Can There Be A 'Halfie' Ethnography?

Clifford (1986) once argued that every ethnography can only represent partial truths. In this sense and in a Nietzscchan way of thinking all of the truths are possibly made by powerful "lies" of exclusion and rhetoric: "Even the best ethnographic texts - serious, true fictions - are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them in ways their authors cannot fully control" (Clifford 1986: 7). This today’s common assumption among anthropologists is perfectly illustrated in Malinowski's posthumously published "A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term" (1967) where the homogenous picture that the polish born anthropologist draws of the Trobriand society by representing "the native's point of view" became scattered and questionable by his frustration with the indigenous, the author’s sexual fantasies with the Trobriand women, the officially denied relationship to other white people in the field and his homesickness. Yet, the publication of his diary initiated on the one side the breakdown of epistemological and moral confidence, pre- and intended in the "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" and on the other fruitful debates about how anthropologists represent the Other (see "Writing Culture" and "Othering" debate).

In the following essay I want to explore what indicators are responsible for making systems of truths partial and in which ways and under which occurring difficulties 'native', 'halfie' and also feminist anthropologists are dealing with constructing an Other that they seek to represent through

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1 According to Clifford the production of ethnographic texts is determined in at least six ways: 1. contextually (since it creates a meaningful social milieux), 2. rhetorically (it uses and is used by expressive conventions), 3. institutionally (one writes within, against specific traditions, disciplines, audiences), 4. generically (an ethnography is usually distinguishable from a novel etc.), 5. politically (the authority of the author is unequally shared and sometimes contested), 6. historically (all the above conventions and constraints are changing) (Clifford 1986: 6)

2 Ethnographic fiction, according to Clifford, can be understood through the Latin root of "fiction" (fingere) that can be translated by "something made or fashioned", and more in the context of ethnographic texts, something "made up" (Clifford 1986: 6).

3 I will use the term Other in its capitalized form referring to Lacan (1966) who makes a distinction between the other, who resembles the self, which, for example the child discovers when it looks in the mirror and that will become the basis of the ego and the Other, which he calls the great Other, in whose gaze the colonized "subject" gains identity in an ideological framework.

4 see Clifford and Marcus (1984)

5 "Othering" is a way of defining and securing one’s own positive identity through the stigmatization of an "other". Whatever the markers of social differentiation that shape the meaning of "us" and "them", whether they are racial, geographic, ethnic, economic or ideological, there is always the danger that they will become the basis for a self-affirmation that depends upon the denigration of the other group (www.cwrl.utexas.edu~ulrich/rww03/othering.htm)
themselves. Are they, due to their intimate knowledge, in a more advantageous position in contrast to their non-native counterparts? Or does their "self-shifting" make them blind for an etic perspective?

Inside the academic sphere what kind of assumptions are linked to terms such as 'native' or 'halfie'? To begin with the tempting topic of truth: How can we deconstruct systems of written truths, what are the indicators that make truths partial, how can the realities of others be represented while acknowledging their partial truth?

Concerning the intellectual writer, Foucault (2000) stresses, that the scientist is occupying a certain position which is linked to an apparatus of truth. Being an intellectual, scientists have to take into account their three-fold specificity: that of their class position; the condition of their life and work linked to their impact as an intellectual which includes the field of research, the place in a laboratory, the political demands to which the scientists submit or against which they rebel; and lastly the specificity of the politics of truth in our societies that allows their operating and struggling with/against a regime of truth.

What Foucault insights illuminate for our topic at stake, is the important issue of positionality of anthropologists. The scientist's embedded being in several systems of power in his or her personal and professional life, highly affects both, the conducted fieldwork as well as the written ethnographic product. However, the ethnographic outcome is not just about the anthropologist. Rather, what and how the observer perceives and in which manner experiential and written work is done depends on the relationship to his co-researchers in the field.

Crapanzano (1980) stresses that we do not get to know the people that we study and their culture. Instead he questions the nature of our ethnographic description, which he does not view as the reality of another culture but as "the negotiated reality" that has been created through the ethnographic encounter between the anthropologists and the co-researchers. This negotiated reality

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6 According to Foucault (1980), until the the period of Renaissance people had assumed that language reflected reality,  

7 I borrowed the term co-researcher from Bell's "Yes Virginia, there is a feminist ethnography" in order to avoid the term 'informant', 'observed' or 'subject' which I all find derogative in terms of establishing a hierarchical relationship in the field (that the written text is later gaining its content from) which can not be assumed. In contrast, co-researcher suggests a situated, contextualized and partial ethnography.
is neither that of the anthropologist nor that of the co-researcher, simply because the presence of the anthropologist and his interest in the respective culture alters the field situation in general; it motivates the members of the culture to be reflexive and as I want to add, in doing so representing themselves partly more ideally than they actually act in all day life.

