (be them strategies or tactics) would mean not only disregarding the role of the state in forging these stereotypes but also ignoring the class relationship between Turkish farmers and Kurdish or Romany workers. It was this very hierarchy between their relationships with the state and capital that made the Turkish farmers' fantasy-scenarios translate into strategies and the Romany and Kurdish workers fantasy-scenarios' to operate through tactics in the first place.

In other words, both the groups mentioned, the Turkish farmers and the Kurdish or Romany workers were investing in a fantasy of keeping 'us' inside and 'them' outside, and all the groups lacked the means of doing so, since the Kurdish and Romany workers did not have a proper place and since the place of the Turkish farmers were constantly being violated by the Kurdish and Romany workers and thus has to be re-made (constantly "under construction"). But the very difference between being in-its-place and out-of-place changed the responses to the fantasy of being one. Now I will analyze how the fantasies of the two groups differ in relation to their *jouissance*.

Žižek identifies two different kinds of *jouissance*: the first one is "the enjoyment of snatching back from the Master part of the *jouissance* he stole from us", and the second one is "the enjoyment which directly pertains to the subject's pain" (Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* 48). "The masculine modality of relating to partial *jouissance* is structured by a particular constitutive exception, in the

existence of another, non-castrated, full *jouissance*.” (Madra and Özselçuk 491) In this sense, both of the forms Žižek identified set themselves upon a masculine *jouissance* of posing an exception to reach the *all*, the *complete* by leaving the exception outside. What distinguishes these two types is that they pose different exceptions: the former poses the Master as the exception, one who enjoys like no one else enjoys whereas the latter poses itself as part of the Master who would enjoy like no one else enjoys if only the exceptions (other than the Master) could have been kept outside.

In this sense I argue that it is only when the Kurdish terrorist or the Romany thief becomes the exception can one relate to a pain of not being one with the Master. On the other hand when the exception is the Master (appearing as the Turkish state or the Turkish boss), the *jouissance* always comes from snatching back from the Master. Yet, it does not mean that the Kurdish and Romany workers always engage in the former type of masculine *jouissance* and the Turkish workers or bosses always engage in the latter. What brings in the difference is what will be posed as the exception in each particular situation.

Now I will me go over the encounters I depicted within this framework. But since it could be hard to remember all the encounters I have depicted in this chapter, I provide below a table which is the sketch of the analysis I am about to make. The numbers in the table correspond to the numbers which will be provided in the text of the analysis.

<p>Jouissance directly relating to one's pain (the jouissance of serving the Master)</p> <p>-depends upon a proper place</p> <p>-mobilizes strategies</p>	<p>Jouissance of snatching back from the Master</p> <p>-has no proper place</p> <p>-mobilizes tactics</p>
<p>(1) Romany worker who says "they kill our Turkish soldiers"</p> <p>Master: Turkish State</p> <p>Exception (intruder): Kurdish Terrorist</p>	<p>(6) Romany who "pilfer"</p> <p>Exception: Master: Turkish boss</p>
<p>(2) Kurdish worker who says "Don't talk to them, they are terrorists"</p> <p>Master: Turkish State</p> <p>Exception (intruder): Terrorist Kurd</p>	<p>(7) Yürüks who "dig a grave", "be practical" and "take the due share of the eye"</p> <p>Exception: Master: Turkish boss</p>
<p>(3) Kurdish rack assistant who claims that ignorant Kurds are cheated into being terrorists.</p> <p>Master: Turkish State</p> <p>Exception (intruder): Ignorant Kurd (possibly Terrorist)</p>	<p>(8) Kurds who "rampage"</p> <p>Exception: Master: Turkish boss and Turkish state</p>
<p>(4) Kurdish worker who claim that Romany know nothing but to steal and to dance</p> <p>Master: Moral Community</p> <p>Exception (intruder): Romany Thief</p>	<p>(9) Kurdish worker who supports the PKK</p> <p>Exception: Master: Turkish State</p>
<p>(5) Turkish bosses</p> <p>Master: Turkish State</p> <p>Exception (intruder): Romany Thief and Kurdish Terrorist</p>	

(1) When the Romany workers posed the Kurdish terrorist as the exception and said: “Kurds kill *our* Turkish soldiers”, they based their *jouissance* in being one with the Turkish state and pointing at the Kurdish terrorist. (2) When the Kurdish worker, Mehmet Amca, told me not to talk to Hêvîdar “since they are terrorist Kurds”, he invested in the Turkish State of which he regarded himself as a part, by being a non-terrorist Kurd. (3) When Davut, the rack assistant, posed the exception of the ignorant Kurd (who can easily become a terrorist Kurd) he invested in an educated civil community organized under the Turkish state. (4) When the Kurdish workers posed the exception as the Romany thief, they invested in a moral community where having no Romany around means no theft. (5) And finally when the Turkish bosses posed the exception either as the Kurdish terrorist or as the Romany thief, they invested in a fantasy of being one with the Turkish State as loyal Turkish citizens in the Turkish homeland. In short, whenever the Romany thief or the Kurdish terrorist became the exception, it had to emerge as the enemy inside allowing a fantasy scenario of being one with the Turkish state.

However, when the fantasy was based upon the exception of the Turkish boss or the Turkish state (6), (7), (8), they had to be configured as the Master whose enjoyment is unprecedented. It is still a masculine *jouissance* since the Master is always imagined to be complete even if part of its power is snatched back. (6) When the Romany worker said: “Can the Romany and the Turk ever be the same? The Romany is like a slave to the Turk” she imagined the Turkish boss as a whole, an all pervasive force dominating her life. However, for this very reason, she also found it legitimate to aim at the Other’s place and “pilfer”. Moreover, she detached the gendarme from the Turkish state and attached them to the Turkish boss in which

case, she could cheat the gendarme and make it return “looking at their asses” without disturbing the fantasy of being one with the Turkish state which she invested in through posing the Kurdish terrorist as the exception. This is why the Romany workers formed tactics to deal with the Turkish boss while, on the other hand, formed strategies to be one with the Turkish state. (7) Similarly, the Yürük worker also imagines the boss as the one who owns the whole vineyard and grudges the *göz hakkı* of the worker. In this sense, carrying bags of grape to the minivan or slacking when one is out of the boss’s eyesight become tactics to snatch power back from the Master. However, they also formed a strategic alliance with the boss as workers who work properly in order to sustain the labor relationship for over many years.

(8) The Kurdish workers also posed the Turkish boss as the Master who enjoys and used several tactics not only to receive its impacts minimally by tactics like translation but also to snatch power from the Master by “rampaging” and getting the maximum of their share out of the Other. Rampaging was a tactic used by most of the Kurds no matter whether they supported or were against the PKK. (9) However, in the case of the Kurdish workers who supported the PKK, things got more complicated since the Turkish State also emerged as a Master whose enjoyment was unprecedented rather than a Master with whom the worker should form an alliance (which is the case with the Kurdish workers who pose the Kurdish terrorist as the exception). For the PKK supporter, the state was a giant holistic entity, an external enemy threatening their oneness as Kurds in Kurdistan, which the PKK guerillas (as well as themselves) should fight against.

(9) But, then, could we not have addressed the case of the worker supporting the PKK with the first type of *jouissance*, in which case the PKK would emerge as the Master the worker forms an alliance with and the Turkish state emerges as the intruder to that wholeness, in which case the Turkish State would be the exception? The answer is no for a number of reasons. First of all, it is the very relation to the Master and its proper place that distinguished the two types of *jouissance*, in the former type of *jouissance*, the subject always aims at the Other's place and in the latter, the subject invests in the wholeness of the Other's place while at the same time trying to make a place for herself in it. In this sense, while the absence of the intrusion of the Romany thief or the Kurdish terrorist is imaginable, the absence of the Turkish boss or the Turkish state is unimaginable and unintelligible since the whole relation during the encounters is based on the former coming into the Other's place while the latter always stays in its own proper place. Moreover, the State could never experience being placeless although its place could be challenged from the inside. The state is too pervasive to be squeezed into the other's place,. It is this very pervasiveness of the state which prevents both the Turkish state itself and the Turkish boss it empowers to be posed as the enemy inside, they could not be subsumed under any other entity to imagine that entity's wholeness without the intrusion of the state. Therefore the only way for the state to be the exception was its being the exception as the Master who enjoys. In this case, the PKK also emerged as wholeness but did so always keeping the state at arm's length, always speaking to it, always relating to it, but only to snatch back from the state. Therefore, the PKK becomes the name of the snatching back, the entity to hold on to. But neither the Kurdish worker who supported the PKK nor the

PKK guerilla itself could depend on a proper place, therefore did not emerge as the Master.

Both of the types of masculine *jouissance* that attached the adherents to these fantasies (the *jouissance* of serving the Master and the *jouissance* of snatching back from the Master) actually served the wholeness of the Master. While the former is more apparent in the sense that its intention is to serve the master, the latter, although less implicitly, also ended up strengthening the Master, leaving the structure of the relation to the entity designated as the Master intact, although it allowed for some snatching of power to be exercised. While the former mobilized strategies and the latter mobilized tactics to deal with the Master, both fantasies kept the adherent of the fantasy attached to the Master in its own way and this was exactly what masked the ethnic and class antagonisms. In other words, in any relationship between Turkish bosses and Romany or especially Kurdish workers, the Turkish state had to emerge as a fantastic entity in the relationship, making it impossible for both sides to bypass the fantasy-scenarios and to address the antagonisms.

My overall aim in this chapter was to depict how the fantasies of the actors in the field operated by glossing over the ethnic and class antagonisms and how the everyday encounters were managed through them. I argued that the actors became subjects by investing in those fantasies which depended upon excluding some particular others who in turn became the symptoms preventing that harmony and coherence. In the next chapter, I will address another fantasy and investigate how the encounters are managed through the fantasies of family and home.

## CHAPTER 5

### FAMILY AND HOME

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have argued that bodies and places materialized differentially through the recognition of certain bodies as not belonging and through minimizing encounters with the not-belonging bodies. Yet, encounters never ceased to exist and through these contestations over and materializations of spaces and bodies within the encounters, social hierarchies were reorganized.

One of such significant materializations of space takes place in relation to and around the themes of home and family for several reasons. The first one is that, no matter whether it is the farmer or the worker who does the agricultural work, the one who does it generally works together with her or his family members. On the side of the farmer, if the family of the farmer does agricultural work too, it generally means that agricultural work is the only source of income for the household. It also means that at least during the time of the harvest, their home has to be close to work and the fields which in turn increases the probability of encountering the strangers who also populate those fields at the same time. This is perceived by the farmers as a threat not only to their families but also to their homes.

On the side of the worker, if the worker is Kurdish or Romany, they become migrant workers and migrate with their family. They leave their home behind and try to make the space they inhabit for a few months a more homely space, which

most of the time proves to be impossible since they are already recognized by the locals and the farmers as not-belonging to that space as well as for the inconvenience of the material conditions of the temporary shelter. They travel, work, live and spend all their time together with their families but in a place that is marked by constantly falling short of home.

There are several dictionary definitions of home most of which are complementary to the concept of home rather than mutually exclusive. The first definition I would like to stress revolves around the function of residence and shelter; home is “any place of residence or refuge.” Yet, the definition emphasizing the functional character is mostly accompanied by the concepts of family or household: “a house, apartment, or other shelter that is the usual residence of a person, family, or household.” The concept of family is almost automatically drawn in and it is not only the collection of related bodies that make up a family, but there is also a surplus of bonding that makes a family into a whole. The concept of home does not only invoke feelings of wholeness with other persons residing in the same place but also of senses of belonging to a space which locates the whole in a place. Yet, the place defined as home does not have to be populated only with the persons socially bonded as family but also involves other attachments to the members of other groups such as ethnic, religious or other communities or it may even include a whole nation, which brings us to the definition of home as “a person's native place or own country.” (Dictionary.com) In other words, the borders of a home has to be materially, discursively and fantasmatically constructed in order for them to operate as borders keeping ‘us’ inside and ‘them’ outside, coupled with the mutual definition of ‘us’ (belonging to home) and ‘them’ (not belonging to home).

In this chapter, I will elaborate upon how the workers and the farmers situate their bodies and the bodies of the others in relation to their home and the others' home. I will explore how some bodies are bounded into social wholes and located into places of belonging by keeping the other non-belonging bodies outside. I will use the tool of fantasy in this chapter again and investigate which antagonisms are obfuscated through the fantasies of home and family and how the actors in the field make their fragmented reality into a whole.

There are two major antagonisms which are dealt with through the fantasies relating to home and family: 1) the antagonism between the body and labor and 2) the gender antagonism.

I have been addressing the antagonism between the body and labor since the section on labor process; it can be roughly defined as the fact that the extremely strenuous agricultural labor and harsh labor conditions combined extract time and energy from the body to the point that it cannot rehabilitate itself and experiences major irreversible losses. In the first section of this chapter, I will argue that the workers deal with these losses by imagining home as a healing abode where they will recover from the losses of homelessness during the time of labor and erase the marks of labor from their bodies.

The second antagonism I will deal with is related to the first one: the gender antagonism. The first antagonism is related to the second one in the sense that the gendered division of labor causes women to spend more energy and time on labor than men do which results in their experiencing the consequences of the antagonism between the body and labor more deeply. However, the gender

antagonism cannot be reduced to the gendered division of labor, since the process of gendering and the gender antagonism is embedded in all segments of life and since it is a major element in the materialization of the body. Still, I choose to include the discussions on gender in this chapter on home and family because throughout my research, neither was gender ever discussed without relating it to home and family nor did the discussions of home and family ever exclude the element of gender.

