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In & Out of Borders: A Reflexive Journey on Turkish National Identity & Migration

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In & Out of Borders: A Reflexive Journey on Turkish National Identity & Migration

“How does migration affect national identity?”

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*The only real homeland is the body,
And the only true state is the state of being.*

*For the child, the woman, the human, and the soul within,
Which has put this fire in me that will burn till the end of times.
And till then, I will listen to its message and the solution it whispers...
Gratitude rains.
Gratitude reigns.
Gratitude rains.
Ajó*

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***My friend, what is your homeland?*¹**

*Ever since I can think, I have spent this huge long life on the road
From one end to another have I traveled this mortal world
Scholars, ignorants, the poor; the rich; there is no difference, they are all the same
Finally, I, too, have understood what makes the world go 'round*

*As though humanity had gone out to the market, the bread in the lion's mouth
No one saying "Would you like to drink a hot soup?"²
Whoever erects their four walls, closes his roof and locks the door
No one saying "Let's get a set of blankets for you, too, come in."³*

*Just one question: "My fellow, what's your homeland?"⁴
This world is my homeland
"No, you misunderstand, my fellow, where's your actual hometown?"
This world is my homeland
"(Dear heavens, dear heavens, dear heavens)"⁵*

*While giving long and drawn-out speeches on brotherhood and equity,
many still say: "Why is your skin darker than mine?"
While someone is being shot and runs towards their death because they have eyes under their eyebrows,
nobody stops to ask "What will the left-behind widow and the orphan eat or drink?"*

*The poor peace has not found the solution, sitting down after having said so many words
There is no one saying "Let us all come to an understanding"
Our world has already become shattered into pieces and uninhabitable, anyway
There is no need to cut it up and divide it any further.*

*Just one question: "My fellow, what's your homeland?"
This world is my homeland
"No, you misunderstand, my fellow, where's your actual hometown?"
No, but I already said:
This world is my homeland
"(Dear heavens, dear heavens, dear heavens)"*

*"My fellow, what's yer homeland?"
This world is my homeland.*

Bariş Manço

¹ "Bariş Manço - Hemşerim Memleket Nire Song Lyrics + English Translation," lyricstranslate.com, 2018, <https://lyricstranslate.com/tr/hem%C5%9Ferim-memleket-nire-my-friend-what-your-homeland.html>.

² "i.e., no one offering warmth, nor kindness." <https://lyricstranslate.com>

³ "i.e., no one offering another shelter, or their hearth." <https://lyricstranslate.com>

⁴ "This sentence is deliberately written and sung in a more rustic-sounding Turkish. Incidentally, the word "hemşe(h)ri" (literally: one from the same town) **is a form of address for someone distant, unknown, with whom one tries to build mutual ties.** Furthermore, "memleket" does not just refer to a homeland, but may also refer to a hometown, depending on context." <https://lyricstranslate.com>

⁵ "'Tövbe, tövbe", literally "Repentance, repentance" is something Turks say when they are exasperated, annoyed, or angry. The meaning stems from the fact that the speaker catches himself wanting to curse, or bad-mouth someone or something else, and begs for forgiveness and repentance towards god. The phrase is always muttered to oneself, and nowadays functions autonomously to signal one's annoyance with a situation or a person." <https://lyricstranslate.com>

Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the effects of migration on national identity in the context of borders through an interpretive political auto-ethnography, as a person born into a Turkish family in Istanbul and a migrant to the Netherlands. I explore how my Turkish national identity has been (de/re)constructed throughout my experiences *In and Out of Borders*. I draw on what Matthew Longo explores in his book *The Politics of Borders* as the thick description of borders: *Borders from the Outside* and *Borders for the Inside*; while bridging it to Julia Kristeva's concept of *Stranger* in her book *Strangers to Ourselves* to explore how migration affected my national identity. Furthermore, I bring elements from psychoanalysis and education, as well as deepening the research by incorporating the stories of five people with whom I discussed how they experience the same phenomenon I analyze in this paper. By conducting relational interviews, I gather their views on topics such as migration, identity, education, and memories of upbringing within the context of Turkish national identity and migration to the Netherlands. I further discuss the use of interpretive methods in political science and emphasize the importance of sharing individual stories.

Keywords: *Identity, Migration, Nationality, Turkish nationalism; Stranger/Other; Borders.*

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Chapter I: Introduction



Figure 1. *Les Voyageurs*, Francesco Bruno Catalano, 2013.

“The journey creates us. We become the frontiers we cross.”⁶

⁶ Salman Rushdie, "Step Across This Line," (Lecture, repr., Yale University, 2002), 77.

We, humans, create identities, divisions, and ‘tags’ to fit in or identify. Even though we believe they give us a sense of identity and security, what we truly create is foreigners, enemies, and thus, *Others*. On a nation-level too, nations inherently push for rules and regulations at the establishment of their population, identity, and especially, borders.⁷ As we each uniquely experience this establishment of structures within and without our nations and individual selves; as I have experienced it personally, we may grow hidden parts of our identities, *Strangers*. And perhaps, we may consider them almost as axioms -given, unquestionable, facts, jokes, or simply ‘the way it is.’ The constructivist perspective argues that our identities can change, evolve, and can become more fluid or rigid as we experience more and more of the world we live in.⁸ In this thesis, I will look into this specific phenomenon within the scope of migration. In an attempt to bridge the author and the subject, I will make use of interpretive auto-ethnographic research that will analyze the main concepts of migration, national identity, and borders through a phenomenological perspective, where the analysis is based on my first-person experience. By arguing how I have faced the hidden parts of my identity upon migration, being my Turkish identity, I aim to explore ways in which it led me to de/reconstruct how I perceive it. I bring elements from culture, education, and belief as well as psychoanalysis and child development to enrich the reflexive analysis. Furthermore, I had intimate discussions with five people of similar backgrounds to mine to bring about their understandings of the question of: “*How does migration affect national identity?*” I aim to enrich the phenomenological analysis with their insights on the topics of identity, nationalism, politics, and migration to provide the audience with a more complete view of the question at hand. Focusing on personal stories of Turkish national identity and the effects of migration within the context of de/reconstruction of borders; this thesis will develop a thick description of these concepts through a reflexive, interpretive fashion that will allow a deeper, transparent, and human understanding to emerge throughout the analysis. To comply with the phenomenology-based research, the main concepts of this thesis -migration, borders, and identity, will be discussed as part of the analysis, rather than being conceptualized or measured to test hypotheses. In light of the research question and the three main themes of this thesis; the next paragraphs in this section look into the existing literature in which these themes have been analyzed. Below I explore the discussion around borders, nationalism, (Turkish) national identity, and migration. This part of the paper looks into the

⁷ Sharon Elizabeth Booth, "Which Came First, 'Nations', 'Nationalism', Or 'States'?", 4.

