

THE TEACHER AS ETHNOGRAPHER: NEGOTIATING IDENTITY WITH A STUDENT COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT. This paper offers an illustration of a university teacher in the humanities representing her own classroom practice. It recommends a dialogic model of the teacher as ethnographer, after the interlocutory model proposed for anthropological study by the writings of James Clifford and others. The paper draws on material from three years' teaching experience in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and recommends a model of classroom as 'society,' comprised of both students and teachers. It views the results of prolonged classroom interaction as a concrete 'utterance' in the Bakhtinian sense, and explores the textual representation of this dialogic relationship.

LE PROFESSEUR-ETHNOGRAPHE: NÉGOCIATION DE L'IDENTITÉ DANS UNE COMMUNAUTÉ D'ÉTUDIANTS DANS LE NORD DE CHYPRE

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article illustre la représentation qu'un professeur d'université en lettres se fait de sa propre pratique en classe. L'auteur recommande un modèle dialogique du professeur en tant qu'ethnologue, d'après le modèle interlocutoire que James Clifford et d'autres auteurs proposent pour les études anthropologiques. L'article s'appuie sur des données recueillies durant trois années d'enseignement dans le Nord de Chypre et propose un modèle en vertu duquel la salle de classe est une société constituée d'élèves et de professeurs. L'auteur considère les résultats d'une interaction en classe prolongée comme une énonciation concrète au sens bakhtinien du terme et examine la représentation textuelle de cette relation dialogique.

Much as two narratives usually do not map neatly onto one another, one party's analysis can only rarely be reduced to the terms of the other.¹
(Rosaldo, 1989, p. 207)

*The participants in this dialogic study are: graduate students Gülben Billuroglu, Timur Kay, Sefika Mertkan, Güler Turker, Baris Yolcukus, Koray Gul, Ülviye Keçecioglu, and Tuncay Dervise. Dr. Robert D'Alonzo and Dr. Johann Pillai, lecturers from Eastern Mediterranean University, also contribute. I am grateful to all participants for their willingness to be involved in this study.

INTRODUCTION

This text is an ethnography of several years' teaching in the northern part of the island of Cyprus (the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [TRNC], as it is known internally and in Turkey). The text explores difference among narratives, and how we often shuffle and organize difference into coherent, even moral, tales. The academic convention of unity of person and voice (one narrative, one point of view) discourages multiple voices, which are conventionally subordinated to the Author by quotation marks, indentation, and ellipsis. Here, I have tried to move away from this convention. The ethnography follows community members engaged in conversation about the text which has become this article, over a six-month period. Embedded in this ethnography are its subjects in time, including me the ethnographer. The shape of the narrative and the style of analysis are premised on my understanding of the teaching of the humanities in Canadian and other educational cultures, and my ambivalence about power in the classroom.

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

In 1997 Eastern Mediterranean University, a mid-sized, English-medium, state-sponsored institution, hired me to teach. I was a newly-minted Ph.D. in English literature with a specialization in late seventeenth-century British polemics. Not surprisingly, I questioned the relevance of a Canadian teaching 'Renaissance Literature' to Turkish Cypriots. I am a product of Canada the post-colonial, and my undergraduate and graduate education focused on the literature and historical culture of Britain. I belong to a Canadian liberal arts culture, watching the current realignment in Canadian faculties toward North American ethnic concerns. The relevance of my specialization is under scrutiny in Canada. How much more closely, I wondered, must it be questioned in the context of a very different colonial environment and history? From a family and cultural context deeply embedded in one Canadian region, I agreed to teach in the TRNC sight unseen, and went armed with a sense of my own vulnerability, stemming in large part from the inaccessibility of the Turkish language to me. This sense was not diminished by the respect and kindness with which I was treated by the university and outside communities. I was *hoca* – teacher – a position of respect, yet at the same time I had to be cared for, at least initially, as one who could not meet my own basic needs: housing, fresh water and food, transportation, banking, communication. In spite of this dependence, my 'otherness' and education gave me authority in the university. All of these factors – my educational and personal backgrounds as well as my life on the island – inform my ethnography of the graduate classroom in North Cyprus and the ideas generated in that classroom about identity and authority.