My final aim in this chapter is also related with this impossibility of reducing gender to the gendered division of labor. Contrary to the arguments in the literature on seasonal agricultural workers which isolate seasonal agricultural women workers as the ultimate victims of patriarchy and tradition and represents them as the wretched of the wretched, I will argue that seasonal agricultural women workers are neither unique in experiencing women's suffering (the women household workers experience a very similar suffering and their tactics are very similar to women seasonal agricultural workers), nor ultimate victims conceding to the gender inequality and surrendering to their fate but are actors who come up with innovative ways to deal with the wrong they are subjected to in everyday power struggles. Through these struggles, they invest in the fantasy of family as well as the fantasy of home to compensate for the loss in their bodies and to make it possible to imagine themselves as a part of a bigger whole, namely the family.

Throughout the chapter I will analyze the actors' investments in the fantasy of family and home as attempts to make their fragmented and devalued bodies

whole and valuable again. I will further claim that through these investments not only bodies but also places materialize and become intelligible.

### The Bodies of the Workers Will Become Whole Again When They Go Home

As I have described in detail in the previous chapters, the power exercised on the bodies through work has many physical effects that make the body emerge as the materially marked being it is. The combination of the amazing speed at which the workers had to work, the big knives sharpened to increase efficiency and the lack of proper equipment of protection inevitably caused injuries especially for the inexperienced workers. Leyla, who is a fourteen year old worker inexperienced in tomato work, had hundreds of cuts in her hands some of which were quite deep and tomato juice gave a burning pain when it touched the cuts. The process of cutting tomatoes by hand with a knife was called *hand-cutting* and Leyla and her friends had made up a joke: the ones who worked in the *machine-cutting* (spreading the machine-cut tomatoes on the rack) would ask the ones in *hand-cutting* “How many of your fingers are left over?”<sup>88</sup>

Leyla once said: “You see my hands? They are covered with wounds and bruises; how much they burn! They will probably go on burning all the time. You are poor, you are obliged to burn.”<sup>89</sup> Here, Leyla’s articulation of the pain the wounds in her hands gave her a language to talk about the mark of the labor that does not

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<sup>88</sup> “Kaç parmağın kaldı?”

<sup>89</sup> “Ellerimi görüyo musun? Hep yara bere içinde, hem nasıl yanıyo! Hep de yanacak. Fakirsin işte, mecbur yanacaksın.”

allow the body to be properly bounded by the skin, constantly reminding her where the integrity of the body cannot be imagined and will be destroyed in time.

Serious accidents were common in the fields, especially among children. Almost in every tent there was a story of scorpion, centipede or snake bite and the flies were not only stinging but also getting into their eyes. Metê Peyam told me that a bee had stung her ten year old son, Serhat on the eyelid; it was swollen and he could not open his eye. In the meantime, while they were going to a vineyard, he fell from the back of the tractor and hit his head on the ground. At first they thought it was nothing serious but two weeks later, they realized that he could not move the left side of his face and it was not the bee-sting that prevented his eye from opening but the facial paralysis caused by the impact of the accident. The doctors said it was probably permanent. Metê Peyam started crying while telling me this story. She said: “Our children get wasted here, for nothing.”<sup>90</sup>

All the bodies were being wasted, sometimes, irreversibly, with no chance of getting them back together. On my second visit to Macolive, I heard that one of Leyla’s nieces, Berîvan, who was five years old, had got lost and could be found only after two days. Xaltikê Beyaz, Leyla’s mother, told me how sad she was and how they didn’t know what to do. Later, she herself got sick and Xalo Mehmet had to send her back home to Siverek, since the doctors there could not find any solution to her dizziness and nausea.

All the illnesses, injuries, impairments, deformities, exhaustion, the pain and losses of the body can be seen as the marks of labor on the bodies of the workers.

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<sup>90</sup> “Burada, çocuklarımız da heba oluyor.”

The body constantly exposed to the forces of nature is always under the risk of disintegration and decay, therefore the body in the field can never be imagined as a unitary whole.

Leyla's family had been seasonal agricultural workers all through her life; neither she nor her sisters could remember when they had started doing it. But five years before, one of her elder brothers moved to Istanbul, found a job and got married there. Two years later, he called his family to Istanbul and found jobs for them. All the girls became apparel workers. Başak Can, in her master's thesis entitled *Subjectivities of Women Garment Workers in the Gazi Neighborhood*, depicts the awful working conditions, the suffering women workers go through, the indelible traces capitalist work relations leave on the laboring bodies of women and that those relations render their bodies vulnerable and disposable. However, the way Leyla talked about being an apparel worker and living in Istanbul was incredibly positive and she always juxtaposed it with the awfulness of seasonal agricultural work:

I didn't use to wear headscarves before I went to Istanbul. Then my brother said it would be better if you wear it, this is what our religion says. So when I went to work, I would wear my trousers, my tunic, and I would wear my headscarf, I had scarves that reached down to my shoulders. Now I don't even want to dress up like that.<sup>91</sup> ,

The issue of dressing was a major one in other workers' narratives as well and it was generally discussed together with the corruption of the body. The clothes the

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<sup>91</sup> Ben İstanbul'a gitmeden önce kapalı değildim. Sonra abim dedi kapansan daha iyi olur, dinimiz böyle diyor. Ben de iş yerine giderken pantolonumu giyiyordum, tünüğimi giyiyordum, üstüne türbanımı takıyordum, böyle omuzlarıma kadar gelen örtülerim vardı. Şimdi burada hiç öyle giyinmek filan istemiyorum.

workers (and I) wore to work in the field got dirty and old very quickly; therefore no one wanted to wear new and clean clothes in the field, thinking that it would become old in a day. But since there was work every day for very long hours and since the majority of the workers stayed in tents next to the field (which is another “dirty” place), one could never find an interval to dress up and still be clean two hours later. When the workers reflected on their bodies they identified a dirty and corrupted condition and the photographs were used as the evidence of the corruption of the formerly healthy, clean and beautiful body. In Alaşehir, in the tent of the workers from Suruç, they showed me printed photographs taken during the engagement ceremonies and weddings of elder siblings and cousins. Their low-neck dresses were very elegant, adorned with sequins and spangles, accompanied by high heeled shoes, their hair dressed in buns. Rojîn who was looking at the photograph with me said: “Look Deniz Abla we are not always like this, don’t look at our appearance here. We cover our faces while working in the field but still our skin gets darker, you are outside, it (the sunlight) touches you anyhow. Look at Esmâ here, how much weight she lost! We come here healthy and beautiful, four months later we return like *çöp*<sup>92,93</sup>

The body, not at-one with itself any time, injured, unmaintained, undernourished and super-exhausted, was not something desired to be dressed up or inscribed with personal or communal meaning. The only power to mark the body

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<sup>92</sup> The word *çöp* may be translated as “straws” which would point at the loss of weight Esmâ lost but it could also be translated as “trash” and we could read it as the healthy and beautiful body turning into trash.

<sup>93</sup> “Ya Deniz Abla biz her zaman böyle değiliz, bakma buradaki halimize. Tarlada çalışırken yüzümüzü filan kapatıyoruz ama yine de kararıyoruz, dışarıdasın bir yerinden değıyo illa. Şu Esmâ’ya bak, ne kadar kilo verdi. Geliyoruz buraya sağlıklı, güzel dört ay sonra *çöp* gibi dönüyoruz.”

was labor, and its marks always threatened the integrity of the body and life, cutting through, burning, corrupting and destroying.

Just like the injuries and illnesses that don't allow the body to be at one with itself, the tent was regarded as not allowing for the separation of the outside from the inside and constructing the inside as a home. Let me return to Leyla's comparison of apparel work to agricultural work:

[In the apparel workshop] we used to work a lot, sometimes we would work till the morning. For example there would be orders to catch up with, when the work was not "okayed", that was how it was called, we would open up the packages and do them all over again. There were times when I didn't sleep for two consecutive nights. But still our work there was much better. We would work there too, there were times we had to stand on our feet for twelve hours, but still in the evening, we would go home and be comfortable. In this job, one is never comfortable. We stay at home only for two months. This tent is not like cement, we are worried that the wind will blow and tear it down. It rains, the floor gets muddy, everywhere gets muddy.<sup>94</sup>

The material existence of the tent was experienced as a lack, lack of protection from the elements of nature. The wind may tear it down, the rain and mud come inside, it never makes the body comfortable, never allowing the boundaries of the body or the home to be imagined as complete, therefore preventing one from ever being "at home". Similarly, the tent provided no protection from work as well, the work could never be kept outside and the work time was never separated from home time. Leyla once said that they used to go on picnics on weekends in Istanbul, but in this job there were no weekends. Both the time and the space that allowed for the

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<sup>94</sup> Orada da çok çalışıyorduk, bazen sabahlamamız gerekiyordu. Mesela siparişler oluyordu, yetişmesi gereken, iş okey'lenmeyince, öyle deniyordu, paketler açılıyordu, baştan yapılıyordu. Benim iki gece hiç uyumadığım oldu. Ama yine de bundan çok iyiydi işimiz. Orada çalışıyorduk, bazen on iki saat ayakta duruyorduk, ama yine akşam evimize gidiyorduk, rahat ediyorduk. Bu işte insan hiç rahat edemiyor. Biz iki ay kalıyoruz evimizde. Bu çadır beton gibi değil ki, rüzgar çıktı mı yıkılacak mı diye bakıyoruz. Yağmur yağıyor, tabanı çamur, her yer çamur.

distance between home and work were inexistent which rendered the body's movement between them impossible. The pervasiveness of work in time and space did not allow for the home and the body to be formed as self-containing entities in the field.

In order for the tent or the conditions of labor to be experienced as a lack or as lacking, it also had to be constructed and articulated discursively as lacking. Leyla's comparison of a cement building (which was discursively constructed as a proper home) to the tent which could not be home is significant not because any tent in any context is in itself inappropriate to constitute a home but because it is *the* tent, placed in *this* specific social context and social space which is formed through *these* particular power relations. The lack was constructed as a lack of protection from the elements of nature, a nature that came closer to the body because of the pervasive character of work and too much exposure to this nature always brought corruption to the body.

Whether a job was good or bad was always articulated by the workers by referring to the body's distance from these elements of nature. For Leyla, apparel work was better because in apparel work, the mud, the rain and the wind were not a threat and only when the body was further away from nature, it was worth decorating. In the tobacco field, Gülcan Ablā's famous advice to her daughters was: "Feyza, my girl, you also study like this girl, you can't stand the heat, it's better to sit behind a desk in the shade; working in the field under the sun is hard." The reason office work was more valuable was its protection from the sun. The dirt of the clothes and of the body, the suntan and the illnesses caused by this over-exposure

to nature were discursively constructed as corrupting the body and there was the belief that the corruption was directly visible from the outside. In every tent that I visited, the first comment on the conditions of work always was: “You see, we are in a disgraceful state!<sup>95</sup>” This “disgraceful state” was always discussed through a discourse of being human/inhuman. The closer a body got to nature, the further it got from humanity. For example Rasim from Diyarbakır said: “Why don’t the people from this region work in these terrible conditions? Are they human and we inhuman?<sup>96</sup>” Also, Xalo Ahmet from Derik said: “They talk about human rights, then, where are our human rights? Is working in this dirt and mud human rights?”<sup>97</sup>

Although the disgracefulness of the conditions or of their state was articulated in the language of human/inhuman, the workers neither regarded themselves as having become inhuman nor as the passive victims of the processes which causes this corruption. On the contrary, by constructing the link between the disgracefulness and the conditions and the states in which they are forced to be by employers, they used the discourse of being human/inhuman to hold a claim to humanity. The workers, by reversing the subjects and the objects of the discourse human/inhuman, designated the employers and the state as inhuman and themselves as human. For them, “inhuman” was the employers who forced them to work under these conditions and who looked down upon them as well as the state which allowed this to happen by discriminating the Kurdish and Romany people and ignoring the violation of their rights.

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<sup>95</sup> “Tû dibînî, halê me rezîlî ye!”

<sup>96</sup> “Buranın insanı niye çalışmıyo bu şartlarda? Onlar insan da biz insan değil miyiz?”

<sup>97</sup> İnsan hakkı insan hakkı diyorlar. Bizim insan hakkımız nerde? Bu pislikte çalışmak insan hakkı mı?”

They also refused to engage in the discourse which makes them into victims who need help to get rid of the disgraceful conditions. Esmâ told me that the villagers of Göbekli, Alaşehir brought them their old clothes, but they did not accept them. She said: “We say, go wear them yourselves, we can buy our own clothes.”<sup>98</sup> The workers from Derik on their day to leave for home, wore the new clothes they bought on the market and were proud of the low prices which they achieved by bargaining with the vendors. They said they could have never bought them for such low prices at home. The girls from Derik told me to wait till the last day to take their photographs, and on that day, they dressed up, put on makeup and then told me to take photographs under the trees, but not on the truck that would take them to the bus station as they sat on top of their belongings.