Here it becomes obvious that the transmitted, written truth is not just partial and strongly affected by the positionality of the anthropologist but also a product of dialogical relations that are negotiated. If the anthropologist is part of the culture he or she explores, the dialogical relations are appear under a different light. Different 'native' or 'halfie' authors (Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar 1996; Jacobs-Huey; Narayan 1993; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984) were concerned with the question of representation a culture from a position of intimate affinity. Can an ethnography by a 'native' be closer to the reality of the people that are studied? How authentic is the representation of somebody who is considered to be an "insider"? Can there be a fixity of a distinction between 'native' and non-native" anthropologists?

'Native' Anthropologists

Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) argues that 'native' anthropologists are in a "far more advantageous position in understanding the emotive dimensions of behaviour" (p. 584). In the view of the 'halfie' anthropologist, 'native' anthropologists have intimate knowledge of daily routines that are exceedingly difficult for outsiders to observe" (ibid. 584f). He further suggests that the 'native' approach might be more successful since anthropologists do not have to deal with informants that perform for them. This assumption implies that the border between 'native' anthropologists and their co-researchers is broken by the intimate knowledge of the 'native' anthropologists while the border between the 'non-native' anthropologists and their co-researchers is expressed through a cultural wall that the foreign professional will never be able to overcome due to his or her heritage.

According to Narayan, this highly essential assumption is ambiguous since even if 'native' anthropologists, or 'halfies' have this intimate knowledge, they are not always aware of it. Whether people wash their hands in specific ways or treat their illnesses, is not necessarily an observation that is obvious for the 'whole', 'halfie' or 'native' anthropologist. And what about regional differences in cultural habitus? Seeing it from Crapanzano’s perspective, its not just the reality between the 'non-native', but also that of the 'native' anthropologist and and his or her studied community that is negotiated (see also Jacobs-Huey 2002). Hence, despite their familiarity with the culture, 'native' anthropologists are not necessarily having more insights because of their apparent insider-knowledge or producing truths that are less partial.

Narayan, being a "multiplex identity" herself, argues against the fixity of a distinction between
'native' and "non-native" anthropologist that suggest dichotomies such as outsider/insider or observer/observed. Instead, she favours a perspective that views each anthropologist "in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" (Narayan 1993: 671). The scholar pays also attention to the historical perspective of the term. The paradigm that polarizes 'native' anthropologists and "real" anthropologists derives from the colonial setting in which the discipline of anthropology evolved. During this period the natives were viewed as genuine natives and the anthropologist was believed to be objective. To access the "native's point of view", the anthropologist used participant observation as a method while choosing a "chief informant" that also might be trained in anthropological modes of data collection in order to reveal the society "from within". Only those who would receive the full professional initiation into a disciplinary fellowship would become "native anthropologists" (ibid.). As Jones noted, these 'native' anthropologists would only be admitted into the circle of professional discourse because they were potential tools of data collection for white anthropologists (Jones 1970: 252 cited in Narayan 1993: 672). In regard to this Foucaultian interpretation, it becomes evident how the term 'native' is associated with different places and sites of power. However, Appadurai demonstrates how "natives" in anthropological discourse are not just tied to particular places but also to particular ideas: one goes to India to study hierarchy, to the circum-Mediterranean region to study honor and shame, to China to study ancestor worship, forgetting that "'essences' of particular places reflect the temporary localization of ideas from many places" (Appadurai 1988: 46, emphasis in original).

Concerning the fact that the contemporary global flows of migrations, mass media, politics, money, trade, and ecology challenged the notion of authentic cultures borders and the exotic local (Ferguson and Gupta 1992), how can serve us the term 'native' and how is it perceived today? In the following I want to describe a case of a southwest German city where being 'native' were believed to be such an advantages for anthropologists that it became their disadvantage.

In Germany students who study Anthropology/Ethnology are obliged to attain classes in a foreign (mostly non-european) language in order to achieve language skills for their future studies. However, the Anthropology Department in Tübingen/Germany decided that it was no option for students to achieve credits in a language course of their own mother-language. For students whose parents immigrated to Germany, this meant that, whether they would speak the language of their parents home country or not, they could get no credits for these language course. As it turned out later, this treatment has been a breach of examination regulations (Kechaja 2008: 18f).