Turkish Cypriot educational culture is strongly hierarchical, the students deferential and polite; however, during my stay in TRNC, I was always aware that the students shared a tight social network inaccessible to me. My sense of my own ignorance of their social context motivated me to undertake research into Ottoman history. A 'Westerner' living and working in the 'East,' enjoying both the privileges of English-speaking foreign experts and our dependence, I could see the students' broad competence more clearly than I might had we shared personal cultural backgrounds. As a cultural and educational product of the end of English colonization myself, my interest in Cyprus gravitated toward colonial, post-colonial and imperial themes. I decided to use the collaborative pedagogies to which I have been exposed to animate the conversation that follows.

ETHNOGRAPHY, COLONIALISM, AND EDUCATION

The goal of ethnography, as a branch of anthropology, "is to develop clear, communicable understandings and interpretations of human behaviour as social and cultural activity" (Wagner, 1990, p. 196). The ethnographer strives "to make other cultures intelligible" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 1). Ethnography assumes that collectives of people share characteristics that can be represented in an act of writing; in fact, ethnography is bound inexorably to the act of writing.² Although the term has roots in anthropology, ethnography now enjoys wide interdisciplinary force, which means that 'classroom' is being added to the list of potential sites of analysis, assuming that a collection of students and teacher(s) share, if not a 'culture', then some sort of representable characteristic.³ The 'classroom' includes students, a teacher, and someone doing the representing, perhaps the teacher herself.

Self-critical ethnography examines the place of the ethnographer within the narrative, the teacher within the classroom, the teacher as ethnographer. As part of this reevaluation of relationships, self-critical ethnography encourages 'writing back', where participants, the 'objects of interest' respond to the ethnographer's text, which response provokes responses in turn; a dialogue:⁵

If we insist on interpreting other people's interpretations, at the very least, we are obligated to allow them the space to respond. At the very most, we stand to learn far more than we ever bargained for. (Brettell, 1993a, p. 21)

Multiple responses don't map easily; at best they read like dialogues or conversations. But difference, and a strong narrative presence, help to complicate cultures, weakening the force of objectifying, homogenizing accounts. The question of power relations is pivotal in ethnography, as it is central to the experience of any teacher. Cultural (or classroom) description, the attempt to represent a relationship in text form, "is properly experimental and ethical," balancing desire for objectivity with concern for

the relationship between self and other (Clifford, 1986a, p. 2). This style of ethnography describes culture only provisionally, and subjectively. It is a process of negotiation and contestation rather than of generalization, and the ethnographer is a self-conscious explorer of this shifting cultural identity. In this holistic definition of culture and ethnography the ethnographer is an agent; she helps shape, both as participant and writer, the nexus in which she operates.

Objectification – constraining other human beings, in all their complexity and individuality, within reductionist, simplistic forms – most often occurs when cultures are simplified for the sake of representation or study. Talal Asad calls this

. . . the textualization of other cultures, that encourages the construction of diagrammatic answers to complex cultural questions, and that is well-suited to arranging foreign cultural concepts in clearly marked heaps of 'sense' and 'nonsense.' Apart from being easy to teach and to imitate, this style must surely be at a premium in an established university that aspires to *standards* of scientific objectivity. Is the popularity of the style, then, not a reflection of the kind of pedagogic institution we inhabit? (Asad, 1986, p. 164)

Asad here objects to the self-other opposition implied in the 'objective' representation of other races and nations according to particular academic values, since norms of empirical objectivity evolved in step with imperial expansion by certain powerful cultures. The organization and language of 'scientific' representation consciously or unconsciously reproduces the values implicit in the cultures that established it as a discipline.

SUBJECT-OBJECT, OBSERVER-OBSERVED

In my final year with the university in North Cyprus I embarked on a project to explore, with graduate students, English representations of the Ottoman Empire, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I chose a question to coordinate the work of the group studying "Early Modern Representations of the Ottoman Empire, 1570-1720": what happens when students very familiar with questions of cultural identity both on an academic level and in their daily lives are faced with the history and theory of the representation of certain aspects of 'themselves' as 'the other'? The primary texts offered them a series of images; secondary texts supplied a range of academic interpretation of the images in context; and theoretical texts 'reminded' the students of the political and discursive systems they had been analyzing in an abstract way in the upper-level years of their undergraduate careers.