Photographs are significant artifacts of memory that bridge the radically distinguished spaces of home and field/work-space and the two bodies imagined in radically differentiated ways are made into a whole through the practices of looking at and talking about those photographs. Almost in every tent, the workers showed me photographs, either printed or digital images (captured by the cameras embedded in their mobile phones), depicting images of themselves at home or in the field taken at another time (when the crops first appeared, when there was snow on the top of the mountains...etc.) On the one hand, these photographs were used as evidence of the continuity of the body over time, yet, on the other, the difference of the current body image from the previous also underlined the corruption the body sustained during labor time.

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<sup>98</sup> “Biz onlara diyoruz gidin onları kendiniz giyin, biz kendimize yenisini alırız.”

When we were looking at the photographs taken during the wedding and engagement ceremonies with workers from Derik, Metê Peyam looked at the photograph and said: “Esmâ, really how beautiful you were by then!<sup>99</sup>” Esmâ looked sad at this remark, then Rojbin turned to her and said: “Don’t worry, Esmâ, we will get ourselves together when we return home.<sup>100</sup>” Metê Peyam was silent and sad for a while, and then she turned to me and said: “I wish this son of mine can get himself together, too.” She was talking about Serhat, her son who suffered from facial paralysis after an accident and with tears in her eyes, she said: “Our children get wasted here, for nothing.<sup>101</sup>”

The powerful imagery of bodies burning, evaporating, rotting, corrupting, being destroyed and wasted was frequent in the narratives of the workers but it was also frequently followed by the remarks that they will “get themselves back together when they go back home.” Through this belief it was made possible to imagine the body as a whole again. Yet this wholeness was projected both in terms of time, to an indefinite future, and in terms of place, to a far away home. This is what I call the fantasy of the wholeness of the body. Through this fantasy it was made possible to imagine, not only the body which will become healthy, beautiful and whole again, but also the home as a peaceful healing abode. It also enabled the strict separation of home time from work time, and coded home time as an uninterrupted time reserved for the recovery of the body.

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<sup>99</sup> “Esmâ, o zaman ne güzelmişsin!”

<sup>100</sup> “Esmâ, üzülme eve gidince yine toparlarız kendimizi.”

<sup>101</sup> “Burada, çocuklarımız da heba oluyor.”

As the doctors noted with regard to Serhat's facial paralysis, wounds may never heal, Berîvan, Leyla's niece who had been lost for two days, might have never been found or Leyla's injuries may actually go on burning all her life and the ones who tell me these stories are very well aware that this promise of full recovery is a false promise most of the time. Even if the wounds are healed, illnesses are cured or the weight lost is regained, the body will carry its traces and the past suffering will not be erased from the memory it carries. Also many workers told me that contrary to the image of home as a healing abode where all work is suspended, there is work at home, men work in daily wage jobs, many children go to school and women do all the work at home. Moreover, since most of the workers labor in seasonal agriculture every year, the next spring (which may come as early as March) haunts the previous winter.

Then, why do the workers insist that they will get themselves back together although they know that it may never be full? In other words, how does the fantasy of the wholeness of the body and of home work? First of all, it allows them to consider their suffering as temporary (as opposed to imagining a cycle of work-home-work that extends suffering over a long time), which makes the suffering more bearable. It also points to a time and space where all work, pain and suffering is suspended. Moreover, the fact that they are literally home-less for over months and the pervasiveness of work is naturalized. Therefore, the horror experienced in the field and the antagonism between the work and the body (the former constantly threatening the integrity of the latter) is limited both in time and space making everything more bearable. And finally home can be imagined as a place

where they will move away from nature, erase the marks of the corruption off of the body and become beautiful, healthy and properly “human” again.

#### Women Make Their Bodies Valuable Again by Investing in Home and Family

The literature on seasonal agricultural workers constructs all the workers as ultimate victims but the women workers are categorized by all commentators especially as the scum of the scum, not only oppressed by the horrible conditions of labor but also exploited by the “traditional” structures in which they are stuck.

Although it is true that just like many other women, women seasonal agricultural workers suffer from the consequences of patriarchy, isolating them as *the* women who are exploited and oppressed by the male members of their families serves not only to disregard women workers’ agency and their investments in and attachments to these power relations, but also ignores the systematic and pervasive nature of patriarchy and depicts it as a phenomenon pertaining to “traditional” structures and as one that is overcome in the “modern” structures.

Seasonal agricultural work is a type of labor which is conducted predominantly by women. However, not only the experiences of different groups of women workers but also how strictly a particular task is gendered vary immensely depending on the context and the materialization of gender through that particular work. In this section, I will analyze materialization of gender through labor and how it gets fixed to form the differentiated bodies of men and women workers. In order to analyze the similarities and differences in the materialization of gender in agricultural work, I will begin with my observations in ‘unpaid’ family workers, then move on to integrate into the picture the gendered materialization of labor in the

experiences different groups of agricultural workers. My aim in following this path is to accentuate the fact that the gendered division of labor is not specific to seasonal agricultural workers the majority of whom are Kurdish, Arab and Romany (who are depicted as “traditional” and “backward” in the literature), but works in a very similar way among the Western Turkish villagers who do send their daughters to school, who do not marry them off before the age of eighteen, who do recognize their rights (the opposite of which are taken as indicators of “backwardness”). Through the investigation of how agricultural work is gendered and how gender materializes through daily practices (including the discursive and non-discursive practices of women and their investments in the fantasies that contribute to make the fragmented social reality into a whole), I aim to analyze gender and gendered bodies as an effect of power relations. Now, let us return to the field and analyze the everyday politics of gender.

In the family I stayed with while working in their tobacco field, the gendered division of labor was obvious. The two daughters and the mother of this family were harvesting the tobacco field in addition to cooking and cleaning. The father was doing “men’s jobs” and the son of the family was doing “his job”, the contents of which I will explain soon. The first thing that attracted my attention was that the women in this household never stopped working. I was suspicious because at first glance, it conformed to the depiction of women as the “ultimate slaves” and victims of the conglomeration of patriarchy, capitalism and the low status of women in “backward” and “traditional” societies. Yet, as I go on telling the story, it will become clearer that power relations are more complicated than they seem to be at first glance. So I will start with elaborating on what distinguishes women’s work

from men's work and how this gendered work is part of the process of gendering of the body itself.

Let me begin by describing the work done by each member of the family.

Feyza, the older daughter of the family, who was eighteen was the one who worked the most; Gülcan Abla (the mother) would do her best yet her pains and lack of energy would not let her work as much as she used to do in her youth and the work Sıdika who was fourteen undertook, was very close to the level of the work of her elder sister. All of these women harvested tobacco in the field between 5 am and 11.30 am in the morning and between 5 pm and 7.30 pm in the afternoon. In addition to the work in the field, they cooked, washed the dishes, did the cleaning, made tea, in short, they were the ones who did all the reproductive chores. Men, on the other hand, barely worked in the field. Nihat Abi (the father) worked in the field very rarely but he did all the work that required driving the tractor, the usage of construction tools and carrying heavy loads or contacting the merchant and making decisions on selling the tobacco. And Şemsi, the youngest child of the family, was only responsible for carrying objects back and forth to the field between their house in the village and the tent and feeding the lambs.

One of the main differences between men's and women's work was that women worked for longer hours than men. The times the reproductive work and the field work that women did were most of the time mutually exclusive. The only exception that I saw to this rule was the day Gülcan Abla went to bake 12 loaves of bread and did the laundry which she did instead of working in the field. All the other days, it was the women who were in charge of preparing the food in addition to

rather than instead of field work. However, it seemed to me that Nihat Abi rarely, if ever, worked in the field and did the men's jobs in the usual working time of the day, with one exception when he mowed the wheat at night because they had to do it with the neighbor and the neighbor had to keep the grocer open during the day. Also, women did not have a choice about which time to spend on which job because the work in the field had to be done in the hours when the sun was rising or setting during which it was relatively cool and the time of food was arranged with regard to the working hours in the field, which in turn determined the time for food preparation, the most time consuming reproductive daily activity conducted by women. On the other hand, men could mostly decide not only on which time of the day a particular task should be carried out (except for the time of picking the baskets of tobacco and the women from the field with the tractor), but also whether a particular task was to be conducted on that particular day or not. This differential allocation of time created an asymmetric distribution of labor spent during that time between women and men and therefore caused a material difference in the energy, labor and time extracted from women's and men's bodies. Moreover, it allowed for the relatively free movement of men's bodies in time and space whereas it restricted women's bodies circulation with time and space limits.

Another basic distinction was related to the objects and tools which were seen as appropriate for men's and women's bodies exclusively. As mentioned above, big knives used for trimming wood, construction tools and machines, motorcycles, tractors and heavy loads were seen as appropriate for only men's bodies. And through their usage, they became not only objects representative of masculinity but also the tools themselves became the appendages of the male body

itself. Let me illustrate it with the work Şemsi did and his relationship to these objects.

Şemsi seemed to be allowed to do only the things that he liked doing and the things that he liked were not arbitrary; all of them included the usage of a “manly” object and a performance of manliness. He loved bringing objects back and forth to the town if and only if it meant he would be riding the motorbike. Once there was a problem with the engine of the motorbike and his mother asked him to bring something from the village and he literally refused to do it. He also aspired to drive the tractor; yet, his feet could barely reach the pedals so he was only allowed to park the tractor in another spot within the space between the tent and the brick house of the neighbor and he did it very proudly. Actually, when I was taking photographs, he jumped on the tractor and requested me to take his photo from three different angles. It was also his responsibility to feed the lambs not only since they were purchased just because he wished to feed them, but also because it meant that he would use the big knife, another manly item that he liked. Using it was necessary for feeding the lambs since corn leaves had to be cut. And also it was used to cut a crevice in the cane sticks so that the rope used to hang the tobacco leaves on, could pass through it. He did this job sitting in a very “manly” posture, a clear imitation of his father.

We should also note that Şemsi was treated more like a grown-up than his sisters were although Feyza and Sıdıka were respectively two and six years older

than he was. He was referred to as *delikanlı*<sup>102</sup> by his parents and he had a lot more freedom when compared with that of his sisters'. He was allowed to stay at home in the village alone whenever he wanted to, he had the freedom to go back and forth to the village by motorbike while his sisters were refrained from it with the excuse that there were dogs on the road to the village and they might attack the girls, all of which had very material consequences reproducing the gender hierarchy. For example since Feyza was not allowed to go to their village house where electricity could be used (and because there was no electricity in the tent next to the field) she had to beg Şemsi for him to charge the battery of her mobile phone at home. I was to comprehend that he was seen as more potent and not fragile at all in terms of security when Gülcan Abla once warned his husband: "Come home early, God forbid, there are three young girls at home"<sup>103</sup> (without mentioning Şemsi at all) and at another time when it was Şemsi who was sent to fetch me "from the gypsies' tent" which was deemed "dangerous" when it got dark.

The tasks that Şemsi did not do were informative as much as the ones he did since the ones he did not do were in one way or another coded as "women's job". At first, what attracted my attention the most was how little Şemsi worked and how little anyone complained about it. Sıdika had told me that she had been working in the field since she was eleven years old. Although Şemsi was also eleven years old he never worked in the field. When I asked him why he did not work in the field with his sisters he said: "Working in the field is boring for me although maybe it is

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<sup>102</sup> The word *delikanlı* means young man, lad, and youngster. The literal meaning of the two words that merge and make up this word are *deli* (mad) and *kanlı* (blooded). This expression is generally used for boys aged around 15-23.

<sup>103</sup> "Eve erken gel, Allah korusun, üç genç kız var evde."

fun for you.”<sup>104</sup> When I asked him whether he thinks his sisters like the job, he shrugged and said that he did not care. It was not only the tobacco picking job that he was exempt from. His sisters prepared food for him (even if it was only him who would eat), tidied the mattress they all slept on, prepared the dinner they would all eat and washed the dishes. All the objects used for the preparation of food or the cleaning of food leftovers were regarded as belonging to women’s bodies and Şemsi did not even touch them except for the purposes of eating.

The following story is exemplary in terms of seeing how the food preparation objects materialize as feminine objects. One evening after we returned from the field, Gülcan Abla started giving instructions to Sıdika about picking and washing the vegetables, as she was aligning the leaves. She said: “Nihat, the cow should be milked” Nihat Abi said: “Oh, it will be very hard for me to milk the cow now.” She replied: “Okay then, you cook the dinner, I will milk the cow, I’m tired too and I have just two hands.” Here, cooking and milking the cow were not real options that he would choose between. Milking the cow was not as strictly a gendered task as cooking was, so Gülcan Abla used it as a sarcastic remark that he should milk the cow since he would not cook anyway. He stood up, grumbling: he would milk the cow. Yet, this brought us to another distinction between men’s and women’s objects. The bucket had to be washed.

Sıdika was away picking the vegetables, Gülcan Abla and Feyza were aligning the leaves so their hands were dirty, but Gülcan Abla said that Nihat Abi could not wash the bucket properly and cleanly (men were automatically deemed ineligible

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<sup>104</sup> “Tarlada çalışmak sana eğlenceli geliyo olabilir ama bana hiç eğlenceli gelmiyo.”

for washing). So I offered to wash it. After a moment of hesitation about whether I would be able to wash the bucket properly, the solution found was that I would wash it while Feyza supervised me and taught me how to wash it correctly. Men could be eligible for milking a cow which is not such a strictly gendered work but never for washing the leftovers of food even if it is just the milk bucket. On the other hand, my being a woman made me eligible for washing it, but not quite, since my knowledge of proper washing was not trusted because I was a woman from the city, who could not know the principles of washing a milk bucket properly.