⁸ Catherine E. Amiot et al., "Capturing Changes in Social Identities Over Time and How They Become Part of The Self-Concept", (2015), 13.

previous literature which will prepare the fundamentals for the stories that will be disclosed throughout the interpretive, phenomenological analysis in the thesis.⁹

To start with, the research question of this paper is one in which there already is an assumption: “Migration affects national identity.” Whereas this is an assumption I make based on my lived experiences -which I further analyze in the upcoming chapters, there has been relatively few empirical research on migrants’ personal perceptions of the effects of migration on their identity.¹⁰ However, some others who have analyzed this phenomenon empirically, have previously argued that “...*strong emotional reactions surround alterations in identity meanings following severe threats that are consequent upon major life changes.*”¹¹ From a rather psychoanalytical view, in her book *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva emphasizes how certain identities shatter as we experience certain socio-political events such as migration, which leads to changes in the way we relate to ourselves and Others.¹² Furthermore, Edward Said mentions in his book, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, that as a migrant leaves the border of one land and enters into another, she must ‘make-do’ a new understanding and identity, for this new reality.¹³

Borders have been the main concept that I spent day and night thinking and reading for. “*What do borders mean to you?*” I asked myself. Now that I see the Stranger within, for me borders are who we are, as much as who we are not in our relationship with Ourselves and Others. However, before the encounter, I would think of the crooked lines on the map or long horrendous passport controls. It made me think of a book that read: “*Borders cultivate a sense of interiority and exteriority through their very presence (and practice)...The border is not home to anyone; it is a space of adjudication. One must prove one’s worth to enter.*”¹⁴ The author of this book, Matthew Longo, emphasizes the rather *thick* description of borders which, he argues, is binational.¹⁵ To put it simply: “*They keep the outsiders from getting in, and prevent the insiders from getting out.*”¹⁶ In its rather physical context or thin description, borders serve to showcase territorial integrity (both for the Outsiders and the Insiders per se).¹⁷ Their importance has always been highlighted in political science literature, as territorial integrity serves as one of the main characteristics of what legally

⁹ Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation And Method*, (2015), xix.

¹⁰ Lada Timotijevic and Glynis M Breakwell, "Migration and Threat to Identity," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 10, no. 5 (2000): 355.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (repr., New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 30.

¹³ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (repr., London: Granta Books, 2012), 9.

¹⁴ Matthew Longo, *The Politics of Borders* (repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), xv.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 23.

¹⁷ Ibid, 67.

identifies a sovereign, legitimate state.¹⁸ However, scholars like Van Houtum and Strüver argue that borders are also inherently mental, as they are built to protect from a certain 'Other' that is imaginatively beyond the border, while also imagining a significance to the sense of individual and national self within.¹⁹ I argue that this overlaps with Longo's thick description, as its physical aspect aside, borders also create a mental (or abstract) sense of security and belonging. Borders are, then, inherent to both nations and nationalism. But which came first?

Primordialists argue that nationalism came first, which led to the creation of nation-states.²⁰ Whereas modernists argue that nations or states came first and led to the rise of nationalism.²¹ Yet, it's important to see the distinction between tribalism and nationalism while thinking of this question.²² The primordial argument of nationalism before nations is based on the idea that it creates a sense of unity that excludes Others for the formation of a state.²³ However, so does tribalism (to form tribes), and any human social group.²⁴ This does not mean that "*nationalism is the new tribalism.*"²⁵ According to modernists like Kedouire, whereas tribalism was led by traditions, nationalism is led by centrally imposed rules and regulations, pushed by the nations themselves.²⁶ As David Hume puts it: "*The same national character (identity) commonly follows the authority of government to a precise boundary (border).*"²⁷ According to Hume, fluid in nature, national identities form by a variety of different factors; yet, they strengthen with greater coherence in means of cultural habits and traditions amongst a group of people.²⁸ Therefore, I argue based on existing literature, that national identities, just like nations, inherently consist of borders that mimic the ones of the nation, finding a sense of belonging towards certain groups of people while excluding the Other.

Furthermore, I argue that this Othering of a group within the borders of a nation inherently brings about the creation of the *Stranger* within the citizen of the nation whose character mimics the one of the nations. In her book *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva talks of the Stranger as "*the hidden part of our identity.*"²⁹ She argues that when we exclude Others to have a sense of belonging

¹⁸ Hearn, J., *Rethinking Nationalism*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 27.

¹⁹ Henk Van Houtum & Anke Strüver, "Borders, Strangers, Doors & Bridges," *Space and Polity* 6, no. 2 (2002): 142.

²⁰ Booth, "Which Came First, 'Nations', 'Nationalism', or 'States'?", 1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ David Hume, *Essays and Treatises* (repr., Edinburgh, 1800), 204.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 1.

(to a nation), we also exclude the parts of our identity that is in common with the Others, creating Strangers within ourselves.³⁰ Similarly, psychoanalyst Carl Jung talks of our *Shadow Selves*, which he refers to as the dark side of our identity, as a great part of our lived experiences.³¹ This Shadow is neither positive nor negative, it lies in the unconscious and is instinctive and irrational by nature.³² This makes our Shadow *“prone to psychological projection, in which perceived personal inferiority is recognized as a perceived moral deficiency in someone else.”*³³ And as long as these projections are hidden or suppressed, the Shadow self will gain more of a free hand to bring about situations that will manifest its presence within our personalities.³⁴ Can migration help One³⁵ understand those hidden projections? Could this Shadow even lead us to migrate in the first place?

Bonnie Honig discusses in her book *Democracy and the Foreigner*, that migration allows One to see the truth of the nation One migrated from.³⁶ For Honig, this does not mean that this truth is not visible from within the borders. She simply argues that more is revealed when the perspective of an Outsider becomes available.³⁷ I argue that what One sees when away from the own homeland can vary depending on One’s own experiences in and out of borders. Migration not only gives One this new perspective that Honig mentions, but it can also create the need to re-identify a new self, to make sense of this new self, and the world (nation) One now lives in.³⁸ As Edward Said mentions, *“Exiles, émigrés, refugees, and expatriates uprooted from their lands must make do in new surroundings.”*³⁹ This process that is more an obligation, as Said observes, rather than a choice, occurs by its very nature when entering a different zone where borders from the Outside and borders for the Inside coexist.⁴⁰ By all means, this ‘make do’ is all but a process of de/reconstruction of identity.⁴¹ Therefore, the experiences of this new zone/nation, as much as the experiences that One brings from the homeland, lead One to redraw One’s individual borders upon migration. This understanding of (national) identity and self stems from (political) phenomenology, which seeks to explore and construct a new way of understanding the (political) self and the world

³⁰ Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 39.

³¹ C. G Jung, *Aion* (repr., Princeton. N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 147.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Throughout this thesis, I preferred to refer to the third person pronouns as One.

³⁶ Bonnie Honig, *Democracy And The Foreigner* (repr., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 46.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (repr., London: Granta Books, 2012), 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

around, through an observational, interpretive, and ever-changing perspective.⁴² This thesis adopts this view national identity and explores an understanding of it that arises from within the context of the analysis, which I turn to in the upcoming chapters. First, I shortly look into recent literature that focuses on Turkish people's more recent migration to Europe.