My colleague, Dr. Robert D'Alonzo, offered a linked graduate course. Of the eight students enrolled in my "Early Modern Representations," five were

also enrolled in “The Mediterranean Appeal of Modernism,” taught by this fellow North American. The five cross-enrolled students were asked to participate in several supplementary gatherings at which we discussed the experiences of investigating one shared aspect of their cultural identities. What did it mean to them to explore Ottoman history and Ottomans as ‘easterners,’ in non-traditional courses, taught by foreign experts? Each student wrote extensively during these supplementary sessions and during the course. The majority of their writings took the form of ‘inksheds’ (Hunt, 1999) in which students were asked to write freely on subjectivity, and in response to particular questions and seminar presentations by other class participants.

This ethnography explores two linked themes about representations of the ‘other’ Mediterranean. In the first case it is the students who are ‘other,’ finding a place in an increasingly diasporic and fractured community. In the words of one, Güler Turker: “The question which always arises: Where am I? Where do I belong? Where’s my home? Do I have a home? Do I belong? If so, where?” Self-definition is difficult in this context, for these students, within a community marginalized both ethnically and politically.

Our exploration of self in community prompted my own question: What is my role in this process of community identity formation? Or, What is the appeal of foreigner as ‘other,’ especially within the Turkish Cypriot academic hierarchy?

OBJECTIFICATION AND AMELIORIZATION

In education, as in critical anthropology, attention has been paid to power structures undergirding the discipline.⁴ A recent guide to *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research* warns that

Mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, . . . part of [hegemonic] . . . oppression. . . . [C]ritical researchers should practice their craft with different principles than mainstream researchers, because the mistaken principles used in mainstream research not infrequently contribute to cultural oppression. (Carspecken, 1996, p. 7)

The educational ethnography proposed by Carspecken and others is a model for emancipatory critical research. It sets for qualitative educational research the explicit goal of ameliorating, of helping to improve, the positions of individuals and communities disadvantaged in hegemonic systems of educational and social organization (Apple, 1996, p. x). The goal of ameliorization has the potential, however, to reproduce the conditions it seeks to relieve. This danger exists due to the ambivalence in many of these models with regard to the subject positions of the ‘observer’ and the ‘observed.’ Kantor (1981) et al. summarize the issue of participant observation as follows:

How much should the researcher be a participant and how much an observer? There are major differences between idiosyncratic accounts . . . and more systematic, objective inquiries. . . . While sharing some traits of participant observation they meet different requirements – the former being aesthetic criteria, and the latter being scientific criteria . . . which must meet certain empirical tests. (Kantor, 1981, p. 302)

Kantor et al. describe two extreme subject positions for the researcher or observer; she can be 'idiosyncratic' or she can be 'objective.' If the ethnographer is 'idiosyncratic' she is 'subjective,' implicated in her account. Her identity, her 'self'-ness, lead to idiosyncratic accounts ("due to individual disposition or susceptibility" [OED]). Subjectivity, presence in a story, renders these stories unreliable according to Kantor's account, fit for "aesthetic" categories. The "systematic and objective" observer position better serves empirical scientific needs.

The presence/absence of the narrator, and the distance that is established between the ethnographer and the community she represents are the most reliable measures of objectification. If we accept Kantor's aesthetic/scientific opposition, the need for reproducibility guarantees the self-other opposition of exploitative models of anthropology. However, this opposition loses its prominence, and its force, when ethnographic work is based in community experience, when rules of 'accuracy' and 'scientific need' are agreed, or at least negotiated, at that same community level. When the narrator's account abandons the 'fuzzy' and difficult work of negotiating shared understanding, for the sake of academic reproducibility, she realigns her relationship to the community she represents.

Educational theory (Carspecken again) explicitly acknowledges the place of the researcher in the model of classroom ethnography, claiming that she should be a "virtual participant." She should try to "assume the insider's perspective," "to learn how to position-take as [her] . . . subjects do," to "privilege" "participant language," to get "inside" the culture being studied (Carspecken, 1996, pp. 98, 140, 142, 189). Principally, he argues that the "longer you are in observational and/or interactive contact with the subjects of your study, the more accurate your hermeneutic inferences will be" (p. 140). The question, then, is this: at what stage does the act of 'observation' and 'interaction' become the act of *being* part of the culture? In other words, in what functional ways is the researcher in Carspecken's model *not* part of the culture being studied? The useful model offered by Carspecken would only be enhanced if the researcher built herself into her research in a way that foregrounded or more overtly acknowledged her role in the creation of the classroom space. In other words, rather than being a 'virtual participant' the researcher, especially if she is a teacher as well, is an integral part of the culture of the classroom.