As it is seen in the example above, the material constructions of the gendered work could never be reduced to the gender “roles” which can be taken up or abandoned at will but gender was carved into the body through material practices and formed, reaffirmed or destabilized the gendered/gendering subject at every performance. Through these performances, not only the boundaries between men’s and women’s bodies, but also the different levels of “proper womanhood” are drawn. This material construction was of course not limited to the domain of labor but was at work in the gendering of the body itself and it always included a discursive construction.

The discursive construction of gendered bodies did not only distinguish between the woman and the man but also made women’s bodies intelligible by ranking them in line with ‘proper’ womanhood. Let’s go back to the first hours of my encounter with the family, where my inappropriateness as a woman started glowing like the stars on a clear night. Having said so many words about tobacco, I should also talk about the controversy my smoking tobacco caused. The first time

Ali Bülent Abi (the person who introduced me to the family) and I arrived and Feyza made and served us tea, Ali Bülent Abi took out his pack of cigarettes and offered one to Nihat Abi and one to me. Nihat Abi thanked him and took one and I thanked him and said I would rather smoke one of mine. I took out my tobacco case which included a mixture of English Golden Virginia tobacco and the Oriental tobacco of Adiyaman, filters and rolling paper. Ali Bülent Abi started a conversation saying: "Look, she rolls her own cigarettes, like our grandfathers and fathers used to do. But she also puts filters in them." We went on talking about what type of tobacco I smoke, where I found it, how much they cost, where I found the filters, how the old men in their youth used to prepare their own tobacco, roll them in newsprint papers and so on. My smoking tobacco with men older than me did not seem to be perceived as a sign of disrespect towards them as it was perceived in many other contexts such as in my own family. That really relieved me because I could not imagine five or six days of going without smoking. Later on I would understand that it was not because they considered it normal for a twenty five year old woman to smoke but because they considered me to be a weird city-girl.

When the grocer's (the neighbor) mother Zeynep came over to meet me, she told me that she was informed by her two granddaughters that I had arrived in the morning. She peeked through the ivy that covered their side of their porch but could not recognize me. She said to herself: "Who is this girl that smokes? Our girls don't smoke. This must be a stranger." Gülcan Abla also said: "Yes here, women and girls do not smoke. Maybe the city women smoke but not us. Here men smoke. I tell my husband to quit smoking. It's bad for his health. You should also quit smoking. It

doesn't suit a bright young girl like you."<sup>105</sup> The problem with smoking seemed to be more an issue of gender than one about health.

The signs of my impropriety as a woman were all very material signs, discursively constructed as inappropriate for the "proper woman". First of all, I had brought in a big suitcase, which was found ridiculous by all the members of the family. In addition to the suitcase, I had brought my inappropriate habits like smoking and ridiculous manners like drinking water out of my water bottle while I was smoking rather than the common cup to avoid making the cup smell like tobacco. (I never did this again once Gülcan Abla told me the story of a city girl who was a relative and how snobbish she was to insist on drinking out of her own cup. She said it was a gesture of looking down upon people and it meant that she found them dirty.) The gestures of my body, the places to which it moved was what was deemed most inappropriate. First of all, I had traveled to a place that I had never been to before, all alone (When I asked for Feyza to be my guest in the winter in Istanbul, Gülcan Abla said that she could not let her travel there alone). I was also comfortable enough to stay with a family I did not know. But what caused the biggest controversy was my insistence on visiting Romany workers without fear.

Fear was regarded as inappropriate for men as it was appropriate for women and in this respect, women agreed on their fragility. Feyza and Sıdıka, not even to mention Gülcan Abla, agreed that they could not go to the village alone and neither the village road nor the gypsies' tent were the only "insecure" places that women should keep away from. Despite all the investments on the girls' education,

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<sup>105</sup> "Evet burada, kadınlarla kızlar sigara içmez. Belki şehir kadınları içer ama biz içmeyiz. Burada erkekler içer. Ben kocama da diyorum bırak şunu diye. Sağığına zararlı. Sen de bırak, seni gibi pırlı pırlı bir genç kıza hiç yakışmıyor."

Gülcan Abla said that she did not want to send her daughters to a big city or a far away city for the university. She said:

Every day on television we see how awful things happen in big cities. They cut women's hands to steal their bracelets, they drag them on the ground to steal their purses, the rapes, the murders, I am really afraid of the big city. Feyza is very afraid, too. It took her so much time even to adjust to Soma [the small town where she attended a boarding high-school].

Feyza also agreed and said that she is really afraid. Then, they asked me how I manage to live in a big city like Istanbul. I told them that one gets used to it in time and that crime happens everywhere and one is pretty safe once one knows which places to avoid at certain times but it didn't satisfy them. Gülcan Abla said: "Yes, but you are a brave girl anyway, my daughters are shy and fainthearted, they can't do in a big city." This courage that distinguished me from her daughters was actually another sign of my impropriety as a woman. When Gülcan Abla sent Şemsi to fetch me from the Romany's tent, she was really angry with me for showing too much courage for a girl and she also complained about my excessive courage to Ali Bülent Abi when he came to take me back to the city.

Yet, interestingly enough, the Romany and farmer family shared the same concerns about my inappropriate presence as a woman in this field and as always it was about the issues of gender and sexuality that the greatest concern was expressed. The following event is exemplary in this regard:

In the Romany's tent, Özlem, the wife of the 20 year old son of the family, was the only one who didn't seem to like me from the very beginning. When I asked her if I could help them in the field, she didn't answer. I followed her anyway since I

was hoping to establish a closer relation with her. We were walking towards the field when she started talking to me:

- How old are you?
- 25.
- Are you married?
- No.
- Are you a girl<sup>106</sup>?
- Excuse me?

This wasn't a question I expected so directly. I had worked with the Romany before and I knew chastity was a big issue for the Romany. Yet, I had a dumb moment, and I let it out.

- Are you a girl, I said?
- Uh, mm, not really.
- Were you married before?
- No.
- So it happened just like that?
- Kind of...
- Who do you stay with here? Are they your family?
- No, an acquaintance...
- It's better if you get yourself a family. If you stay with every acquaintance, they will come and get you and they will fuck you and kill you.
- Uh, I know them pretty well, they are good people, I feel quite safe indeed.

By this time Ali, Özlem's five year old boy of was trying to get my notebook and I was trying to convince him not to draw on my notes. Finally, I picked up the pen and put it in my pocket. I was really having a hard time. Then he started crying and his

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<sup>106</sup> This means: Are you a virgin?

aunt Ziyne slapped him, he started crying even louder and ran off to the tent.

Özlem got even more angry with me:

- Whose notebook is it? Yours?

- Yes, I'm sorry.

- People will see you around us and they will gossip about us. You should get married. You should go back to your mother and father. Where are they? How do they let you come here all by yourself?

- This is my job. And I only go to places where I feel safe. And I have a boyfriend if you're curious. I don't go around with whoever asks me.

- Why do you think everyone gets married? Look at me, I got married at the age of 14, I have two kids and I'm pregnant with the third.

- God bless your children.

- You should also get yourself a family and bear children. This is what our religion orders. What you're doing is sinful. You show yourself to everyone. What is an acquaintance? You will definitely get fucked somewhere. I'm telling this for your own good. There was a girl like you in our neighborhood, she also had a lover, they were doing all kinds of things and everyone knew. He amused himself with her and deceived her that he will marry her but didn't. Last week she threw herself before a car. If you go on like this, you won't end up well, either. I'm saying this for your own good; take yourself from here and go!

Through both of the discourses (that of Özlem and Gülcan Abla) women, especially young and single (and virgin) women were constructed as bodies-supposed-to-be-afraid. And the dangers were always material threats to the integrity of the body: the fierce dogs on the village road, the traffic accidents, the burglars, the rapists and the murderers in the big cities, and the dangerous Romany for Gülcan Abla and the treacherous boyfriends, rapists and murderers all around and all the insidious strangers disguised as acquaintances for Özlem.

The mainstream modernist discourse would label these fears as "irrational" and "parochial" reproducing the "traditional" gender inequalities, enclosing women

in their “small worlds” composed of family and home. It may be correct that, as a result, these fears serve the reproduction of gender inequality, yet what should be scrutinized in this case, is how this discourse of fear works in within the specific context of power relations, with which other discourses it articulates to produce the end result that we observe and why it is reproduced by women themselves although it limits their freedom of movement.

What does this discourse do? It designates the bodies of women as fragile in a very particular way. This is not the same fragility of the body of a woman whose soft skin should be protected from the sun or the wind. It is not the fragility of a woman’s body which cannot undertake work that requires muscular strength or physical stamina. It is the fragility of a woman whose body is open to physical and/or sexual violence (and this violence is embodied in the fierce masculine body of a stranger). So the body not subjected to this violence is imagined as pure and complete. The fragility of this pure body (and so the body itself) is valuable and therefore in need of protection and this protection should be provided by family and home (which are also imagined as pure and complete). Yet, the state of being protected was not a passive submission. The subject of the fragile body had to be an active subject in this protection. Therefore the woman had not only to refrain from these dangers by minimizing the possibility of such encounters but also make the effort of involving herself in a family.

Through this discourse, not only do women’s bodies materialize as pure bodies in need of protection from violence, but also this violence embodied in the fierce masculine body of a stranger. Therefore the male body can either violate (the

male stranger) or protect (male family member) the female body. Through this discourse the family and home are also created as pure and safe. However this can only be done if the woman invests in this discourse of fear outside and no fear inside the family.

If we go back to our example, Gülcan Abla, Feyza and Sıdıka invested in the protection of their bodies (Gülcan Abla invested in Feyza and Sıdıka's protection) by keeping out of the village road, the big cities and the Romany's tents. Özlem invested in it by getting married, having children and staying with her family. I, on the other hand, invested in neither of these sets, on the contrary, I placed myself into situations in which my body could be violated. Therefore the proximity of my daring (or maybe even potentially promiscuous) presence placed their bodies at risk as well obliging them to reaffirm their investment in the discourse of fear and replace themselves into their families. It is through investments that they become subjects of their self-protection against the object, the other.

As Sara Ahmed underlines: "Women's movements are regulated by a desire for 'safe-keeping': respectability becomes measured by the visible signs of a desire to 'stay safe'. In this sense movement becomes a form of subject constitution: where 'one' goes or does not go determines what one 'is', or where one is seen to be, determines what one is seen to be." (Ahmed 33) When Gülcan Abla wanted to keep her daughters as well as herself away from these material dangers, she was at the same time separating herself from those women who expose their body to dangers like dogs, murderers and "the gypsies", thereby definitely separating herself from and acquiring a higher status of respectability than "the gypsies". Özlem

was employing the same tactic to increase her respectability as a woman who travels only with her family which protects her from sexual assault and at the same time separating herself from those women who take the risk of being sexually assaulted, namely from me, and placing herself a level of respectability above “women who show themselves to everyone” (women like me).

Yet, this does not mean that women invest in all the discourses about the wholeness of the family which conceal gender antagonisms and reproduce gender inequality. Now, I will depict an incident in which the discourses that make up the family fantasy were actively challenged and thus disclosed the gender antagonisms in the family opening up a space for negotiation enabling the women to make a claim as the subjects of a right, who have right to their bodies.

When I first arrived in the tobacco field, I asked Nihat Abi the question “Do men also break the tobacco<sup>107</sup>?” he said: “Yes, men and women break the tobacco together. Here, it’s not like in other places where women work and men sit in the coffee house. We work together, we earn together and we spend together.” It was on my third day (until then, I had seen Nihat Abi perform several of men’s jobs like building the greenhouse and carrying the baskets full of tobacco, yet I had seen him work in the field just for a couple of hours in total) that I asked the same question “Do men also break tobacco?” to Gülcan Abla while we (as women) were working in the field. She replied: “Yes, they also break tobacco, but they have other jobs too, they run the errands, they build greenhouses, they contact the merchants, they drive the machine (the tractor), they fetch us cold water...” So we went on working

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<sup>107</sup> Breaking the tobacco (*tütün kırmak*) is the idiom used for the harvest of tobacco.

in the field. The work had started around five thirty in the morning we made a break for breakfast at around nine and it was almost ten o'clock. That day we were in the *icar* (rented) field, which was 10 minutes away from the tent on foot, so it would account to a loss of twenty minutes if one of us went to fetch water from the tent, moreover the water we would fetch from there would be warm. The water we had taken with us had also gotten warm and having cold water was becoming more and more important (more important for the women in the family than it was for me) as the sun rose higher.