Recent studies show a significant rise in the migration of highly skilled and educated people from Turkey to Western Europe.⁴³ In the Netherlands alone, almost seven thousand highly skilled migrants arrived from Turkey in 2018.⁴⁴ Serenay Kaykaç has previously shed light on this phenomenon, which she refers to as a *brain drain*. By interviewing cases of Turkish brain drain in the Netherlands, Kaykaç reveals fragments of individual reasons for migration that are analyzed under three main areas: Life Standards (socio-political), Uncertainty (political & economic), and Othering (socio-cultural & socio-political).⁴⁵ Similarly, a more extensive research done by Geurts, Davids & Spierings, shows that highly skilled Turkish migrants feel less belonging to their country of residence, the Netherlands, for a variety of different reasons concerning the personal ways in which each interviewee constructs the sense of belonging.⁴⁶ They refer to this turning away of the highly educated/skilled migrant from the host country as the integration paradox.⁴⁷ What is more interesting for my analysis though, is that a greater number of participants in the research by Geurts, Davids & Spierings, self-identify with a supranational identity, which is observed in two groups: *belonging nowhere* and *belonging everywhere*.⁴⁸ Geurts, Davids & Spierings further analyze some of the reasons behind the cases in which participants have felt a sense of belonging to nowhere (integration paradox) while considering the participants that have felt a sense of belonging to everywhere (world citizen) as non-paradoxical since it is assumed they feel belonging to the country they migrated to.⁴⁹ While the research argues that several conditions such as feeling excluded by the host country, having difficult feelings towards the home country, and expectations about migration can negatively affect a highly skilled migrant's integration; each case depends on each individual's construct of sense of belonging and what they attribute to it.⁵⁰ This recent body of literature is

⁴² Nihel Chabrak, "The Politics of Transcendence: Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Accounting Policy", *Critical Perspectives On Accounting* 16, no. 6 (2005): 702.

⁴³ Nella Geurts, Tine Davids and Niels Spierings, "The Lived Experience of an Integration Paradox: Why High-Skilled Migrants From Turkey Experience Little National Belonging In The Netherlands", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47, no. 1 (2020): 71.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Serenay Kaykaç, "Turkey's Brain Drain: An Interpretative Analysis Of Skilled Migrants' Experiences In The Netherlands" (Master of Science, Political Science, repr., Leiden University, 2019), 21.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 77.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Geurts, Davids, and Spierings, "The Lived Experience of an Integration Paradox", 85.

important for the foundation of this research as the subject of this paper, I, have journeyed between a sense of belonging to nowhere and everywhere both in Turkey and the Netherlands, throughout the de/reconstruction of my identity, and have finally (be)come Home, which will unfold throughout the analysis of this thesis.

This thesis will contribute to the academic literature by providing a thick description of the effects of migration on national identity through an interpretive lens and a deeper understanding of the phenomenology around the development of our sense of (national) identity and meaning-making (of ourselves and others) as humans, as we cross the very borders we have drawn for our highly globalized world and intricately unique selves.

Chapter II:
The Human Method

*‘It’s important to tell stories **to tell people about people with people.**
What I see is that our capacity to tell and understand certain things
is always through stories.*

*The best source of these are other people's experiences
and the relationships we establish one-on-one,
and this is why we do what we do,
to tell the stories that we think are worth telling.’⁵¹*

⁵¹ Participant D

To analyze the question: ‘How does migration affect national identity?’ I decided to use auto-ethnographic research design, which will provide the empirical data for this research, where the researcher is the main subject of the research question, and her lived experiences are the main data to analyze. Even though interpretive methods such as auto-ethnography are met with strong criticism in the field of political science, this thesis defends that the interpretive methods can provide one of the most essential empirics, our human experiences.⁵² And this embodied act of reflection within academia may bring about such reflexive research by others in the field, enriching the human-focused, phenomenological database of social and behavioral sciences in the field of political science.⁵³ As each of our lived experiences consists of data we collect through the ways we perceive, (re)act, and understand the outside world, I hope to contribute to this ripple effect of phenomenological remembrance within the academia that focuses on the authentic and sensitive meaning-making of the human nature. That is why, I also choose to conduct relational interviewing, a method of reflexive interviewing that is aimed at generating data through open, honest, and transparent conversations, with five individuals that also share Turkish national identity and migration to the Netherlands in common with me.⁵⁴ Through sharing our lived experiences as Turkish-identifying people in the Netherlands, I aim to collect their personal stories and reflections on the research question and relevant topics such as education, upbringing, sense of belonging, and encounter with Others. Relational interviewing treat the exchange of stories between the researcher and the participant with the utmost respect and considers reflexivity on stories as the main path of the human learning process, which impeccably overlaps with the main goal of this thesis.⁵⁵ By choosing not to conduct and analyze these interactions merely as structured interviews as in interviewer-respondent dialogues, I aim to showcase that contrary to undermining the causality, rigor, and the science, this humanist method can significantly contribute to the field by deepening the understanding of the questions and concepts at hand.

Unfortunately, the significance of the contribution of interpretive methods to empirical social science has been dominated by arguments against the method.⁵⁶ Positivists like Ragin argue that interpretive methods are only partially empirical.⁵⁷ Yet, as Yanow argues, there is no contradiction between empirical research and meaning-focused research.⁵⁸ On the contrary, the

⁵² Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method*, (2015), 133.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Lee Ann Fujii, *Interviewing in Social Science Research* (repr., Routledge, 2018), 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method*, xiii.

⁵⁷ Ibid, xiv.

⁵⁸ Ibid, xiv.

main focus of all empirical social science should be problems of meaning-making.⁵⁹ Understanding specific aspects of causality are central to the meaning-making characteristic of human actors.⁶⁰ Positivists mainly argue that interpretive methods lack subjectivity and non-generalizability; yet, this argument deprives the researchers of their human essence and creates a gap between academia and the actual world we live in.⁶¹ In this thesis, I argue that all research is subjective, as subjectivity is part of human nature that stems from individually constructed interests and decisions (the research topic, question, hypotheses, analyses, literature, etc.).⁶² When it comes to non-generalizability, as a person who appreciates the unique contribution of every story, my aim in this thesis is not to create a generalizable theory to apply to the wider society. Instead, I aim to contribute to academia by transcending academic borders and providing an analysis through the phenomenology of personal stories. As many authors that inspired me have done, I hope to also create a ripple effect for others to question, reflect on, and share their stories as well.