A teacher/ethnographer who belongs to the culture of the classroom can represent herself in relationship, thus acknowledging the built-in 'self/other' binary implicit within it. At the same time, she must represent herself and other members of the culture dialogically, that is, in the process of communication and culture formation. Kantor might argue that this emphasis on the ephemeral and dialogic nature of culture reduces the cross-disciplinary validity and reproducibility of the results of research. Thus the dialogic model might not be the best option for researchers working primarily to ameliorate disadvantaged classes. One might argue, on the other hand, that a strong presence of the teacher/ethnographer in the text renders its findings more transparent. Readers do not have to guess at the links between the teacher and her students, since one more facet of the cultural experience is present to the reader of the ethnography. The cultural experience becomes a tableau of the classroom in which the teacher and students represent themselves, rather than a picture offered of the students by the teacher or, more commonly, of the teacher and students by an outside expert.

A further objection might be raised, that the ethnographic style is most often employed by academics or other outsiders who are brought into the classroom to observe the students or the interaction between teacher and students. This ethnographer is an outsider by her nature, it might be claimed. She is not part of the culture but rather an observer of the culture. Rosaldo suggests another model. He claims that the researcher

. . . should be meaningfully connected with, rather than utterly detached from, the group under critique. . . . [This] assertion contests the conventional wisdom that idealizes the impartial detached observer. . . . [T]he critic should be socially connected, probably not at the centre of things, but neither a complete stranger nor a mere spectator. In this view, the most powerful members of society make better apologists than critics, and those most marginal either perceive their world through distorted lenses or all too readily cave in to efforts to co-opt them. (Rosaldo, 1986, p.182)

Unless the ethnographer is willing to examine her role in the formation of the culture she studies, what I propose as dialogic investigation and representation cannot occur. Imagining culture as a temporal and geographical space shared by all the real individuals who are present, on the other hand, affords a place or position from which a teacher as researcher can explore her own role and power. This might allow some teachers "disappointed by the failure of much recent research to affect teaching and classroom experience" to undertake their own inquiries about their own classroom (Kantor, 1981, p. 294).

ETHNOGRAPHY, PART 1: A DIALOGUE ABOUT NAMES

NARRATOR: The TRNC occupies the northern third of the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean, and has a largely Turkish-speaking popula-

tion of approximately 200 000 persons. Britain controlled the island from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (1878) until independence (1960). The struggle between the island's Greek-speaking majority and Turkish-speaking minority, and a mainland Greek military coup, destabilized the island and led to military intervention by Turkish forces in the northern part of the island in 1974. The island is divided by a United Nations patrolled no-persons zone running east to west. This border is still prone to sporadic outbursts of violence. Although this ethnography does not address the 'Cyprus Problem' head-on, the island's instability plays a role in every resident's self-understanding.

Outsiders may ask about the choice of names used in this text. My choice of TRNC – Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus – reflects my positioning and that of the students with whom I worked. For us this is the appropriate name, whatever others outside the context may choose to call this much-contested territory. This is not about the world's 'recognition.' I am interested in the way these students self-define, and the place they say they come from is the TRNC.

I do not represent Greek Cypriot voices on the issues of the 'Cyprus Problem' because this article is not a contribution to the conversation about the 'Cyprus Problem,' except tangentially. Some versions of events in the 1960s and 1970s are necessary, because students' histories are instrumental in their current self-understanding. But the 'Cyprus problem' is not the story I want to trace in this article; in fact, I believe time spent retelling and refining these stories of mutual atrocity is almost wholly destructive. Turkish Cypriot narratives of the conflict are familiar 'tape loops;' no more 'true' nor 'false' than similar Greek Cypriot narratives, since 'truth' is not their function. There are few uncontested 'facts' and no 'objective' history of 1950-1980; for me to fudge one would be both counter to my purpose and unethical.

This is a paper about myself and about a group of university students. In order to write about our community, I need to represent our histories, and according to my own ethic must offer their history in their own words, as contentious as I understand these to be. Most Cypriot graduate students weren't alive when the Turks 'invaded' the island in 1974. Their stories are important not as 'facts', 'justifications', or 'uncontested truth' but rather as they effect each person's sense of place now.