Around ten o'clock the girls started complaining about having no cold water and Gülcan Abla said: "Your father will bring it soon; he should be here in a few minutes." Time was passing and there were no signs of Nihat Abi. Gülcan Abla said: "He will send Şemsi if he can't make it." She was turning back and looking at the road at every motor sound of a running engine to see whether it was him. In twenty minutes Gülcan Abla started complaining aloud which gradually developed into shouting and yelling. She was saying:

Men don't know what it is to work in the field, when the work is hard, they escape and they forget. I am working my ass out in my old age and he doesn't bring a drop of water. They don't care. They sit in the shade and enjoy themselves. We work here under the sun till we run out of breath and they don't even bring a drop of cold water. They think it is easy, in my old age, my back, my legs, my arms, every part of me aches, I never say a word and I go on working but he doesn't bring a drop of water...<sup>108</sup>

She was complaining and yelling like this but she was still going on working without drinking any water. For me drinking warm water wasn't a problem, so I drank from

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<sup>108</sup> Erkekler tarlada çalışmak ne demek bilmiyolar, zora gelince kaçıyorlar, unutupolar. Benim bu yaşımda çalışmaktan kırım çıkıyo o bi damla su getirmiyö. Umurlarında değil. Gölgekte oturup keyif çatıyolar. Biz burada nefesimiz kesilesiye çalışıyoruz, bi damla soğuk su getirmiyolar. Kolay sanıyolar, bu yaşımda sırtım, ayaklarım, kollarım, her yanıma ağrıyo benim, ağzımı açıp bi laf etmiyom, çalışmaya devam ediyom ama herif bi damla su getirmiyö...

the bottles which were warm but the girls and Gülcan Abla did not want to drink from them. In about half an hour, Şemsi showed up on the motorbike. We all stopped and turned towards him for the water but he hadn't brought any. He had come to ask his mother a silly question but probably he just wanted to ride the motorbike. Both Feyza and Gülcan Abla started yelling and screaming at him asking why he didn't bring any water and telling him to bring cold water and ice immediately. Gülcan Abla also asked him where his father was but he said he didn't know. At first, he tried to raise his voice and shout back as he usually does when one of the women in the household yell at him. But when he saw that everyone was really angry this time, he got back on the motorbike and disappeared in a few seconds. After he left, Gülcan Abla's yelling and shouting eventually turned into screaming and swearing:

Kids and men are the same! They don't care whether or not the kids working in the field die out of thirst! They can also work in the field but they do not. As if we are in the field for fun! Tell me another one! They sit in the coffee house all day while we work to our last breath! Look at that Şemsi that bastard, that little piece of shit! He is the little shit and that father of his is the big shit! They are all the same! This time I will give him a merry hell! My girls, finish your schools and save yourselves from these fields, work in the shade, this is no misery to suffer!<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, I felt as if I started a family fight by asking the question whose answer turned from "Yes, men also work in the field" to "They can also work but they hang out in the coffee house!" and I wasn't really happy about it. So I said: "Gülcan Abla maybe he has some work to do, maybe he couldn't finish it." Gülcan Abla gave me a

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<sup>109</sup> Çocuklarla adamlar birbirinin aynısı! Tarlada çalışan çocuğum susuzluktan öldü mü umru değil! Onlar da çalışabilir ama çalışmıyorlar işte. Sanki biz tarlada eğlenmeye geliyoruz. Hadi canım sen de! Biz burada son nefesimize kadar çalışıyoruz onlar kahvede bütün gün oturuyorlar! Şu Şemsi'ye de bak, şu piçe, küçük bok! O küçük bok, babası büyük bok! Hepsi aynı! Bu sefer ben ona gününü gösterecem! Kızım siz de okulunuzu bitirin, kendinizi kurtarın bu tarlalardan, gölgede çalışın, bu çekilecek dert değil!

sarcastic look: “What work could he have! I’ve got him pegged! He’s hanging out in the coffee house or in a friend’s shop! For sure!”

The girls went on working, so did Gülcan Abla while her screaming and yelling gave way to grumbling. After a short while she said: “This is it, enough, my girls, come here and take some water from the fountain, we will drink water and rest.” Until that time I didn’t know that there was a fountain right behind the trees at the border of the field and the water was pretty cool. Gülcan Abla said: “The water here isn’t good, normally I don’t make my kids drink it.” Again, I didn’t taste the difference. We filled the bottles and drank out of it, we wet our heads and squeezed under the little shade of the trees. It was almost eleven thirty so we didn’t go into the field again. In ten minutes Nihat Abi showed up in the tractor, and we turned back to the tent.

While the girls and I were washing our hands by the fountain I saw Gülcan Abla talking to Nihat Abi. After all the yelling and swearing I really was expecting a family fight, yet nothing out of the ordinary seemed to happen. Later, when Nihat Abi wasn’t around I asked Gülcan Abla: “Was he really in the coffee house?” She replied: “I didn’t ask, if I did, we would fight.” We went on aligning the tobacco, Feyza made some tea. While she was preparing to serve it Nihat Abi said: “Feyza, my girl, I won’t drink tea, I drank nine glasses of tea since the morning, I don’t want any more” Gülcan Abla asked where he drank all that tea and he replied in the coffee house and in a friend’s shop. We caught each other’s eye with Gülcan Abla, I looked away quickly. At that point, Şemsi started nagging everyone, saying that he was bored and said he wants to go home and watch TV. Gülcan Abla asked him

whether he looked for the English books at home; she said that if he found them I would help him study while I was there. He said that he didn't want to study English. Gülcan Abla said:

Look Nihat you made a spoilt child out of this one here, he lingers around all day doing nothing. He doesn't work in the field, he doesn't memorize his prayers for the religious course properly, he just wants to have fun. He didn't bring us water today. To be honest, I also complained about you in the field. You were going to bring us water, why didn't you? We were dying of thirst!<sup>110</sup>

Nihat Abi said: "I have so many things to do! How can I do everything at the same time?" The girls smiled tongue in cheek, Gülcan Abla and I looked at each other. No words were uttered, yet, the nine glasses of tea were there to stay...

I don't know if this conversation was the reason or not but in the evening Nihat Abi came to work in the field with us. Although he chatted with a friend who stopped while he was passing by the road almost half of the time, he broke tobacco in the other half. And as I noted above, he also had to choose between cooking or milking the cow, and he did milk the cow instead of Gülcan Abla.

There, a space of negotiation had opened which resulted in this action. What Gülcan Abla stressed the most, both when she was in the field and while talking to Nihat Abi, were her pains caused by years of labor and her and her daughters' thirst. Here, clearly, their bodies had become a space of contestation and these laboring and suffering bodies, when juxtaposed with the bodies of both men enjoying the comfort of resting and having fun in the shade, opened up a space of

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<sup>110</sup> Bak Nihat sen bu çocuğu çok şımarttın, bütün gün etrafta dolaşıyo, başka da bir şey yapmıyo. Tarlada çalışmıyo, Kuran kursunda dualarını ezberlemıyo, sade eğlenmek istıyo. Bugün bize su da getirmedı. Açıkçası senden de şikâyet ettim. Hani bize su getirecektin, neden getirmedin? Geberiyoduk susuzluktan!

demand for the formers' rights. Her words "Kids and men are the same! They don't care whether or not the kids working in the field die out of thirst!" reflected the gender antagonism that lay beneath the fantasy-scenario of a family whose members earn together, spend together and support each other. The antagonism was there and the suffering bodies were the evidence. In blaming Nihat Abi for spoiling Şemsi, she implicitly pointed at their common privileged position and she stressed it in the field when she yelled and swore at "men" addressing the girls and advising them to save themselves from this misery caused by labor which has not been and will not be shared with men.

When I say that the incident opened up a space of negotiation, I do not mean that it was an emancipatory move, nor do imply that Gülcan Abla was an ordinary heroine of feminism trying to eliminate gender inequality within her family or to obstruct its reproduction. First of all, we should note that she was very well aware of this antagonism. This incident of not keeping his promise to bring something to the field took place twice (in the second one Nihat Abi was supposed to come to the field and make us tea for the breakfast and Gülcan Abla swore at him and repeated her advice to the girls) in the six days that I spent there, which makes me believe that these were neither the first nor the last ones. At another time, Gülcan Abla had also implied that having a husband causes one to grow old early: when the grocers's mother, Zeynep Nine, a very cheerful and lively woman in her eighties left for her house, I said: "What a lively woman Zeynep Nine is!" and Gülcan Abla responded: "Of course she remains young, she lost her husband twenty years ago and since then, she has been living quite well. She goes wherever she wants, each week she stays with one of her children, she doesn't worry about

anything and she lives comfortably. Who will remain young? Will I? Of course she will remain young!" So we clearly see that she is aware not only of the general family antagonisms but also the particular one in her own.

So there are two questions that should be asked: 1) Can we also not view this explosion of anger far from the ears of Nihat Abi as the moderation of her fury in the absence of which the incidence could have, as I was expecting, resulted in a much more direct confrontation (from which we generally expect bigger gains)? 2) It is more understandable for Nihat Abi to answer my question saying men and women work equally but why did Gülcan Abla give the same answer although she knew that it was not the case?

First, one of the most significant lessons I drew from my experience in this research was that this assumption of direct confrontation resulting in total emancipation was embedded in my fantasy of revolution. In the power struggles of everyday life, direct confrontation, neither necessarily resulted in bigger gains, nor could it be a tool of higher position when compared to more indirect tools like squawking or gossiping. I will elaborate more on this point in the next section, called Encounters, but for now, suffice it to say that Gülcan Abla, just like all the actors within the power struggles, was more well-acquainted with the tools that were available to her for that particular power struggle than I was and she used them to challenge the material and discursive practices which reproduced this gender inequality.

Although this moment seemed to be an elusive act, it opened up a possibility for subverting the discourse in the power struggle. It was also one of many

instances in which the fantasy of the family as a coherent whole was disrupted and the gender antagonism became visible and this cleavage in the fantasy-scenario gave Gülcan Abla an opportunity to grab a position from which to make a demand as a subject with a right to her and her daughters' bodies, experienced and communicated through their fatigue, pains and thirst. So when we come to the second question, why despite the fact that she saw the antagonisms in the family she insisted that men and women work together and support each other, we should note that the fantasy of the family is composed of the intersection of many discourses and the full traversal of fantasy is not possible by challenging one discourse for a moment (and especially if one at the same time invests in another discourse that supports the fantasy). As I noted before, her phantasmatic investment in the family was crucial in enabling her to distinguish herself and her daughters from the improper women and to make them proper and respectable women.

Moreover, what seemed to be elusive to me at first was that she yelled and got all her anger off her chest only when her husband was not present. Yet, later on I figure that it was her daughters' presence as much as her husband's absence that marked the significance of the setting. While on the one hand, the field emerged as the site of wasting the bodies of the workers who are predominantly women, on the other it provided a secluded space where women had the chance to gossip and communicate their pains and life experiences to other women. This exchange of advice took place especially from older to younger women. Gülcan Abla's words against men and their careless attitude was directed at her daughters and aimed to

convince them to pursue their education in order to increase their stakes and their capacity for negotiation to have a more egalitarian marriage.

Contrary to the general assertion of the literature on seasonal agricultural workers, the experiences of women workers in terms of gendering of labor or in terms of their status in the family were very similar whether they worked as 'unpaid' family labor and were Turkish "Westerners" or whether they worked as seasonal labor and were Kurdish "Easterners".

First of all, the workplace that brought together the women workers also became a place where the complaints and tactics of women were discussed and where older women advised younger women on marriage and the family. However, the advice given here was more radical than its counterpart among Turkish "Westerner" women. I was talking to Leyla about the hardships of labor when we exchanged glances with an old woman and I smiled. She asked Zeynep Abla, another middle aged woman whom I had met a few hours ago, whether I was married or not. Zeynep Abla responded: "No, she isn't. Are men so necessary? She's clever." Then, she started yelling in Kurdish to all the girls around us. Seeing that I didn't understand fully, she switched to Turkish and went on:

Girls shouldn't get married. I'm telling you girls, do not get married. My girl, I don't know if it is the same with you but among Kurds, girls are sold like cattle. They get the dowry, they spend it and they never think whether their daughter works like a slave around here, if she is wasted, deprived and miserable in the hands of a stranger's son or not, whether she has a house, a life or not. Believe me, what I'm saying is true, ask anyone and they will tell you. They say dowry, they brag that they sold their daughter for 5-6 billion. Why the hell should they get married!<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Yaşlı bir kadın: "Ew zewicî?" ("Evli mi?")

This was another instance when the fantasy of the family was disrupted and the gender antagonism within the family became visible. Moreover, the shared material pain and misery of the bodies of women were communicated by linking the antagonism between the labor and the body wasted through it, to the gender antagonism within the family and its broader reflection as a social antagonism. Later on, I heard the same discourse being utilized by Neriman, who was a very beautiful, clever twenty year old woman. When I asked her if she has a boyfriend or whether she aims to get married, she said: “You should have seen the children around the tents, how miserable they get. Women are even more miserable than them. No, honestly, I won’t get married. One gets more miserable while running after her children if she gets married.”<sup>112</sup>”

The difference among the women workers’ experience of gender and its influence in power relations within the family stemmed not from whether the workers were “Westerners” or “Easterners” and not from whether they were Turkish or Kurdish and definitely not from who was more/less “traditional” or “backward”. The main difference in how powerful the women were mainly stemmed from whether they were the ones who received the money or not. While

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Zeynep Abla: “Na, ew nezewicî ye, mêr pir lazim ê? Ew biaqil ê!” (“Hayır, evli değil, koca çok mu lazım? Akıllıdır o.”) Sonra bağıra bağıra etraftaki bütün kızlara Kürtçe seslenmeye başladı. Sonra da belki ben anlamamışımdır diye bana dönüp Türkçe devam etti: “Kızlar evlenmesin, size diyorum kızlar evlenmeyin. Sizde nasıldır bilmem ama bizim Kürtlerde kızları mal gibi satıyorlar. Başlık parası alıyor, onu da yiyor, kız buralarda perişan mı olur, köle gibi çalışır mı, eloğlunun elinde zebil mi olur, sefil mi olur, bir evi, bir hayatı olur mu diye düşünmüyorlar. Valla doğru bu söylediklerim, sor herkese, başlık diyorlar, 5-6 milyara kızımı sattım diye övünüyorlar. Bok mu var evlenecek!”