Elizabeth Dauphinee observes that fewer students transcend certain intellectual and academic boundaries to express themselves more freely.⁶³ She argues that, as a result of the gap between the positivist vs. interpretive discussions, we can make less and less sense of the world we live in, even as academics.⁶⁴ I choose to use auto-ethnography to make a deeper sense of the world I live in with the identity and the borders I have and have not. If you ask me, “*Why you, then?*” There is nothing that makes my case any more special or human than anyone else’s. Yet, I do feel the calling to express myself through this method, having observed that often, through sharing my story, I attune Others to a new understanding of who a Turkish person is; as by receiving their stories I also allow new understandings of Others to be revealed to me too. While this exchange brings me closer to the Stranger within me, it may lead the reader to get closer to their Stranger too. Psychologist Jean Piaget argues that attunement is a significant part of the process of identification which we inherently do since early childhood, by creating generalizable schemes through certain life experiences to make sense of the world around us.⁶⁵ Piaget argues that our innate understanding and processing of our outside world grows through this attunement, as we get more stimuli from the outside world to categorize and reorganize the meaning-making we create through stories and experiences.⁶⁶ This is good for the human mind at any age, even though it has been found that it’s

⁵⁹ Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method*, xiv.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, xiii.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Elizabeth Dauphinee, “Writing as Hope: Reflections on the Politics of Exile,” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 4 (2013): 348.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Denise Boyd and Helen L. Bee, *The Developing Child* (repr., Pearson, 2004), 312.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

rather difficult to attune to new stimuli at later stages in life.⁶⁷ As every person's sense of identity forms through one's own life experiences, and deepens through asking and sharing stories, interpretive methods such as auto-ethnography, coupled with relational interviewing can help us peek into the lived experiences of individuals that often become numbers in a majority of research; and understand *how* and *to what extent* do certain political experiences affect our personal processes as socio-political beings.⁶⁸

In an attempt to cover this human method more effectively, the semi-structured interviews I conducted took place as one-on-one open conversations between me and the participant in a private setting, to avoid social-reliability bias, with a total of five individuals that have a similar background to that of mine, the subject of the paper. The participants' confidentiality has been ensured by asking for verbal consent and throughout this thesis, they are referred to as participants A, B, C, and D for identity protection. This also allows the reader to follow and connect to each participant's stories individually. A list of questions (see Appendix) has been introduced to the participants to guide them in disclosing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding (national) identity, migration, living in the Netherlands, memories of upbringing and education in Turkey, as well as the research question of this thesis. The rest of the discussion is in a free, intimate setting to increase the authenticity and transparency of the interactions. Asking the research question was aimed at demonstrating the participants' unique meaning-making nature in answering the same question I will be analyzing in this thesis, based on their lived experiences. These five people are selected based on convenience, as I have individual access to them as friends. They share Turkish nationality and migration to the Netherlands for academic purposes in common with me, as well as being in the same age range, and same education level. I have further made use of secondary resources such as books, articles, and news resources, to support the analysis and enrich the context of the stories that are shared throughout the thesis. The thesis follows a chronological order which helps keep the concepts in a clean flow and indirectly encourages self-reflection, by increasing the relatability of the reader.

⁶⁷ Denise Boyd and Helen L. Bee, *The Developing Child* (repr., Pearson, 2004), 312.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Dauphinee, "Writing as Hope", 348.

But, where are you really from?

Auto-ethnographic research usually includes a section of positionality where the author identifies themselves to help the reader understand how the research came to be and the lens through which the analysis is formed. While these categories (mainly nationality, gender, race, etc.) help understand the phenomenology behind the research; this thesis aims to transcend all such identifications while encouraging and telling the stories of their de/reconstructions. Therefore, the positionality of this thesis does not include the positioning of this or that. Instead, it reveals my positioning within and outside the borders to the reader throughout the thesis in its ever-changing nature, as simply a *different* one. And being different, this inherent and simple act of (human) nature, has brought me, Şehnaz, to this very moment of writing this thesis today. In this thesis, I, therefore, explore the question at hand first and foremost, from *different* perspective. Yet, it is debated how 'free' One is to be different in my homeland, and my story may be one of a survivor, a rebel, or a misfit. One could identify me as a Turkish-born, non-religious woman, who is as ambitious as Socrates about questioning; and determined to share the very questions and stories that have become central to her understanding of herself and the world around her every step of her path on Earth. And somehow, that already makes this story "courageous" or "bold" in the eyes of some, while also making me a Stranger, or a terrorist, in the eyes of the Turkish government. This is the thesis of someone who has grown immense passion towards political science only to lose herself while studying it, for the simple reason of missing the human stories behind its teachings. Someone who has yearned for a deeper understanding than just systems or institutions, and asked questions that started with: "Why?" Therefore, the creation of this thesis is a reclamation of a lifetime of experiences and self-reflection, and years of feeling non-belonging, this time towards my own degree, expertise, and passion, which is telling stories. And after countless times I've contributed to telling others' stories, I decided that I can only move forward first by telling my own. So here is my story.

Not this, not that,

just *different*.

As it is,

as it has always been.

Chapter III: Inside the Borders

Stranger at Home



Figure 2. *The Flag*, Şener Özmen, 2010.

I am, a “100% Turkish” woman from Istanbul, Turkey. This way of mocking my identity has become a thing after hearing the following question countless times: “*But.. where are you really from? Are you fully Turkish? A hundred percent? Are you sure?*” Still many in the Netherlands struggle to accept and even reject my identity. Just yesterday, a man on the street asked me for directions, and added: “*Where are you from if I may ask?*” I said, Turkey, to which he responded as: “*No, not you.*” This way of Othering didn’t start here in the Netherlands, or out of borders. I have also been a Stranger back at home. I remember the first time I truly felt like a Stranger, was at primary school. The perspective that I had brought in had always been referred to as different, challenging, or oppositional. I was quite successful in this institution that I had to go and be part of every single day, yet I struggled to belong. I always had the feeling that school was alienating me from myself by implementing its values on me, as opposed to the values I have been developing as a child. This has been crucially affecting the way I related to my own unique or *different* way of thinking, feeling, and being. Somehow, this very institution that is considered an essential part of a child’s development, and the creation of a sense of belonging to a community, has had a strong impact on my alienation from it. And little did I know that a *Stranger* was growing within me. Every single morning until the end of high school, for twelve long years, I repeated “Our Oath” alongside my classmates:

‘I’m Turkish, I’m righteous

I’m hardworking

My principle,

Is to protect my minors,

Respect my elders, and

Is to love my country and my Nation more than my own self..

let my existence be bestowed upon the Turkish existence!

How happy is the one who says I am a Turk!”

On a warm August morning in 1999, I was born into a family where I felt free, but a society I failed to fit in. I was sent to progressive, private schools which had a great education in language, music, and arts. Yet, the utmost love and respect for *our great* Nation, and the sacredness of *our* Turkish flag & anthem was a given for any school. I don’t remember ever challenging any of these ideologies, since I mainly experienced them through school, where *I have never felt like I belonged*. Maybe that is how I somehow never realized the Turkish nationalism that had been slowly

ingrained in me. As I discussed this topic with my friends, the interviewees, whom I only met after I migrated to the Netherlands, I received interesting and valuable insights and stories about the effects of the Turkish education system on (national) identity.