AYSE GUL (graduate student, and secondary school teacher): In 1960 the Turkish and Greek sides established the Republic of Cyprus together. The president was Greek and the vice president was Turkish, due to the Greek side's greater population. According to the agreement Turkey, Britain and Greece were the guarantors of the new republic: each country had the right to intercede if the rights of either Greek or Turkish Cypriots were compro-

mised. On 21 December 1963 Greeks began their bloody massacres, with the idea of uniting the whole island with mainland Greece and killing all the Turkish Cypriots. Yet the Greeks were divided in two factions. One part wanted unification immediately, but the other part wanted it silently and slowly. In 1974 mainland Greeks made a military coup against their president, in order to get rid of Turkish Cypriots immediately. They started to kill Turks in huge numbers. At that time Turkey, using its guarantor right, undertook the peace operation of 1974.

NARRATOR Turkish Cypriots comprised an ethnic minority largely under Greek Cypriot control from independence in mid-century through to the Turkish intervention in 1974. I believe Turkey is now actively colonizing the TRNC: Turkish Cypriots depend exclusively on Turkey for political recognition, there are thousands of Turkish soldiers, under Turkish command, permanently stationed on the island, and the mainland has undertaken the organized repopulation of the north with (im)migrants, most from rural Anatolia.

AYSE GUL: As Turkish Cypriots we have never been a colony of Greek Cypriots. Throughout history they have attacked us, they massacred many people, but we never became their colony. And I do not think that we are the colony of Turkey now. We are free in our every choice and we are an independent republic. But I do agree that once we were colonised by Britain.

JOHANN PILLAI (lecturer, Eastern Mediterranean University): The TRNC has a constitution and laws, a presidential government in which all the key posts are held by Turkish Cypriots; there is freedom of entry and exit; all international currencies are accepted in addition to the Turkish lira; the country has its own armed forces and police, its own education system, etc. Nearly all of its citizens are emigrés from Turkey, some from families that came here in 1571, some who came here within the last decade. When they were under attack by the Greeks in the 1950s and 1960s, the Turkish Cypriots asked Turkey to intervene in Cyprus, and they depend for their security and territory on Turkey. The TRNC government consults with Turkey on major foreign policy decisions, because the island is also of strategic importance to Turkey. . . . Your paper at no time mentions Greek colonialism, but implicitly refers to the Turkish Cypriots as victims of Turkish colonialism throughout. So I'm not clear at all on what you mean by "colonialism" . . . in this context – and I have the sense that you are trying to (perhaps unconsciously) force the Turkish Cypriots into the role of colonized underdogs and victims of Turkey . . . so you don't refer at all to the reasons why Turkey intervened in Cyprus or why they are staying, or to the fact that there is an international embargo on North Cyprus orchestrated by the Greeks which has forced the Turkish Cypriots to remain

dependent on Turkey, and put a serious economic strain on Turkey to maintain a defensive force on the island. I understand, of course, that you're trying to steer clear of the political – but you've already stepped into it with the "colonial". . .!

NARRATOR: It is safe to say the island has been in a state of transition for the past 120 years at least, and questions of culture and identity are ever present.

BARIS YOLCUKUS (graduate student): If someone should ask me: Where are you from? I would say I am from North Cyprus, but if someone asked my nationality, I would say Turkish-Cypriot as opposed to a North-Cypriot.

JOHANN PILLAI: First of all, there is no such thing as a generic "Cypriot" – although Greek propoganda would like everyone to believe that there is – and the people who live in the TRNC would not hesitate to self-define as "Turkish Cypriot" – even if they couldn't define exactly what that meant – blood, geography, culture, etc.

ETHNOGRAPHY, PART 2:

A 'MORAL' STORY ABOUT GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE TRNC

NARRATOR: Students in the TRNC speak fluently and competently on the nature of community, and I believe that these students' sophistication arises from their daily interrogation of the idea of Cyprus, and their place within it. Some students were born and raised on the island, others spend part of their year within the large diasporan community established at the time of British control over the island, expanded during the time of Greek-Turkish conflict and still thriving in London. They have read Said and Bhabha on colonialism and grown up as Turkish Cypriots, in most cases never having visited the southern half of the island. They also repeatedly, especially in response to theoretical texts, identify with 'easterners,' the silenced majority: "my ancestors' identity is only available to me in written texts which were not written by them" (Gülben Billuroglu); "I'm interested in exploring how post-colonial Cyprus is" (Koray Gul);