The same department was annually organising a short-term fieldwork for a selected group of students. In the year 2007 Trabzon/Turkey and the Ukrainian Krim were chosen by the department as two possible sites for the students to conduct their first professional experiences in the field. As
the students decided on one of these two sites and after the results of the application were published by the Head of the Department, it turned out that two Turkish and Kurdish students who were applying as 'native' students in the field, were refused to go on the trip with their student fellows. According to the head of the department, "natives" would have advantages in the field relating to their mother-tongue (even if they were not capable of speaking properly and were born in Germany). It was argued that the equal approach for the other students would not be guaranteed. After protests of the 'native' students and the publication of an article of a native undergraduate in an ethnographic newspaper for student anthropologists, the head of the department decided to cancel both of the trips and offered instead an organised fieldwork to Azerbaijan where everybody would have the possibility to participate (Kechaja 2008: 18f). Yet, ironically, the common language in Azerbaijan is Azeri-Turkish a language that is widely understood by Turkish speakers.

In this case a 'native' was not just considered to be a member of his or her native speaker fellows but was rather excluded of an anthropological venture. Would German students with German parents who were somehow able to speak proper Turkish, also have been excluded of the trip? In this particular case 'native' anthropologists are, in the sense of Ohnuki-Tierney (1984), perceived as insiders, thus having a distinctive approach to their people and field of study, despite of their usually in qualitative social science highly valued complex and different backgrounds that challenge a general notion of a 'native' identity.

As Foucault remarks, "it is necessary to think of the political problems of intellectuals not in terms of 'science' and 'ideology', but in terms of 'truth' and 'power'' (Foucault 2000: 42f). What the french philosopher stresses here is that the intellectual is not supposed to criticise the ideological contents linked to science, or that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology but of being aware of the possibility of constituting new politics of truth. In this perspective the aim is of detaching the power of truth from the forms of social, economic and cultural hegemony within it operates. In the Tübingen case the cultural hegemony was demonstrated through the head of the department who clearly draw a line between "us" and the Other and mediated "natives" as people with distinct abilities that would work to their advantage.

An alternative and less clear cut perception of the 'native' anthropologist" is emphasised by Behar (1993) who talks about the impact of women of color on feminist anthropology. African-American women as Hurston were often treated more as "native informants" rather than scholars of their own rights (Behar 1993: 317). Assuming the 'native' being the Other again, this Other here, is not even acknowledged of being capable of being a scholar.

Again another point of view is suggested by Rabinov who considers the hermeneutical issue during fieldwork as "the comprehension of the self by the detour of the comprehension of the other" (1977: 5).
5). While he does not refer to psychology of any nor the Cartesian self or the Freudian self, he refers to the "culturally mediated and historically situated self which finds itself in a continuously changing world of meaning" (Rabinow 1977: 6). Here, the partiality of the observer is recognized. Standing on shifting grounds makes clear, that every view is a view from somewhere, every act of speaking is a speaking from somewhere possibility for an easy slide into subjectivity for 'native' and 'halfie' anthropologists.

Taking this three different notions of a 'native' anthropologist into account and speaking hypothetically: Can a person from a Turkish worker class family living in the outskirts of a bigger German city who managed, despite the occurring difficulties and prejudices, to get an education and study his own community be equated with a member of a privileged group in Turkey who had an excellent education in a elite school and was send abroad through parental funding to study anthropology yet returns home in order to conduct fieldwork among the less privileged of his "culture"? What about anthropologists who have dedicated themselves to long-term fieldwork, returning year after year, growing with the group they visit (Narayan1993: 677f)? Did they just "go native" or did they even become native by being initiated into the group? Yet it is stressed, that even the most experienced 'native' anthropologist can not know everything about his culture (Narayan 1993: 678). The indian scholar proposes that every anthropologist exhibits what Rosaldo has termed a "multiplex subjectivity" with many cross-cutting identifications (Rosaldo 1989: 168-195). This "multiplex subjectivity" of 'native' scholars are highlighted in the case of 'halfie' anthropologists.

'Halfie' Anthropologists

What do anthropologists mean when they talk about "halfies"? Is it someone that has parents from two different cultures? Is it somebody who bears a somehow splitted identity due to his two affiliations and homes? Am I a 'halfie' because my mother is German and my father Turkish?