Drawing on the insights I received through the interviews, the feeling that *"Education is like a horse race. It's a battlefield, and the children are the soldiers,"*⁶⁹ was more or less expressed immediately, and similarly among all participants. Indeed, Turkey has a success, teacher, and exam-oriented education system that is also known as Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM). As young as 12 years old, students had been taking nation-wide multiple-choice exams that cannot be retaken to enter high school (which determines the success of the rest of One's education life). As a participant shares: *"Success is one of the main conditionings. You have to be successful. A Turk should be successful. In the Turkish education system, you should always prove yourself. So when I came here (the Netherlands) I still thought 'I need to prove myself!' It's like, if I'm not a successful student, then I'm also not a successful human being."*⁷⁰

Furthermore, due to being exam-oriented rather than learning-oriented, where the main goal is to make it into a university or a job, Turkish education system is very much based on memorization. *"I think the most fundamental deficiency is the lack of critical thinking. In other words, people are not given a good education or space on how to think and how to discuss, so people are very behind in the culture of critical thinking and discussion in Turkey."*⁷¹ I cannot count how many times, I remember having been shut up in classes, simply because I asked questions or wanted to understand something better in a *different* way other than memorization.

"The first time a professor asked my opinion on a subject (in the Netherlands) I thought: 'Should I even have an opinion?' I am currently struggling to write my thesis, the lack of the practice of self-expression and critical thinking in Turkey is still haunting me. I'm not only earning a degree here, but I'm also reconditioning my whole identity, way of thinking, and being.

*Writing a thesis like yours (this thesis) would be considered a sin within Turkish education."*⁷²

⁶⁹ Participant C

⁷⁰ Participant E

⁷¹ Participant D

⁷² Participant C

The education system in Turkey has always been a tool for modernization and change in Turkey since the founding of the Republic in 1923.⁷³ During the Atatürk era, education has been reshaped in a way to bring about Turkish unification and secularism through reforms such as the use of the Latin alphabet and the abolishment of religious classes in schools.⁷⁴ Especially after the 1980s, the Turkish education system has increasingly become one of the main tools of the government to impose its populist, and short-term political self-interest.⁷⁵ This top-down and constant change coupled with the success, teacher, and exam-oriented system, has made the Turkish education system more and more successful in the creation of a Turkish national identity that was concentrated around fitting the ideals of the government's interests and policies:

*'This system wants to create a prototype individual who is obedient: Sunni, male, heterosexual, grateful for the government no matter how miserable, fatalist, fully surrendered to the state, unquestioning, dying for his country, never endangering the government and its policies. So if you are not an obedient member of the community, like you and I, it is very normal to question your identity, and feel like a Stranger within the borders of Turkey.'*⁷⁶

According to Erdoğan and his government, if you do not fit into the borders of this above-mentioned persona, or simply if you're *different*, then you are considered *a terrorist*. A list of all groups and individuals that Erdoğan has referred to as terrorists includes intellectuals, university students, people who invest in US dollars, citizens who voted against the presidential system, his political opponents, and more.⁷⁷ In June 2022, Erdoğan has called the same people, *sluts*.⁷⁸ Since Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party came to power back in 2002, the Minister of Education has changed six times, and the education system itself has changed almost every year.⁷⁹ This has continuously helped to reinforce the creation of the ideal persona that Erdoğan wishes to rule over, as his government ingrained more and more of his religious conservative ideology within the education system and its content: *"The Turkish education system changes every single year to align more with the ideologies of Erdoğan's New Turkey. I have 2 years of age difference from my older sister, and we both went through a completely different education system."*⁸⁰

⁷³ Funda Karapehlivan, "Constructing A "New Turkey" Through Education", Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2019, <https://tr.boell.org/en/2019/10/01/constructing-new-turkey-through-education>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Participant D

⁷⁷ "Erdoğan Bugüne Kadar Kimlere "Terörist" Dedi?" (Who Has Erdoğan Called "Terrorist" Until Today?), dw.com, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-bug%C3%BCne-kadar-kimlere-ter%C3%B6rist-dedi/a-56175417>.

⁷⁸ "Erdoğan Faces Multiple Criminal Complaints For Calling Gezi Protestors 'Sluts'", SCFF, 2022.

⁷⁹ Funda Karapehlivan, "Constructing A "New Turkey" Through Education."

⁸⁰ Participant C

In conclusion, while we all agreed on the fact that we have received a decent education (in private schools); neither I nor the interviewees can say that we have successfully survived the ingraining of the nationalist rhetoric, which still haunts us as the Stranger within, across borders. The education system is still rapidly orienting towards growing successful soldiers for Erdoğan's New Turkey, which targets to 'cancel' many, such as the late Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution, to instead glorify its ethno-nationalistic, religio-conservatist, radical-Islamist, neo-Ottoman, and pan-Turkic ideology.⁸¹ And with the rapid increase of the number of İmam Hatip (Imam Preacher) Schools -where children as early as twelve years old start studying if they fail to 'make it' or enroll in a secular school, the ingraining of these ideologies are becoming more and more systematic within the Turkish society.⁸²

⁸¹ Funda Karapehlivan, "Constructing A "New Turkey" Through Education."

⁸² Ibid.

Chapter IV: Crossing the Borders

Home is the Place You Left



Figure 3. Elmgreen & Dragset, *Home is the Place You Left* (2017), *The Critic* (2012)⁸³

⁸³ Photography: Ekber Öztürk

In 2013, on the very first month of high school, I applied for an intercultural exchange program to study abroad. After several exams, and interviews, I have been selected as the youngest student that year, to go to a country of my choice. I followed my mother's advice when I picked Spain, a country which I had absolutely no idea about its language and culture: "*You already speak German and English. Spanish is one of the most widely spoken languages!*" I still recognize that sweet moment of realizing that I can communicate with more people around the world if I learned Spanish, as one of the turning points that led me to be the person that is writing this thesis.

In September 2014, I departed for Spain and spent a year with a Spanish family. There, I struggled at first with language, but ended up adapting quite well, learned fluent Spanish, made lifelong friends and a second family, and even mastered the tradition of *siesta*. Even though I cannot say that I faced any significant discrimination, I peaked into how "Turkishness" was understood by the Westerners. I couldn't quite grasp some commentary or questions directed toward me. Whether I or women in my family wear hijab, eat pork, or drink alcohol, even *bothered* me at times. How come these things that have never been part of my reality, and were complete Strangers to me, were constructing Other's assumptions about my identity? And just like that, 8 years ago, my earlier migration to Spain has already led me to undertake the journey of looking into the country whose borders I have left, truly for the first time, in search of an answer to who I *truly* am. But it wasn't until I arrived in the Netherlands in September 2017, that I had truly met the Stranger in me. Upon my arrival in the Netherlands, I encountered a feeling of, not maybe belonging, but freedom. Yet, this freedom had already felt on a leash before I landed. Through bureaucratic immigration processes, collection of funds for tuition and living, struggle to find housing, and many such headaches, I was reminded that, oh, indeed... *I am Turkish*.

They asked about the sea to the fish,

And the fish replied: "What do I know?"⁸⁴

As a participant explains: "*When you belong to the majority in a country, you become less inclined to think about minorities or how they feel. I faced my Turkish identity only when I went abroad and became a minority. You have to encounter an Other, for you to define and react to your own identity. The moment you see the Other, you start to question "How do they see me?" "What am I to them?" And so they do too. It's a two-sided thing. You start to read the prejudices or stereotypes about your own identity from Others because people approach you with certain patterns. You start to see what*

⁸⁴ Self-translated Turkish proverb -source unknown.

people understand, know, and think about Turkish identity. Then how you present yourself, what you emphasize, what you talk about, what you are proud of, what you are ashamed of... This whole process, (re)shapes our identities.”