<sup>112</sup> Neriman: Çadırların orada görmüşsündür çocuklar nasıl perişan oluyor. Kadınlar desen zaten onlardan perişan. Yok valla ben evlenmeyeceğim. Evlensen daha perişan oluyorsun çoluğun çocuğun peşinde koşarken.

for women whose husbands and fathers receive the money for their work, labor in the field was communicated only through pain and misery, for women who received it themselves, labor in the field could also become an empowering practice turning the tables at home to their benefit. Emrah and Hatice were two women who lived in Akhisar and came to work in a nearby village in the harvest of grapes. They worked on the rack, in the process of spreading the grapes on the rack for drying. Hatice was working to pay her debts and raise money for the school expenses of her children and Emrah was going to use the money she earned from this job to buy a leather coat. I would like to conclude this section with their answer to my question “Do only women work on the rack?” They answered me in a way which depicts how earning money empowered them in their relationship with their husbands:

Emrah: Yes, actually all the work is done by women.

Hatice: I work as a cleaning worker at a high school when the school is open and I do these jobs as extra work, and when I argue with my husband, he says your hands met some money and your mouth opened<sup>113</sup>, of course it will open.

Emrah: We do all of this in addition to bearing children and looking after them. You know this commercial which says: “I both have children and have a career”. We are the same you know. (laughter)<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> An idiom meaning: “You gained too much self confidence to say whatever you want to say.”

<sup>114</sup> Ben: Sergide hep kadınlar mı çalışıyor?

Emrah: Evet, zaten bütün işleri kadınlar yapıyor!

Hatice: Ben okul zamanı lisede temizlik işçisi olarak çalışıyorum, ek iş diye de bunları yapıyorum, sonra konuşunca adamla, elin para gördü ağzın açıldı diyor, açılacak tabii.

Emrah: Bunları yapıyoruz bir de çocuk doğuruyoruz, çocuk bakıyoruz. Reklamda diyor ya “çocuk da yaparım kariyer de”, bizde de öyle işte. Hahaha

Hatice: You know what Sultan Abla says to her husband? Her husband is retired and he sits at home, he spends time reading the paper and so on. When Sultan Abla comes home from work, she says to her husband: “My dear wife how was your day?” It’s good that her husband can take a joke, my husband would kill me if I said such a thing.<sup>115</sup>

Obviously, the money Emrah, Hatice and Sultan Abla earned empowered them within the family and raised their self-confidence. It enabled them to communicate their complaints not only among themselves but also to their husbands. Yet, this situation was not specific to Turkish women who lived in the center of the town. Similarly, Fadile Abla, a Kurdish woman worker from Kızıltepe, came with her four daughters and aimed to raise money for her husband whose back was injured in an accident and would not be able to work unless he had an operation. Since her husband was home, she was the *çavuş* of her family and received the money she and her daughters earned, herself. She was one of the strongest and most self-confident women among the women workers I met. Unlike the other women who said it wasn’t proper for women to smoke, Fadile rolled her own tobacco and smoked. To others who said she shouldn’t smoke she replied: “This is my only pleasure and I’m not giving it up!” Once she also argued with Caner, her boss saying that the previous year he had promised to give the other field’s work to her as well and asked why he gave it to the Arabs (another group of workers from Urfa, always referred to as Arabs) instead and she was quite self-confident and argued fervently all through their conversation. Of course it does not mean that these four women did not invest in a fantasy of family, yet they also invested in themselves as “strong

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<sup>115</sup> Hatice: Sultan Abla ne diyormuş biliyor musun kocasına? Kocası emekli, evde oturuyor, gazette filan okuyor, Sultan Abla işten eve gelince kocasına “Hanım, nasıl geçti günün?” diyormuş. Ben desem benim adam beni öldürür, iyi onun kocası şaka kaldırıyormuş.

women” and their investments in the family were made as strong women. Therefore the family was not there in order to make the antagonisms of family invisible, on the contrary, to accentuate their role of “strong women” in supporting the family, helping their husbands and children.

In this section I tried to show not only how the boundaries between gendered bodies materialized but also how they were challenged and negotiated. Through the operation of discourses the bodies were made into objects as men/women, young woman/old woman, married woman/single woman, virgin woman/non-virgin woman, educated woman/uneducated woman, city woman/village woman, upper-middle class women/working-class women. Yet, these categories were also challenged, negotiated and reaffirmed by the actors who became subjects through investing, growing attachments to or disinvesting from these discourses. I also aimed to show that only it is through the active investments of the subjects into the discourses that the bodies of the self and the other are formed, and that the fantasy of the family can only be formed and sustained through these investments.

### Conclusion

Before I conclude this chapter I would like to note that this fantasy of the family is very important for the whole thesis because one of the main reasons why the majority of seasonal agricultural workers are women is that it is the only job which allows women to travel, stay and spend the whole time of work with their families. Although men can travel long distances, stay with strangers and work in

other informal jobs, seasonal agricultural labor is the only informal job to make use of women's labor while keeping them under the protection of their families.

In going back to this fantasy of the family, we should be aware that the terms of building this fantasy is composed always with a reference to the body and especially to the body of the other. And through this fantasy-scenario, some bodies materialize as improper and impure while some others materialize as proper and pure. This displacement of the antagonism -be it the gender antagonism or the antagonism between the body and labor- allowed the subjects to avoid facing the antagonism directly and made the antagonistic situation more bearable. The fantasy-scenario therefore obscured the antagonisms "inside" but also ironically every time the antagonism became visible the *jouissance* mobilized more investments into the fantasy of family as a coherent whole. By investing in the family, they would become more proper than the other, not-so-fragmented and to-be-completed at home. However, *jouissance* is not a rational and stable investment tool (Madra and Özselçuk 490), therefore it also had a surplus of the symptom of the other enjoying more, the one who is not a proper woman, the one who is not a woman, the one who is not away from home.

It was by managing the encounters through the notions of family and home that it became possible for the actors involved in the social and economic relationships organizing labor to sustain the labor relationship. Yet, this does not mean that these fantasies only made the exploitation of women workers worse. The instability of the fantasy scenario also allowed the women to base their claims on their bodies and their labor and allowed them to negotiate their positions as well

as to form tactics to find a crevice to settle, although temporarily, in the proper place of the other.

The final argument I made in this chapter was that the gender antagonism in the family, the operation of the fantasy of the family and home and tactics women employed to manage them were very similar to each other whether they were Turkish, Kurdish or Romany or whether they were household workers, migrant or non-migrant agricultural workers. Each aimed to compensate for the losses due to the exploitation of her body and labor by investing in the fantasy of family and each laid a claim on her body or labor by reasserting her place in the family and at home. And it was through encounters that these tactics operated and opened more grounds of negotiation in the power relations organizing women' labor.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In Turkey, as elsewhere, the experience of being a migrant agricultural worker is shaped within the broader power relations and antagonisms of class, ethnicity and gender -the terms of which are further reconstructed at the everyday level. My aim in this thesis was to analyze how these antagonisms were experienced within the everyday power relations among the actors involved in seasonal agricultural production. I claimed that it was through these power relations that the bodies of the actors experiencing them as well as the places in which they were experienced materialized and it was through the management of the everyday encounters that these power relations organizing seasonal agricultural labor were challenged and reproduced.

In Chapter 2, I analyzed the public representations of seasonal agricultural workers within the academic and non-academic texts and claimed that the discourses which circulate are formed in terms of the empirical, descriptive and monolithic category of “seasonal agricultural workers” glossed over the class, ethnic and gender antagonisms whose very management allow for the labor practice to go on. I claimed that these discourses depicted the body of the seasonal agricultural worker both as lacking (unskilled, uneducated, deprived of hygiene and knowledge of modern ways of life, victims of the underdevelopment) and as excessive (having too many children, exercising too much religion and tradition) and formulated the “problem of seasonal agricultural workers” as caused by these lacks or excesses of

the worker herself and by the *neglect* of the state. The discourse of neglect worked twofold: firstly, it rendered invisible the foundational role of the state in the continuation of this labor practice not only through its contribution to the ethnicization of the labor market (especially with its systematic dispossession of the Kurdish people of their means of subsistence during the course of thirty war years with the PKK), but also through its practices of ethnic recognition of the actors in the field. Secondly, it reduced the issue to a lack of development *in toto* which called for more “technical” intervention of the state through education, attention to hygiene and increased policing in the labor camps.

In Chapter 3, I claimed that the descriptive category of “seasonal agricultural worker” subsumed two different practices of migrant and non-migrant workers whose experiences of labor were distinguished along ethnic lines. Most of the Turkish workers worked in the places close to their homes and were therefore non-migrant workers. If they ever came from afar provinces, employers offered them accommodation inside the village, hiring an empty house for them. On the other hand, the Kurdish, Romany and Arab migrant workers were located in an area specifically chosen to be outside the village where the only possible type of accommodation was the tent. Once the Kurdish, Romany and Arab workers settled in the areas reserved for their tents, the Turkish villagers designated those areas as dirty and dangerous places and avoided going there for the following months. The gendarme also designated those places (as well as the bodies of the Kurdish, Romany and Arab workers) as dangerous and conducted regular unannounced ID checks and inquired their ID numbers for any previous police records. I claimed that the labor process was structured through these practices of organizing migration,

accommodation, remuneration and ID checks and they served to minimize the encounters of the Romany, Kurdish and Arab workers with Turkish locals. Yet, the labor process could never be structured fully and the antagonisms had to be dealt further in the everyday encounters that happened despite all the efforts to prevent them.

In Chapter 4 entitled Theft and Terrorism, I analyzed these encounters and argued that within these encounters, fantasies of the actors in the field displaced the ethnic and class antagonisms by investing in a fantasy scenario (which always included the investments into the State either as the Master to serve or as the Master to snatch back from) which made their fractured reality into a whole. Žižek notes that the fantasy-scenario is what displaces the antagonism and allows one to invest into a wholeness: "...fantasy-scenario which obfuscates the true horror of a situation: instead of a full scenario which traverse our society, we indulge in the notion of society as an organic Whole, kept together by forces of solidarity and co-operation..." (Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* 6) In this sense, these investments were what concealed the ethnic and class antagonisms and allowed the labor relationship to continue. "However," Žižek warns us, "the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy cannot be reduced to that of a fantasy-scenario which obfuscates the true horror of a situation (...): fantasy conceals this horror, yet at the same time it creates what it purports to conceal, its 'repressed' point of reference." (Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* 7) Therefore although the actors in the field invested in a fantasy-scenario of the society as an organic whole, this fantasy at the same time created more horror through the production and circulation of the stereotypes of

Romany thief and the Kurdish terrorist, which only ended up sharpening the antagonisms in the field.

In Chapter 5, Family and Home, I addressed how the notions of family and home were utilized in managing the encounters and how the actors in the field dealt with the antagonism between the body and labor and the gender antagonisms. I claimed that the workers invested in the wholeness of a distant home where they would get themselves back together and this investment was what kept them going on working despite all the fragmentation their bodies and realities were going through. Similarly, the women workers (be them household labor or migrant labor) also invested in the family and home in order to make their bodies whole and valuable again and just like the fantasies of the state, the fantasies of home and family also created what it purported to conceal, the improper other, the body-out-of-place. Yet, there were also moments that the fantasies of family cracked and a space for negotiation opened.

My analyses so far have allowed me to see that seasonal agricultural labor is a practice which becomes possible only by employing fantasy-scenarios which displace the class, ethnic and gender antagonisms to other domains where their articulation becomes impossible. In this sense it is a type of labor which can only be practiced through its reproduction of the class, ethnic and gender inequalities in Turkey. However, since these fantasy scenarios can only operate by posing an exception and excluding the other, this labor practice also deepens the antagonisms and the encounters in which especially the ethnic and class antagonisms merge and

pop up, inform the broader power relations in society and render them even more antagonistic.

As I have mentioned before, the ethnic identity of the state was one of the most important elements in the encounters and the discursive practice of that identity in the fields further reproduced the ethnic and class inequalities by empowering the Turkish employers and disempowering the non-Turkish workers. In this sense, if a *negligence* of the state is to be mentioned, it has to be formulated not as the absence of the state from the power relations organizing seasonal agricultural labor, but as the selective and systematic negligence of its duties towards the non-Turkish workers accompanied by its over-indulgence in the ‘threats’ they pose to its unity. But since this systematic negligence is embedded in its structure as its ethnic identity, it would be more appropriate to formulate this selective presence as the continuation of the foundational violence rather than negligence. It is only through seeing this as part of its foundational violence, can the questions pertaining to structural inequalities allowing this ethnic labor market to emerge and this labor practice to continue, be asked. Without addressing these structural inequalities, calls for simple improvement of the conditions or solutions based on “technical” interventions of the state would not only prove futile but also conceal the ethnic discrimination and the labor exploitation these workers experience by treating them almost as the victims of a natural disaster.

Before I conclude this thesis, I would like to address a recent public memorandum issued by the prime ministry on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010, with a subject title “Improvement of the Work Lives and Social Lives of Seasonal Migrant Agricultural

Workers”<sup>116</sup> which is almost a Freudian slip blurring the fantasy scenarios of the state. It is written totally within a discourse of security, turning the bodies of the migrant agricultural workers (who predominantly happen to be non-Turkish) into bodies even more out of place than they would be without its existence. In this sense I regard the memorandum as the institutionalized form of the fantasies of the state. Although its implementation is limited to a few pilot projects at the moment, it is informative not only because it reflects the state mentality which reproduces the mentioned inequalities, but also because it translates into a mechanism of governmentality.