The geographical place we belong to is desired all the time. . . . The courses helped me appreciate where I live. I can now see how beautiful the sea looks at night or how soothing it sounds or how undefinable the undefinable colour of it is during the day. This could be yet another form of orientalism imposed on us by the texts we read in both courses. (Gülben Billuroglu)

There is implied here a level of identification which assumes that the students have made that very tenuous and important connection between the texts, the theory and their own experience. This connection is afforded in part by the modernist and theoretical orientation of the department. This identification may also be a result of the last hundred years of colonization

of Turkish-speaking Cypriots, explicitly under the British, then implicitly under Greek Cypriot majority and now Turkish mainland *de facto* rule. With this awareness, we might add, comes a poignant sense of cultural vulnerability. This sense of uncertainty is another reflection of the political uncertainty that has possessed the island at least since its independence from British rule:

I always wondered if, when I was born in my Turkish Cypriot family I was taken accidentally by an Italian family, what national identity I would have then? A Turkish, a Cypriot, an Italian, another? (Koray Gul)

I think most of the students here are hybrid, which is very important when classified as 'Cypriot'. To what extent are we 'Cypriot'? I have a problem with this classification, although to a certain extent I self-define myself as 'Turkish' Cypriot'. Don't forget we are in ^{North}Cyprus. (Güler Turker)

The superscript insertion of 'Turkish' and 'North' added interlinearly later by Turker signals her shifting identity position within Cypriot culture, and this uncertainly is intensified by her own self-identification as a British citizen, born and raised in London but married to a Cypriot and living on the island.

GÜLER TURKER (graduate student): You stated that my husband is a Turkish Cypriot. He is, but he was born and raised in Turkey, and when he came over (around 14 years of age) he then became a Turkish Cypriot. This is important I think, for most of his values and traditional beliefs are more inherent from the Turkish culture in Turkey, than that of the Turkish Cypriot culture. Just a note.

BARIS YOLCUKUS: The designation Turkish Cypriot has many problems, because this means that there is little or no difference, other than geographical location, between a Turk from Istanbul, Konya, Trabzon, Hatay, or Cyprus. But, is it just a language and religion that we share, or is it more than that?

NARRATOR: While hyper-engaged with identity politics, students appear selectively unaware that the theory of orientalism objectifies them. When we move from the academic life of students and imagine their troubled identity as 'easterners', there is emphatic refusal to associate themselves with an intellectual construct:

I don't think North Cyprus part of the East because I believe her people are more modern than other eastern countries; for me, the 'other' refers to Eastern people, such as the Arabs, the Algerians, and the Ottomans; but I still have difficulty imagining how the Ottomans fit the pattern. (Ülviye Keçecioglu)

GÜLER TURKER: I don't agree with this characterization. Although Cyprus geographically is on the border of the EAST/WEST dichotomy, we can't say

that the “Arabs” are ‘more’ eastern based on the justification that North Cyprus’s people are more modern. Ridiculous! This just implies the further mystification, re-mystification if you like, of the ‘east’ in a refusal to be in the position of the orient, which is after all a self-created position.

NARRATOR: This refusal to identify with the ‘mysterious east’ might offer a preliminary answer to the question of what influence a day-to-day uncertainty about political identity has on those who can articulate this uncertainty. In the face of colonial history we can claim that personal identity resists co-option by the theory of orientalism and the powerlessness it implies.

This narrative addresses cultural identity of students, and their relationships with ‘outside’ cultural authority. Students questioned our reliability as academic authorities on the ‘east.’ Specifically, the courses asked students whether their identity as cultural descendants of Ottoman Turks living in the area of study afforded them an intellectual or other perspective lacking in us, their North American instructors. Their responses suggest that if we link Cypriot ideas of belonging to the history of colonial domination, we might ascribe the institutional power of the academy to domination as well, as a product of combined Turkish and Euro-American origin, perspective, and privilege. Students daily face a conflict between a Turkish understanding of education, specifically university education, and the Euro-American optic of their faculty. The department depends on skeptical foreign faculty for its intellectual orientation, while it depends on Turkey for financial and administrative infrastructure. Some students distrust Turkish- language, state-sponsored high-school education, and all ascribe vociferously to the text-based Enlightenment ideology of intellectual rationalism professed by foreign faculty. This means, first of all, that studying means studying written texts: “The texts for the study of Ottoman history are very limited; therefore, if I were to investigate my own history, then I would be looking at the same written texts for they are all that exist” (Gülben Billuroglu). “All the documents belonging to the Ottomans are abolished or unreadable; they burned things that didn’t suit them” (Ülviye Keçecioglu). Further, enlightenment rationalism teaches the students that their individual intellectual freedom protects them from indoctrination:

Being taught by people who have independent ideas although they are from Western cultures does not mean that we are being fed orientalism; rather we are being shown various ways of thinking and seeing, which cannot be called a ‘bad’ thing. The final choice is still ours. (Gülben Billuroglu)

The students describe objectivity and choice as privileges of those, including themselves, educated within the ‘Western’ liberal intellectual tradition. This education renders them vulnerable to feelings of cultural alienation

("if there is a collective unconscious belonging to a particular city or nation how does an outsider fit in to this collective consciousness? Can s/he fit in at all?" [Baris Yolcukus]). Within this rationalist, individualist intellectual tradition, they are also taught, the cultural background of the interpreter has little effect on the ideal hermeneutic process:

I was taught Cyprus history for six years in high school and did not learn a single thing because the teachers did not have foreign ideas – ideas of their own. In university I took a Cyprus history course taught by a Sri Lankan teacher (raised and educated largely in the United States) with ideas of his own – foreign ideas – and learnt all that I had not been able to learn in six years. It was not where he was from but his ideas that made us see what our history consisted of. (Gülben Billuroglu)

So we have a text-based history steeped for these students in a rationalist ideology that affords them the belief that they make individual choices based on their own understanding measured against Enlightenment paradigms.

This belief in autonomy is bound to conflict with an 'official' history based in a Turkish ideology very different from the one shared by foreign faculty. Students distrust the Turkish history they are taught in high school, due to a combination of ambivalence about the mainland and the skepticism encouraged by the faculty teaching liberal arts:

In high school all I heard about was the powerful Turks; do you think historians in this country would reflect the bad side of their community? (Koray Gul)

I hated history and geography at high school because it was too ideological. (Gülben Billuroglu)

At high school I received the point of view of the government workers (teachers) hence the government itself. These views are very limiting and tyrannical. (Timur Kay)

AYSE GUL: I should ask whether any nation's history is written completely objectively, without reflecting any national subjective thought or bias? Any cultural description is inevitably subjective, fragmentary, and incomplete. In the light of this I can argue that any nation's history is inevitably subjective.

JOHANN PILLAI: Most countries have state education systems in the high schools, which promote their own state heroes and heroism, and wave flags around; and North Cyprus is no exception. It is inevitable that a population under attack will try to organize its own schools to promote its solidarity in terms of history and identity

NARRATOR: Those students who react negatively to Turkish state history do so for several reasons: they claim explicitly that they are reacting against the

colonizer; they are working within an academic framework that encourages rational skepticism; and they are being taught by faculty who are products of this Enlightenment understanding. These students are engaged by questions of their own identity and their relationship to intellectual 'Western' ideas and individuals with whom they come into contact in the course of their graduate careers. Linking courses and focusing on the history of representations of Ottoman history provided the students with a forum in which to explore and articulate the relationship between certain aspects of personal, national, and ethnic identity. There appears to be in these students a strong will to community that mitigates their Turkish colonial present and British colonial past but draws them toward the Enlightenment ideology professed by their university lecturers.

This ethnography is a "serious fiction" (Clifford 1996:10). Its themes, determined by my place in the hermeneutic circle, are "'belonging' in an orientalist paradigm," and "the hierarchy of power/knowledge within the academy." In contrast to the inductive assumption that analyzing ethnographic data implies ranging broadly over the largest possible body of evidence searching for trends, this ethnography *proves* something, is *about* something, "simultaneously describe[s] real cultural events and make[s] additional, moral, ideological, and even cosmological statements" (Clifford, 1986b, p. 98). In the language of educational ethnography, the story makes "universalizing outsider claim[s]" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 189). I have teased out of the data on graduate students in the TRNC a morally charged story about the history and influence of colonialism. But the shape of my universalizing claims, moral statements or other organizing principles depends on my position *vis a vis* the subject with which I am engaged.

ETHNOGRAPHY 3: NARRATIVE, SYNECDOCHE, COLONIALISM: ANOTHER LOOK

I organized a second round of written comments on the draft text into three categories, as they offer commentary on the text's rhetorical and political claims: the first concerns the narrative function; the second questions ethnographic representation as synecdochal; the third addresses colonialism.