So what now? I come from a country where I was considered different, Stranger, and *Other*; which is considered the same as a terrorist. And in the Netherlands, it was rather those simple questions, comments, or reactions,... when you don't have the same rights as a European or Dutch, even if it's for government funding, public transport, tuition fees, or job applications that mainly remind you: Yes, I am Turkish, a little piece of paper determines my identity, and draws my borders, within these new borders, before I ever get to do it myself.

‘When I am not hired for a job, I truly don't know- am I not hired because I am Turkish?

Am I not hired because I am not an EU citizen?

Or am I not hired because I am really just not qualified?

This keeps you in a paranoid mentality.

In fact, you can be paranoid even in a situation where maybe there is no racism.”⁸⁵

I believe this paranoia is twofold. First, there lies a fear that is rooted in hard facts, such as Europeans themselves being more desirable employees here in Europe for a variety of reasons that is both bureaucratic and socio-cultural. Yet, if One fails to acknowledge and face this fear, what I believe happens is a fall back into the fatalistic mentality that One can recognize within the persona that is glorified within Turkey. As one interviewee explains:

‘What we need to break is mostly fatalism, the victim mentality, the arabesque mentality of suffering. All of these are defense mechanisms, people in Turkey think that this gives them a degree of comfort and creates a remedy for them (i.e. this is my fate). But when you continue to hold on to this fatalism within other borders, then wherever you go insolubly becomes your hell. This is what I still struggle with the most. You are in such victim psychology that you are closed even to the solutions to your own problems within yourself. Here, (in the Netherlands) on the contrary, people tend to look for the solution to everything in individual salvation. But in Turkey, ... being a community together, being one homeland is a virtue. After migration, you continue to think with the old dynamics of the place you are used to. First of all, you need to get rid of the conditioning, because things work differently here.’⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Participant D

⁸⁶ Participant D

The main difference between the Netherlands and Turkey that both myself and my interviewees have highlighted is this individual vs. community-based lifestyle. The persona that sustains Turkey's borders today is one of unification of people under the above-mentioned ideal persona that fits the government's motto of *One Nation, One Flag, One Homeland, One Nation (Tek Millet, Tek Bayrak, Tek Vatan, Tek Devlet)*.⁸⁷ In Europe, specifically in the Netherlands, I observe and experience a space that is more based on individual-self actualization. *"I feel like in Turkey, there is always a gatekeeping into who you are and who you are becoming by Others, such as your family, social circle, and society overall."*⁸⁸

*"In Turkey, the judgment, the oppression always exists. Even your grandma's neighbor comes over to see what you are doing, what you are wearing, how much do you earn, when are you getting married, when are you having kids... I do not feel this pressure here (in the NL), but now that I'm conditioned, instead of the society, I put this pressure on myself, and that is what led me to depression this year. I'm always trying to evaluate myself and fit into the molds that exist in my head, that I was forced into in my previous education and social life in Turkey, where you cannot be different. This voice in me criticizes me, compares me, judges me... But I can be different now. I'm learning how to de/reprogram my brain."*⁸⁹

And of course, as we go through this de/reprogramming of our identities, so do we de/reprogram how Others see us -it's truly a two-way street, but only to the extent to which the Other person's borders allow. There is a long history of migrants in Europe, and Turkish people are the second largest minority group in the Netherlands. Therefore, there are certain practices, habits, and learned views about Turkey and Turkishness, that are mainly shaped by the Turks who came to the Netherlands post-World War II. As a participant explains: *"We differ from those Turks in many ways, especially as a generation. But there is a certain image of Turks in (European) people's minds that develops based on their experiences with Turks here. So when you meet them, they inevitably see you through that box and maybe as they get to know you, they change the shape of that box or maybe they don't change it, maybe they don't even try to open that box because that image in their minds is enough for them."*⁹⁰

This brings us back to what Jean Piaget explains as the attunement, which helps us and Others to reshape our understanding of ourselves and Others, to feel safe as primitive animals. He argues that this attunement is more difficult as we age. In light of what has been discussed so far,

⁸⁷ Soner Çağaptay, *The New Sultan: Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, (2017), 72.

⁸⁸ Participant B

⁸⁹ Participant C

⁹⁰ Participant D

there seem to be two main options when I think of the research question at hand in relation to the twofold understanding of borders. On the one hand, One can choose to cross One's own borders, and explore the hidden area within the Self by facing the Stranger which is triggered through interactions with Others in the foreign land, while attuning them to a different understanding of the same subject through self-actualization. On the other hand, One can also choose to become or stay fatalistic, fantasizing about finding security within the borders One brought from the Homeland, outside of it, to finding comfort or even a remedy for the 'suffering' that migration has led to.

This is tricky. Because no matter the willingness to self-actualize, the systematic and bureaucratic position One holds in a foreign country, as a minority, foreigner, or simply Stranger, holds them to a certain standard based on i.e., how Turks are being received by and within the Dutch society. I did personally experience both sides of this coin throughout my migration journey. I did get triggered and fall into fatalism so many times when the borders that were drawn for me as a Turkish migrant were reminded to me. An interviewee friend has put this in words better than I could ever, *"I can see that being Turkish has prevented you from being & doing things. I remember you got accepted from all these different master's degrees but you had to accept the one that has offered you a scholarship, not the one you truly wished to pursue. Now I see that you're very grateful for this opportunity too, but that has already been a reminder for you that being Turkish is preventing you from doing what you actually want to do on a constant, systemic basis."*⁹¹ Considering many such examples like this, how truly free can this self-actualizing be? And how much of the Self can be actualized through these new borders that are imposed on One by the new country, based on how this country's borders, views and customs (of Others), and identity.

And here in the Netherlands, even in the most intercultural spaces, I did feel the need to defend Turkey from time to time. There has been this incident at the university where a couple of students burnt a Turkish flag. Now, growing up being told that *"the flag cannot touch the ground,"* *"the flag is sacred"* and such, my initial reaction was confusion and the feeling of being disrespected. Looking back I realize that both in this case and such cases where I was asked whether I wear a hijab, or eat pork, who I was really trying to defend was the Turkish national Stranger in me which made me question why I even feel the need to defend it -having been stuck within the borders of Turkey outside of it. Interviewees who have both Turkish & European citizenship also shared similar feelings: *"I do feel like having to defend more of Turkey because I believe that it is misrepresented. And it's not that I'm ashamed of it, but I'm kind of tired of having certain*

⁹¹ Participant B

conversations such as 'Are you secular? Are you religious? Is your family okay with you studying abroad? Why are you so tall? Why are you so blonde?' But what do you want me to look like? What do you want me to do? Should I go get married, like.. what?'⁹² Another question that dual nationality interviewees have shared they receive frequently is: *From which Turkish people are you? (Hangi Türklerdensiniz?)* This question for many of us Turkish people abroad, is an innocent-looking, but political question, that usually replaces: *What do you think about Erdoğan?* It's aimed at receiving a better understanding of how open-minded or secular One is, based on One's political stance. *"It's a question that I constantly receive from people who I meet for the first time. They try to get to know to who they think you must be instead of who you really are in essence."*⁹³