Let me say a few words on governmentality before I move on to the analysis of the memorandum. In “Governmentality” Foucault cites the definition of government by Guillaume de la Perriere “government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a conventional end.” (Foucault, Governmentality 208) He claims that what was the economy in the sixteenth century became the general paradigm of government from the eighteenth century onwards, in the form of arranging the right disposition of men in their relations to “wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility...customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking...accidents, misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death and so on.” (Foucault, Governmentality 209). He further claims that the subject of this new type of government is the population and its new science political economy. Foucault holds that as contrary to the previous periods in history, beginning from the second half of the eighteenth century, life itself entered the scene of politics and this became possible only with the operation

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<sup>116</sup> Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçilerinin Çalışma ve Sosyal Hayatlarının İyileştirilmesi

of bio-power. Mitchell Dean gives a brief definition of bio-politics as follows: “a form of politics entailing the administration of the processes of life of population.” (Dean 98) But who does the population refer? The population is determined by the administrative unit, in terms of the question or the issue it aims to address.

Contrary to the disciplines whose major target was the individual body, bio-power focuses on the species body and aims to regulate the population at large, relying on the statistics of biological processes such as birth rates, mortality, health...etc. Just as in the operations of the disciplinary mechanisms an individual body is addressed as having certain characteristics or a particular nature, in the regulatory form of bio-power the population is assumed to have certain characteristics, to depend on certain variables in itself and to be following certain “natural” laws. Foucault claims that this “naturalness” is what constitutes the population, not as a “juridical-political notion of subject” (which was the case in the question of disciplines) but as a “technical-political object of management and government.” (Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (Michel Foucault: Lectures at the College De France) 70)

In this sense what I have addressed as an empirical, descriptive and monolithic category of “seasonal agricultural workers” does indeed serve to forge a population as the technical-political object of management and government. I had also claimed that the discourses which forge this object also determine the course of ‘technical’ intervention, through education, hygiene and policing of the labor camps. Similarly, the population the memorandum addresses is “the Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers” and the methods of technical management to be

implemented are clear in the memorandum as well. Out of the nineteen clauses of the memorandum, four clauses are dedicated to the formation and the responsibilities of a new administrative unit the Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers Monitoring Board<sup>117</sup>, two clauses are on traffic safety, seven clauses are on the consolidation of labor camps and the administration of the camp in terms of public hygiene, camp safety and camp security, three clauses are on the education of children and adults, and three are on social security.

Let me go into the details of the memorandum, in the light of the fantasies I have analyzed so far. Clause four states: “The number of train services will be increased, public places and facilities will be made ready for temporary accommodation as far as it is possible; they will not be allowed to stay or wait in the city center, bus or train stations, parks...etc.” Here the right disposition of the bodies of workers is designated not only by stating where they should be placed, but also by pointing at the places where their presence is an excess. Moreover, the phrase “as far as it is possible” is used only for the provision of temporary accommodation, limiting the duty of the state in providing temporary accommodation to what is possible under existing conditions but no such phrase accompanies their being disallowed from the city center, train and bus stations... etc. which enables the full perversion of the acts of security of the state forbidding the workers’ stopover at those places, and here, the sky is the limit. Moreover, this is clearly a clause focused on preventing the encounter of the dirty worker with the pure city dweller (in which the former happens to be non-Turkish and the latter clearly Turkish), an act of keeping dirt away from the eyes, noses and skins of the

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<sup>117</sup> Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçileri İzleme Kurulu

inhabitants of the city as well as from the pure places in which the worker's presence is an excess.

Clauses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 concern the consolidation of collective camp areas. Clause 5 states that the employers should provide the workers places of accommodation with facilities for cooking, washing the dishes and clothes, toilets and bathrooms; where this is not possible (which means everywhere since it costs the employer to build such a place with facilities), collective camp areas will be consolidated. Clause 6 states that these camp areas should be set up on public lands and areas protected from the vagaries of nature, where electricity, running water, roads and sewage systems are available and where the camp can be far enough from facilities posing public danger and areas close to the public. This last part of the clause clearly describes the bodies of the workers as dangerous *per se* and since the majority of the restricted areas in Turkey are military lands, the danger their bodies pose is accentuated. The first part relating to the provision of water and electricity is also interesting not only because it is completed with the eighth clause which states that the workers will be charged for the water and electricity they use (currently the workers consume electricity illegally or it is provided by the employer, and the water is always provided by the employer), but also because it is an attempt to regulate their bodily movements and habits.

I had stated that the public representations of the seasonal agricultural workers mostly included depicting them as deprived of the knowledge or habits of modern ways of living. This clause is an attempt to regulate those habits by acting not upon those bodies directly but by acting upon the actions of those bodies, by

acting upon the place and aiming to transform the former through the latter. When I make this remark, I generally receive the criticism: “So you mean that the workers do not deserve having access to healthy toilets and proper showers?” Well, the answer is never simple since neither are dirt and health (therefore the attempts to clean and make healthy) exempt from social order nor is the issue of toilet ever devoid of fantasmatic surplus. Yet, I choose to base my answer upon the subject of the act (worker with a right to access healthy toilets), rather than the object (healthy toilets) just to avoid complicating the matter. During my research, I heard a lot of complaints about the toilets from the workers. In this sense, it was one of the few ‘problems’ on which the workers agreed with the researchers on seasonal agricultural workers. What distinguished them was how they regarded the problem, rather than whether it existed or not. For the workers, seclusion was as important as the health while the researchers focused more on the hygiene issue. Moreover, their understanding of seclusion did not only include protecting the body from the gaze of the other but also from the bodily proximity of the other, whether the other was visible or not.

Let me clarify what I mean with an example: The workers’ tents I visited mostly included a section where they washed themselves. Therefore, the person who washes herself there can move into the tent to dress up without ever going out. The toilets were made outside and away from the tent but most of the time, each family had their own toilets which were made by digging big holes in the ground (away from another family’s toilet), sticking 4 high clubs in the ground and covering the four sides with a plastic sheet. The separation of each family’s toilet aimed to prevent not only the members of different families busting each other’s

members accidentally in the toilet but also the distance between them aimed to prevent any exchange of sight, smell or sound between two people in two toilets. In other words, for the workers, their maintenance was the problem but the architectural design was instrumental.

Let me now describe other toilets, which are pretty hygienic since they are not used but not instrumental. When I visited one of the few places where the pilot project of this memorandum was being implemented, Polatli, the officials responsible for implementing it complained to me that they had installed cabins with proper toilet and shower facilities but the workers were not using them. When I asked why, they complained that the workers had said: “My wife cannot defecate here while another man is taking a shower right next to her.” This assertion is very important in understanding what I mean when I say regulating the habits by organizing the space. Placing double cabins consisting of a shower and a toilet separated from the shower by a plastic wall is seclusion enough for the implementers of the memorandum but for the workers it is not, making the cabins unusable. Moreover, this is not just a wrong design, because it will always be a wrong design, unless the workers are included in the design process, which this memorandum has no intention of doing.

Let me move on to the issue of hygiene in the memorandum. Clause 9 states that insect and pest control will be applied in collective camps and garbage will be collected regularly. Clause 11 states: “Medical screening of the workers and their families will be carried out in order to prevent the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics; in addition child growth and pregnancy follow-ups will be

conducted, mobile health teams will be formed, if necessary.” Again, since health problems are common among the workers, provision of health services is very important but there are two important details here. The first is that in both clauses the emphasis is not on the access to health and municipal services but on the place of the camp and the second is that clause 10 is placed between the two clauses. Clause 10 states: “The identity information of the workers and their families will be collected in accordance with Law on Notification of Identity; in addition, the areas where these [ones] are accommodated will regularly be patrolled by day and night by local law-enforcement officers. Moreover, the information on these workers and their families will be given to the Turkish Employment Agency and a database will be founded about them.” This clause is informative for several reasons. First of all, it is again the camp area which is targeted and its security, which is pretty obviously evaluated more in terms of the threats it may pose for the outside than being concerned with the security inside. Secondly, it is the clause which institutionalizes regular patrols and giving the law-enforcement officers (the gendarme in the case of the rural areas where agriculture is done) full access to the camp, extending it to all times of the day and night, rendering a particular complaint unnecessary. In the current implementation, there is no law preventing full access of the gendarme, but, also, it is not customary for the gendarme to patrol at night unless there is a complaint. In this sense, this clause at least institutionalizes random patrols at night if it does not motivate them, and I would like to note once again that the presence of the gendarme in any encounter renders the ethnic and class relations more antagonistic. The third and final reason why this clause is informative is its placement between Clause 9 about pest control and garbage collection and Clause

11 about medical screenings to prevent epidemics. This placement of the clause clearly shows that the dirt, security and health of the camp are pretty closely related and it legitimizes and calls for the cleaning, patrolling and medical intervention of the state, which is crucial when dirty and dangerous bodies are concerned.

The next subject is, of course, education. Clause 12 states that the enrollment of children at the age of mandatory education will be ensured in any way possible, enrolling the children either at the Regional Primary Boarding Schools in the areas where they come from or in their place of temporary accommodation or mobile education. Again it is good that the state undertakes to ensure the education of children, but the boarding schools mentioned are very well known for their practices of ethnic assimilation and the workers do not want to be away from their kids which are the two main reasons why the children are not sent to school in addition to their labor being crucial for their families. Moreover, “in any way possible” does not refer to the possible for the worker but for the state, therefore, this clause is not about providing options to the workers about how to send their kids to school but about the state implementing mandatory education. This clause also states that “the incentives encouraging schooling such as conditional cash transfers will be implemented effectively” and undertakes to provide school materials free of charge. These, of course, are positive aspects of this memorandum which could help families who want to send their children to school but cannot do so since they depend on their children’s labor. Education is not only envisioned for children but also for adults, “especially young girls and women”. Clause 13 states that when the workers go back home, opportunities will be provided for them to

attend special courses of literacy, vocational training courses and socio-cultural activities. Again a pretty vague statement on the content as well as who is responsible for organizing these courses. Moreover, it is also a clear reaffirmation that this job is not considered to be a vocation and not to necessitate any skills like the skills offered by vocational training.

The final issue I will address in the memorandum is the social security of the workers, covered by Clauses 14, 15 and 16. Clause 14 states: “their conditions in terms of social security will be improved.” But unlike the detailed security patrols, the expression is kept pretty vague and the formalization of the job is not even mentioned. Clauses 15 and 16 state that the labor intermediaries (the *dayıbaşıs*) will be given certificates and their duties will include the signing of a labor contract directly between the workers and the employers in order to prevent their probable clashes on the issue of wages. Yet, it is assured that this labor contract will not mean formalization since it is also stated that the possible arguments will be settled by the monitoring board. The three clauses obviously point at the state’s aim to regulate the labor contract without providing social benefits which are accessed through labor in Turkey. This means that social security will remain in the Green Card Scheme, which is another tool of governmentality, whose object is the “poor and needy” citizen under the protection of the paternal state rather than the citizen with a right to social security, the subject of rights.

The conclusion of the memorandum is as informative as the rest of the memorandum so let me provide the full text here. “With the aim of strengthening the consciousness of their mutual need for labor and work, of brotherhood and

solidarity, the activities cited above will be implemented by the help of all institutions, vocational unions and NGOs concerned. Social and political problems which could cause abuse will not be allowed for and all types of remarks, actions and practices especially the ones which could call the objectiveness of the State into question will be refrained from.”

Let me begin with the final sentence, what does it mean to call the objectiveness of the state into question? And more specifically what does it mean as the final sentence of a memorandum on the improvement of working and social conditions of seasonal migrant agricultural workers? In other words, how could the betterment of conditions of workers challenge the objectiveness of the State? Again in Polatlı (the site implementing the pilot project), the officers implementing the project told me and other observers that first, they had to convince the villagers to build a camp close to their village because the villagers were concerned that Kurds would settle in those areas permanently if they received the services such as water, electricity, sewage and education. The officers told us that they had convinced the villagers that the *Easterners* would not settle permanently by assuring them that the tent facilities would be dismantled as soon as the harvest was over. In this sense, any *Easterner* whose working and social conditions were improved could challenge the privileged position of the Turk who already benefits from these services. Could the privilege of the Turk be what is meant by the objectiveness of the State? When we consider the horror story told by the officers, “Kurds migrated here in the nineties and bought the lands which they worked, they settled permanently and the locals are very unhappy about this” and the ethnic

discrimination of the gendarme, the claim that the objectiveness of the state means preserving the ethnic hierarchy makes quite a lot of sense.

On the other hand, is it possible that it is intended to mean: “the State should be neutral towards all ethnicities and class positions”? Although it does not sound likely, this is still possible. But, why does the state anticipate social and political problems in the first place? The answer to this question is that there are acute ethnic and class antagonisms which cause violent clashes between the predominantly Kurdish but also Romany and Arab workers and the Turkish employers and locals. This is why the fantasy-scenario turning class antagonism into “mutual need for labor and work” and ethnic antagonism into “consciousness of brotherhood and solidarity” is enforced. Actually, ethnicity is totally absent from the memorandum, which renders the ethnic antagonism invisible, but it is implicitly the main scheme organizing the memorandum especially in its anticipation of the “social and political problems”. In this sense, without addressing the ethnic character of the State, it would be extremely naïve to expect the State to be objective to refer to ethnic neutrality.