Baris Yolcukus reacted to the text's controlling narrative presence:

The part that surprised me most is the depiction of yourself and your own problems in Cyprus, until now I assumed that the ethnographer studies subjects in an 'alien' culture but with this essay I realized that the ethnographer becomes an *object* of study as well.

The conventions of ethnographic narrative (one person, one story) are difficult to give over, even for students whose training affords them the opportunity to interrogate rhetorical stance and persona as a matter of

course. But the presence of the observer as narrator is part of the classroom represented in the text; both ethnography and classroom are comprised of students, teacher and teacher-observer. This works in the face of “the presumption that researchers and practitioners are different kinds of people doing different kinds of things. . . that the former engage in inquiry and the latter in actions.” (Wagner, 1990, pp. 211-212). If the primary function of educational ethnography is to improve the culture of the classroom, and if the classroom culture is created by all participants, then the most effective use for this ethnographic text itself is as a provisional and tentative commentary on the culture, and as an impetus for further dialogue.

Baris also questioned the composition of the group, how ‘typical’ the voices are:

The opinions and ideas of certain students are fairly represented. Yet I am just wondering if the ideas of a few students have become a representation of *all* Turkish Cypriot literature students at EMU.

He resists the objectifying classificatory impulse in ethnography by suggesting his point of view is not necessarily that of other students. The question of synecdochal representation – the part for the whole — is central to ethnographic research: how do we claim that the voices we quote are ‘truly’ representative of a larger whole?⁶ In this story the ‘whole’ is fragmented by diachronic quotation (through integrated quotation and later additions) autobiography, polemic, history, and cultural theory, controlled by a self-conscious narrative. Can the results be replicated? Certainly not exactly, but that’s not the point of the study. The culture is an idiosyncratic interdependent whole, one that includes students, teacher and ethnographer. The study makes a finite statement only about the practice of educational ethnography itself: there is no study that will define, categorically and definitively, how graduate students integrate their academic with their day-to-day lives, how multi-cultural classrooms work, or even how Eastern Mediterranean University students understand their university culture. In the words of Gul, “it is impossible to reach to a completely objective definition of any culture; any cultural description is inevitably subjective, fragmentary, and incomplete.” This does not mean, on the other hand, that the description is useless; it is one tool for understanding – not a complete understanding – how Turkish Cypriot graduate students and foreign faculty members imagine their community.

I use the word ‘community’ advisedly here, to introduce the final theme from responses, that of the colonization of the TRNC by Turkey, a claim that for some Turkish Cypriot readers at least is the most contentious one I make. It is in this claim that the traditional ethnographic self-other binary, observer *vs.* observed stance is at its most transparent. In other words, traditional ethnographic method would allow me, as a professional observer, two options: I could make this claim without acknowledging objections by some respondents; alternatively, I could not make the claim at all, denying

what I believe to be central to the experiences of teaching and learning in North Cyprus. The tension between respect for other voices and the critical perspective of “just” ethnography must animate both “fieldwork” and the “writing process” (Horwitz, 1993, p. 137). The claims I make are provisional, supported and contested by objections and alternative representations of the relationship. The conversation is not closed.

NOTES

1. For another example of a polyphonic dialogic text in ethnography, see Watkins (1995). See also Pearce and Chen, 1989, p. 124; Brettell, 1993a, pp. 2, 21.
2. James Clifford is one scholar of the linguistic turn in ethnography. See among other of his writings “On Ethnographic Allegory.”
3. On the evolution of ethnography of education in North America and its relationship to the ameliorative function in educational research see Smith, 1992, pp. 186-188 and Rosaldo, 1989, p. 38.
4. On the reshaping of anthropology and other social sciences as academic disciplines, see Rosaldo, 1989, pp. x, 21, 34-35; Horwitz, 1993, pp. 132-133; Clifford, 1986a; Brettell, 1993a, p. 1.
5. This conforms to the Bakhtinian model of a dialogic relationship, in which “any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe” (Bakhtin p.69). Poignant implications for a dialogic researcher-‘subject’ relationship can be seen in the exchange between Harry Wolcott, 1996 & 1997, and Daisy Sewid-Smith, 1996.
6. On the synchdotal relationship in ethnography, see Atkinson, 1990, pp. 82-104.
7. Provided by Dr. Johann Pillai.

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