While I do see that, as I attune people to a different understanding of a Turk on a constant basis, simply through self-actualizing myself, I am also constantly reminded of the limits of this relative freedom I have both because of the borders of Turkey I've been shedding, and the borders of the Netherlands I (fail to) fit in. After spending over five years in Europe, as one of my interviewees put it clearly: *"I think we have learned that our nationality is not our personality."*⁹⁴ Yet, it does not change the reality of the global system we established that consists of borders that follow and 'welcome' us no matter where we go. Another dual nationality participant shares her thoughts regarding this as we speak: *"How stressful that must be for many people, including you. I like living here but you know, if someone had offered me a good job in Turkey, I'd leave here tomorrow. You are the type of person that wouldn't leave and you also have to prove that you should stay here. I'm paying the EU tuition fee without ever having lived in the EU. And what's even crazier is that YOU lived in the EU, in Spain! Sometimes I forget how lucky I am because I don't have to defend a reason for wanting to stay here. (My eyes got teary for how good she put my experiences into words) Okay okay, don't cry... I think this is incredibly unfair..."*⁹⁵

⁹² Participant B

⁹³ Participant A

⁹⁴ Participant B

⁹⁵ Participant B

Chapter V: Outside the Borders
You Belong Where You Be Longing



Figure 4. *Political Meeting*, Nikos Economopoulos, 1990.

How can we, then, understand the effects of migration on national identity, in light of these stories that were shared? If our identities forcibly (and even unconsciously) mimic the borders of our nations, then what happens to us as individuals when we decide to undertake journeys that cross borders? As a participant discloses: *"Migration shows you that there are different realities, alternatives, perspectives, ways of living out there."*⁹⁶ Whereas these new realities also come with their own borders and are perceived together with the borders that One carries of One's own homeland, I argue that migration allows One to experience being *an Other*, where we face the Strangers in ourselves. And if One has already felt this feeling of being an Other within the borders of the homeland, like myself and some of the interviewees did, then this feeling itself can lead One to embark on the journey of migration in the first place.

As the stories exchanged above disclose, the systematic ingraining of certain political ideologies that aim to create a certain persona that obeys the government, and allows no space for self-actualization, or simply being different can lead to the feeling of: *"...either I don't fit in here or I am in the wrong place. So either the problem is with me or the problem is actually with these people (home country) and I shouldn't be here. If I have to adapt to this (Turkish) society, I will have to sacrifice who I am and who I want to be"*⁹⁷ And for someone who has felt this non-belonging in a society that estranges One from One's own self and homeland to enforce a false notion of Oneness that is limited to *'One Nation, One Flag, One Homeland, One Nation'*; becoming an *Other* outside borders can actually provide One with a space that is relatively 'freer' than the one that exists within the borders of the homeland. Outside borders, the true versions of One's stories can emerge against the ones that One has previously been told about One's self within the borders. In the case of Turkey, *"We're grown up with the notion of everyone needs to be a Turk, be successful, be the best, that's the mission that has been set for us. The mission has been ingrained since childhood through education. Maybe if we weren't imposed this mission of 'becoming someone' then we could actually be ourselves by choosing ourselves for ourselves by ourselves."*

"Parents usually always complain when you come back to visit:

"You've changed a lot!"

Yes, I have changed

because your truths

are not my reality anymore,

I have my own now.

⁹⁶ Participant A

⁹⁷ Participant D

That's what migration does to you: Finding your truth.

We're all trying to understand and tell our own truthful stories."⁹⁸

I further observe that by facing the Stranger/Shadow Self upon migration, we get access to information about ourselves and Others that was previously hidden. This can be better explained by the use of the Johari Window model (see Table 2 in Appendix) which is, in simple terms, a psychological tool for self-discovery. Through looking into the Stranger/Shadow Self, or in other words, the Unknown Area (see Table 2), we get access to information that was previously not known by Ourselves or Others. I argue that while migration can be a significant tool to access this Unknown area, by providing us with the perspective of being an Other, or a Stranger; it truly depends on One's own conscious choices as to what extent this Unknown area is to be revealed. Whereas we can disclose our own Unknown areas/Strangers through our encounters with Others, asking and reflecting on questions, and listening to stories; we also share the Strangers in ourselves with Others through (conscious or unconscious) self-disclosure (of stories, perspectives, etc.). In light of the question at hand, we can see that migration's effect on national identity depends on the extent to which we open ourselves up for self-exploration, awareness, and development. As one participant explains: *"Yes, geography is your fate, it means you cannot change where you were born or your past, but it's in your hands to choose how to make use of these experiences."*⁹⁹ She further adds: *"If just crossing borders and living somewhere else was something that changed us, there wouldn't be, for example, any non-Dutch speaking Turkish migrants that have been living here for three generations. It's more about our conscious choices and willingness to look within and make this change. It's all within us. It's really about choosing to see this as an opportunity to walk this path of self-reflection and actualization."*¹⁰⁰

Allowing ourselves to open up for such experiences and changes is valuable as it creates an opening where One gets to develop as an individual in relation to how One relates to Others and the collective.¹⁰¹ Because if One does not know something that Others also do not know, One can easily call it 'fate' and fall into fatalism as the participants and I have previously discussed. The instability and insecurity of the Unknown are where One connects to a belief, a higher Source, or God's will (fate).¹⁰² Yet, the more One learns about this Unknown area within themselves, the more One

⁹⁸ Participant C

⁹⁹ Participant C

¹⁰⁰ Participant C

¹⁰¹ Jung, *Aion*, 23.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 19.

becomes truly *One*, with *One's* self, and *Others*.¹⁰³ Personally, the feeling of not belonging to my homeland has led me to feel like I don't belong anywhere at all. After all, where could *One* feel belonging, if *One* doesn't feel they belong *at Home*? And this very feeling that led me to migrate might have also stemmed from the yearning to search for a different way of *belonging*. *One* that is more of a feeling, instead of a government to die for or a piece of paper.¹⁰⁴ And I found out that this way of belonging is truly towards *everywhere*.

*"Migration disconnects you from that nation (homeland), you no longer belong to the linearity of time that happens within that nation. And this disconnection brings you closer to a stronger feeling of individuality, you know. So not worrying about what country you're living in, but rather worrying about where you're gonna feel best. But of course, we have to keep in mind that not everyone can jump from country to country to pursue their best self."*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Jung, *Aion*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Participant A

¹⁰⁵ Participant B

Chapter VI: Conclusion
Be(coming) Home

*“Take a glass of water from the sea
here, that glass of water is who you are
now pour that water back into the sea
Now go and find yourself...”*

Muhyiddin İbnü'l-Arabî

Even though this section is meant to conclude the discussions that arose throughout this thesis, I believe that this section, maybe even more than the other chapters, has an ever-changing nature. As the conclusions I reach regarding my own identity, the way I belong and where, and the effects of migration I experience will change throughout my life, I aim to conclude this paper by taking the reader to where this journey has brought me today.