I have presented this criticism in several platforms addressing the problems of seasonal agricultural workers which are incomprehensible to ‘the experts’ devoted to development and hygiene, and they ask with sincere curiosity and wonder: “What is your proposed solution?” When I start saying that there is no immediate and technical intervention to “solve” this problem since this is not a plague but a labor practice, they categorize me as a cynical intellectual who does not care about real problems, but loses sense of reality in her self-inflicted

philosophical ruminations. So disregard the rest of my words, so let me end this thesis by using this opportunity to express the two most important points on which I base my analysis.

Firstly, the ethnic identity of the Turkish state being the most important element antagonizing the relationship between the migrant workers and employers, any solution to the problem should start by questioning this ethnic identity which solidifies and legitimizes ethnic discrimination towards Romany, Arab and especially the Kurdish workers who are the majority of migrant workers. Actually, it is where not only the solution to the problems of migrant workers but also the solution to broader ethnic problems in Turkey should start from. Abbas Vali states: "The de-ethnicization of the identity of sovereign power is essential for the democratic solution to the Kurdish Question in Turkey." (Vali 11) In this sense, my first point follows Vali's argument not only for the solution of the Kurdish Question but also for the question of migrant seasonal agricultural workers which is based upon ethnic and class antagonisms. Vali further argues that the ethnic character of the sovereign is very much related with its forms of governance. Therefore, any change in the ethnic character of the sovereign power can only be genuinely realized if a political space could be opened up through which the relationship of the state to its citizens is questioned. In other words, this thesis stands out as the proof that all everyday social relationships are imbued with the implications of the workings of the sovereign state and that no antagonisms can even be addressed, let alone be faced, unless such a space can be opened up from which the question of seasonal agricultural workers can be posed as a *political question* rather than a *question of national security*. The challenge this thesis poses for further studies also

follows this line of thinking: How can a space be opened up through which holistic fantasies on “the indivisible wholeness of Turkish State” could be bypassed and encounters through which negotiations on class, ethnic and gender antagonisms be enabled?

Secondly, on the practical side, I do not claim that nothing can be done to improve the living and working conditions of the migrant workers unless the Kurdish Question is solved and until the socialist revolution of the Turkish state. But, these improvements would nevertheless remain limited without addressing the ethnic, class and gender antagonisms and the reproduction of the inequalities around which the whole process of labor and migration is organized. And meanwhile, the short-term actions for the improvement of the social and working conditions can be instrumental, if and only if the workers are regarded as subjects capable of reflecting on the problems they experience in the field and of coming up with innovative ways to overcome them (which is what this thesis argues). Therefore no attempts to improve the conditions of seasonal migrant agricultural workers would go beyond acts of governmentality unless they included the workers in the design and implementation processes of the projects for the improvement of conditions.

Appendix A: Memorandum on the Improvement of the Working and Social Lives of  
Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers

24 Mart 2010 ÇARŞAMBA

Resmî Gazete

Sayı : 27531

**GENELGE**

Konu : Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçilerinin  
Çalışma ve Sosyal Hayatlarının İyileştirilmesi.

**GENELGE**

**2010/6**

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçisi olarak çalışmak amacıyla, buldukları illerden diğer illere aileleri ile birlikte giden vatandaşlarımızın bu süreçte ulaşım, barınma, eğitim, sağlık, güvenlik, sosyal çevreyle ilişkiler, çalışma ve sosyal güvenlik bakımından mevcut sorunlarının tespiti ile bu sorunların giderilmesine yönelik olarak aşağıda belirtilen çalışmalar, ilgili kurum ve kuruluşların işbirliğiyle yürütülecektir.

1. Merkezde, konuyla ilgili kurum ve kuruluşlar arasında koordinasyonun sağlanması, yürütülmesi gereken faaliyetlerin izlenmesi, uygulama sırasında doğabilecek sorunlara çözüm üretilmesi ve bir veri tabanı oluşturulması için Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı Müsteşar Yardımcısının Başkanlığında; İçişleri Bakanlığı, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Sağlık Bakanlığı, Ulaştırma Bakanlığı, Tarım ve Köy İşleri Bakanlığı, Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü, Türkiye İş Kurumu, tarım işkolunda örgütlü en çok üyeye sahip işçi sendikası ile Türkiye Ziraat Odaları Birliği temsilcilerinin katılımıyla “**Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçileri İzleme Kurulu**” oluşturulacaktır.

2. Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçisi (İşçi) gönderen ve alan her il ve ilçede, mülki idare amirinin başkanlığında; o ildeki ve ilçedeki ilgili kurum ve kuruluş, işçi, aracı ve işveren (toprak sahibi/işleyen) temsilcilerinin katılımı ile “**İl/İlçe Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçileri İzleme Kurulu**” oluşturulacaktır.

3. İşçilerin göç döneminde yolculuklarının güvenli ve sağlıklı bir şekilde yapılabilmesi maksadıyla; göç alan ve veren yerler arasında ulaşım ile ilgili koordinasyon sağlanacak, trafik denetimleri artırılabilecek, araç ve trafik güvenliğinin gerektirdiği kontroller hassasiyetle ve sıklıkla yapılacak, ilgili kamu kurum ve kuruluşlarınca gerekli bütün tedbirler alınacaktır.

4. İhtiyaca göre tren seferleri artırılabilecek, işçilerin il ve ilçe merkezlerinde geçici konaklamaları için ihtiyaç halinde ve imkanlar dahilinde kamuya ait alan ve tesislerden yararlanma imkânı sağlanacak, şehir içinde, otogar ve istasyonlarda, parklarda vs. gelişmiş güzel konaklama ve bekleme alanlarına fırsat verilmeyecektir.

5. İşçilerin ihtiyaç duyduğu yemek ve yemek pişirme, çamaşır ve bulaşık yıkama ile tuvalet ve banyo mahalleri gibi asgari ihtiyaçların karşılandığı barınma yerlerinin işverenlerce karşılanması sağlanacak, bunun sağlanamadığı bölgelerde; işçilerin yoğun olarak çalıştığı yerlere en yakın mesafede, alt yapısı il özel idarelerince hazırlanacak toplulaştırılmış uygun yerleşim yerleri oluşturulacaktır.

6. Yerleşim alanlarının; doğa olaylarından fazla etkilenmeyecek, elektrik, su, kanalizasyon, yol gibi hizmetlerin sunumunun kolaylıkla sağlanabileceği, sağlık şartları

uygun, tehlikeli tesislere ve girilmesi yasak yerlere yeterli mesafede, barınacak işçilerin sayısına uygun büyüklükteki hazine arazileri arasından seçilmesine özen gösterilecektir.

7. Topplulaştırılmış çadır yerleşim yerlerinde il özel idarelerince seyyar kolaylık tesisleri kurulacaktır. Kolaylık tesislerinde; tuvalet, banyo, çamaşır ve bulaşık yıkama yerleri ile ekmek pişirme imkânları ve gerektiğinde derslik olarak kullanılabilir sosyal tesis bulundurulacaktır. İhtiyaç duyulacak çadır ve seyyar kolaylık tesisleri imkânlar ölçüsünde öncelikle bölgedeki Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, valilikler ve belediyelere ait depolardan temin edilecektir. İhtiyaçların bu şekilde karşılanamaması halinde il özel idarelerince kiralama ve hizmet satın alma yoluna gidilecektir.

8. Bu yerleşim yerlerindeki içme ve kullanım suyu ile elektrik ihtiyacı; şebeke tesisi, mahallinde sondaj, su tankı/tankeri, elektrik hattı tesisi veya jeneratör temini suretiyle il özel idarelerince sağlanacak ve kullanım bedelleri kullananlardan alınacaktır.

9. Topplulaştırılmış çadır yerleşim yerlerinin belli aralıklarla her türlü haşerelere karşı ilaçlanması ile çöplerin alınması, mücavir sınırlara göre ilgili belediye veya il özel idaresi tarafından yerine getirilecektir.

10. İşçilerin ve ailelerinin kimlik bilgileri 1774 sayılı Kimlik Bildirme Kanunu esaslarına göre alınacak, ayrıca, mahalli kolluk kuvvetlerince bunların konakladıkları bölgelere gece ve gündüz mutlak zamanlarda güvenlik amaçlı devriye faaliyetleri yapılacaktır. Ayrıca bu işçiler ve ailelerine ilişkin bilgiler Türkiye İş Kurumunca alınacak ve bunlar hakkında veri tabanı oluşturulacaktır.

11. İşçilerin ve ailelerinin bulaşıcı ve salgın hastalıklara karşı düzenli sağlık taramaları, çocukların gelişimi ve gebelik takipleri periyodik olarak yaptırılacak, bu hizmetler için gerekirse mobil sağlık ekipleri oluşturulacaktır. Bunların aileleri ve çocukları sosyal hizmetler kapsamında bilgilendirilecek, psikolojik destek verilecek ve varsa özür ve yaşlıların Devletimizin bu kesimler için sunduğu imkân ve hizmetlerden yararlandırılmaları sağlanacaktır.

12. İşçilerin zorunlu öğretim çağındaki çocuklarının eğitimlerini devam ettirmek üzere; kendi yörelerindeki veya gittikleri yerlerdeki Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okullarına misafir öğrenci olarak alınmaları veya taşınabilir eğitim veya mobil eğitim gibi imkanlardan en uygun olanı seçilerek çocukların okula devamları sağlanacaktır. Bu hususta şartlı nakit transferi gibi özendirici tedbirler etkin şekilde uygulanacak, çocukların okul kıyafetleri ve malzemeleri İl/İlçe Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıflarınca temin edilecektir.

13. İşçilerin geri dönüşlerinde başta kadın ve genç kızlar olmak üzere, yetişkinlere okuma-yazma, sosyal-kültürel faaliyetler ve meslek edindirme kursları düzenlenmesi hususunda gerekli imkanlar hazırlanacaktır.

14. İşçilerin sosyal güvenlikleri açısından mevcut durumları Sosyal Güvenlik Kurumu Başkanlığı tarafından yürütülecek çalışmalarla iyileştirilecektir. Çocuk işçiliği ve çocuk emeğinin istismarı ile etkin mücadele edilecektir.

15. Tarımda iş araçlarının belgelendirilmesi zorunlu hale getirilecek, belgesi olmayan iş araçlarının işçi temin etmelerinin önlenmesi ve iş araçları ile işverenler veya doğrudan işçiler ile işverenler arasında sözleşme yapılmasının sağlanması için gerekli tedbirler alınarak, vaki uyuşmazlıklarda mağduriyetlerin önüne geçilecektir. İşveren/iş aracı ve işçi arasındaki ücret alacağına ilişkin uyuşmazlıkların öncelikle il ve ilçelerde kurulacak izleme kurullarında çözümlenmesine çalışılacaktır.

16. Belgesi olmayan ve sözleşme imzalamadan iş alan araçlar Türkiye İş Kurumu tarafından "Tarımda İş ve İşçi Bulma Aracılığına İzin Verilmesi ve Araçların Denetimi

Hakkında Yönetmelik” hükümleri çerçevesinde denetlenerek, ilgili mevzuatı çerçevesinde gereği yapılacaktır.

17. Tüm bu tedbirler ve çalışmalar valiliklerin gözetim ve denetiminde icra edilecek, tedbirlerin doğru anlaşılması ve uygulanması için göç veren illerde işçiler ve aracılara, göç alan illerde ise işverenlere ve yöre halkına yönelik bilgilendirme ve bilinçlendirme çalışmaları planlanacak, il düzeyinde alınacak tedbirler valiliklerce ilan edilecek, aykırı davranışlar hakkında idari ve cezai yaptırım uygulanması için gerekli işlemler geciktirilmeden yapılacaktır.

18. Tüm bu faaliyetler için ihtiyaç duyulan kaynak, valiliklerce hazırlanacak projeler doğrultusunda; 4447 sayılı İşsizlik Sigortası Kanununun geçici 6. maddesinde yer alan ekonomik kalkınma ve sosyal gelişmeye yönelik altyapı yatırımları için işsizlik sigortası fonundan aktarılan kaynaklardan Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığınca il özel idarelerine gönderilecek ödenekler ile imkanlar ölçüsünde Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıfları ve il özel idarelerinin bütçelerinden karşılanacaktır.

19. İl/ilçe Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçileri İzleme Kurullarınca, mevsimlik çalışma döneminin başında ve sonunda, o il ve ilçede yürütülen faaliyetler, karşılaşılan sorunlar ve çözüm önerileri Mevsimlik Gezici Tarım İşçileri İzleme Kurulunda görüşülmek üzere Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığına gönderilecektir.

İşçilerin ve yöre halkının birbirinin emek ve işine duydukları ihtiyaç, kardeşlik ve dayanışma bilincini güçlendirmeye yönelik olarak yukarıda sıralanan faaliyetler ilgili tüm kurum ve kuruluşlar, meslek teşekkülleri ve sivil toplum örgütlerinin de katkılarıyla uygulanacaktır. İstismara yol açacak sosyal ve siyasal sorunlara fırsat verilmeyecek, özellikle Devletin tarafsızlığına gölge düşürecek her türlü söz, eylem ve uygulamadan kesinlikle kaçınılacaktır.

Bilgilerini ve gereğini önemle rica ederim.

Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN  
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