Firstly, if I were to summarize my takeaways from both my experiences of migration and of writing this thesis, I would say that migration does not only happen on a physical or surface level. It is not solely about crossing physical borders and attaining physical goals or freedoms. Inevitably, many of us who have experienced it, already know this. Becoming an Other/Stranger, whether One has felt like an Other within the homeland's borders or not, leads us to look into those borders we have left and (often unconsciously) continue to live in. As migration allows us to get closer to the Strangers in ourselves, it also allows us to get closer to the Strangers we see in Others.

Secondly, migration shows us that only by choosing to exchange our stories and consciously de/redrawing our borders, we can truly make sense of the borders we carry and start to make sense of the new borders we now exist in. So maybe indeed, a big part of this integration paradox, the sense of non-belonging that Geurts, Davids & Spierings mention, stems from a lack of exchanging stories of sufferings, sweet reminiscences, taught nationalisms, and conditioned realities,... Whether we intend to or not, every story changes the way we experience and perceive Ours, both ways in which are known and unknown to Ourselves. As Said mentions, migration already obliges us to make-do to our new surroundings. However, *how* we choose to do it, still depends on our conscious decisions.

And this brought me personally, to a feeling of belonging everywhere, through first choosing to belong to myself in my body, within the sovereignty of my borders, and then to this World. And this is maybe only truly attainable through allowing ourselves to transcend our borders and identities, and rewrite the way we connect to ourselves, our stories, our pasts, and our origins. And still, I will continue to find many more Strangers in the Home I found within, as I get to know more of this world. These Strangers will only stay hidden until I stop and greet them as I encounter them (within and outside), ask and receive their stories, as I share mine with them. I believe that this practice can bring us to the wholeness, the Oneness of our beings, transcending the ones that have been created by the borders of our nations, as it serves as a *"remembrance of our pasts, a formulation of our presents, and a showing of our futures"* as humans.¹⁰⁶ And this process never

¹⁰⁶ Chabrak, "The Politics of Transcendence", 713.

ends, as we meet more of One another, and share the remembrance of the humane importance of exchanging stories.

Thirdly, this research highlights a gap within migration research that is incredibly valuable to the ways in which we contribute to how we make sense of the world around us with the systems we create, the problems we face, the actions we take, and more importantly, the solutions we try to generate. This gap is one of listening to and telling stories. In my experience of this thesis, holding space for stories to unravel through relational interviewing has allowed me to generate data from my participants that I could not express myself better. Their stories have further inspired and encouraged me in my auto-ethnography, knowing that sharing my story with theirs creates an even bigger ripple effect which I hope will inspire and encourage *Others* to recognize their stories in ours and share them with the world.

Appendix A

Table 1. Demographics of the Interviewees

Participant	Identity	Age	Gender	Length of residence in the Netherlands	Degree of education
A	Turkish (& EU)	22	Female	5 years	MA
B	Turkish (& EU & US)	24	Female	5 years	BA
C	Turkish (& Dutch)	25	Female	9 months	MA
D	Turkish	30	Male	2,5 years	MA
E	Turkish (& Dutch)	24	Female	7 years	MA

Semi-structured Interview Guideline

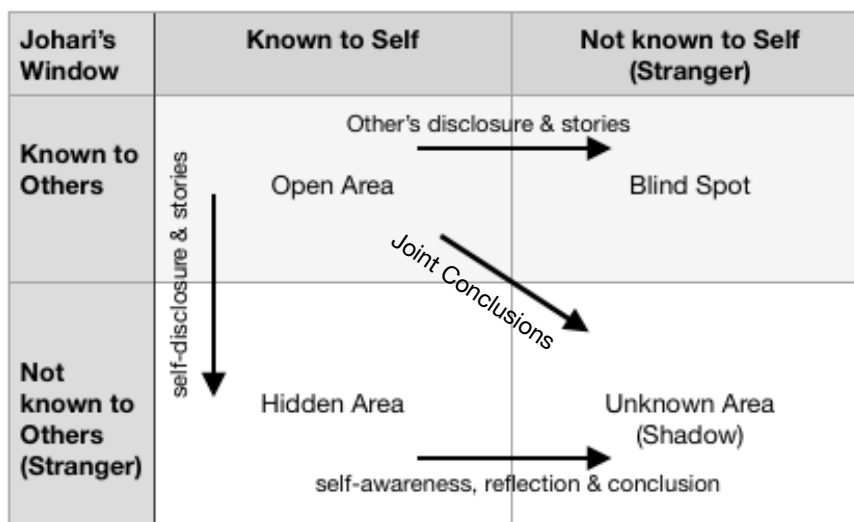
- Broadly introduce the research.
- Ask verbal consent to record the interview, use of data, confidentiality, anonymity, and rights.

Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Where in Turkey are you from?
3. What is your national identity?
4. How long have you been in the Netherlands?
5. Why did you come to the Netherlands?
6. What's the highest degree of education you have or that you'll obtain this year?
7. Have you ever lived in another country than Turkey or the Netherlands before? How long?
8. Did you ever feel at Home in Turkey?
9. Do you feel at Home in the Netherlands?
10. Do you think your (national) identity has ever been challenged in Turkey?
11. Do you think your (national) identity has ever been challenged in the Netherlands?
12. How do you feel about the education you received in Turkey?

13. What are the biggest differences between Turkey and the Netherlands?
14. How do you feel people approach you here in the Netherlands (about being Turkish)?
15. How do you feel you approach Others here or abroad?
16. Based on our common shared experiences throughout our friendship, what do you think you observed about my (national) identity?
17. How does migration affect national identity?

Table 2. Johari's Window Model¹⁰⁷



¹⁰⁷ "Johari Window Technique can Improve the Culture of Knowledge Sharing," Medium, 2022, <https://muabusalah.medium.com/johari-window-technique-can-improve-the-culture-of-knowledge-sharing-f9c853a549e4>.

Appendix B

The participants of this interview have shared their perspectives on how they see my national identity since they've met me. While the other three have also mentioned how my looks and lifestyle can surprise people based on preconditioned understandings of a Turkish person, I would like to share two of them that I found very special, as they have truly captured how I embarked on the journey of writing this thesis in February 2022:

*'My impression of you, since I've met you in September 2017 until today in May 2022, is you are currently a nationless being. Not in a negative way or legal sense... You in your raw self are above the borders we have drawn. And I have seen it has also been long mental health and inner journey for you to shed expectations and pressures that some you've created for yourself, some you felt, some you were told.'*¹⁰⁸

*'Şehnaz has always belonged to herself. Since I met you. And this means.. like you have lived in Spain, in Turkey, here.. you were maybe always constrained by your nationality, but nationality was never your concern or what you were seeking for, you were seeking for yourself. Your true, raw self. Your yearning for migration seems to have always been getting closer to yourself. What you do, from my perspective, is always to love yourself and others and thus, create Love-based connections. I see you beyond your nationality, and even beyond a personality, you are Love and with your struggles and successes, you make every person who gets to meet you to deeply feel and learn from your Love-ing presence.'*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Participant B

¹⁰⁹ Participant E

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