German and Turkish are the official terms that nation-states use in order to assure their citizens that they exist legally and that they are equipped with a national identity that tights them to a specific status, diverse rights and rules. Even, as it is possible in some of these nation-states, people become the potential owners of two passports that contest two official "homes", identities were and are more complex than just revealing two sides of an individual heritage. Talking about multiplex identities, might it be of importance in my case, that my mothers father was Bavarian and that my mother`s mother was born in the Carpates of Romania as a Siebenbürger-Saxonian who claim their own ethnic identity? Is it worth mentioning that my grandfather moved with her to Germany after the Second World War where they married and raised four children that also spent a lot of time in
Romania, including my mother who tells stories? How does it affect my 'halfie' identity that I experienced both of my parents only in the first two years of my life when we lived neither in Germany nor in Turkey but in France and where I had more contact to animals and neighbours than I had to my parents? Moreover, do I have to stress considering my heritage, that my father left Turkey when he was 18 and never turned back except for two short visits? Does it make my father less turkish, when we take into account that he has a German passport thanks to a fake-marriage or that he does not identify himself as a Turk although his male ancestors were involved in establishing CHP (Cumhurriyet Halk Partisi), the Party of Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey which earned him a freak-status among the members of his Turkish family? Or that the mother of his mother was Egyptian who came to Turkey because she did not see any way to survive with her four kids in Alexandria after her husband, being a military doctor, died in the First World War? Does it help to know that my father was raised in a liberal muslim house where women were not obliged to wear scarfs and that he recently converted to Buddhism? However, I mostly grew up in Germany without my father. With the age of 25, I visited Turkey for the first time and came back one year later to live and study a year in Istanbul. As a result of my own identity quest, is it inevitable for me now to conduct fieldwork in Turkey? During my stay I learnt to speak Turkish for the first time in my life. Can I be a 'halfie' when I was not even raised bilingually?

Using the term 'halfie' presupposes an essential heritage based on a national bias that is also implied with the term 'native'. Like 'insider' or 'indigenous', it suggests that an unproblematic insider perspective is possible. But as several authors stressed before (Behar 1980; Fernandez 1980), in order to be reflexive, rather than simply reflective about the collective self, one must achieve the sense from distancing from self. In reference to Foucault, Abu-Lughod (1991) stresses that "halfies" produce not just partial truths but also positioned truths since they position themselves with reference to two communities. While representing the Other, they also represent themselves. This does not just blur the border between self and other but also implies a complex awareness of reception which seems to be both, challenge and dilemma, because 'halfies', as feminist anthropologists, are forced to squarely confront the politics and ethics of their representations. And this, as Abu-Lughod comments, does not just affect the 'halfie' but also the 'wholeie': "two halves cannot adequately account for the complexity of an identity in which multiple countries, regions, religions and classes may come together" (Narayan 1993: 673).

The complexities negotiating identity in the field are also highlighted by several authors such as Williams (1996) who was considered to be "skinfolk" but not "kinfolk" or an "educated fool". Moreover, the task of negotiating one's own identity as a 'native' or 'halfie' anthropologist is further complicated by the possibility that certain co-researchers in the field may attribute certain identities
in the field for strategic purposes (Jacobs-Huey 2002). For Williams (1996), it became clear after a while in the field, that her own status as an educated Africa American scholar served to bolster her hostess’s affluence and self-ascribed elite-status. Here again, the nativeness of scholars becomes insufficient when it comes to issues of class. Yet, being able to enter a community that shares some of the same cultural patterns, ergo symbolic capital (Bordieu 1991), as the researcher, such as religion, language, customs etc., the relationship stays nevertheless hierarchical. This is also due to the fact that these 'native' anthropologists are not, just because they are familiar with the cultural patterns they are confronted in the field, always equally sensitive to context-dependant discourses or free from romanticization, which might affect their "success" in the field. Another risk that Jacobs-Huey (2002) mentions is, that even if the observers are acting cautious against romanticization they might fail to expose 'home' as socially and culturally constructed and an imagined (Anderson 1991) concept. These assumption communicate the blurred border between the self and the other. An approach that supported the destruction of the distinction between self and other is the feminist scholarship.

"Writing against culture"

Feminist scholarship questioning "woman as Other" destabilized the category of 'Other' as well as 'self' which is split between the intersection of systems of difference according to positionality, audience and power (Abu-Lughod 1991, Strathern 1987). In this sense feminism can be understood as politics rather than a methodology (Kirby 1993).

Abu-Lughod (1991) convincingly argues how feminists and 'halfie' anthropologists are especially sensitive to the politics of representation and the dangerous tendency in anthropology to "Otherize". Reflecting and reconsidering the conventional nature and political effects of the distinction between the self and the Other, she questions the value of the concept culture on which the distinction depends. Being a 'halfie' herself she predominantly sees two issues at stake. The first is the common conviction among anthropologists that 'native' anthropologists cannot be objective about their own society (a fear that might have played an indirect role in the mentioned case of the 'native' anthropology students in Tübingen). The second problem, in her point of view, seems to be that western anthropologists and 'halfies' that study non-western culture are still more easily recognized as anthropologists than for instance native Americans who study Americans. (Abu-Lughod 1991: 141). This worry suggests that even if the anthropologist wants to close the gap between the self and the Other, is defined as a being who must stand apart from the Other.

This is exactly what she criticises: "the outsider self never simply stands outside. He or she stands in a definite relation with the Other of the study, not just as a Westerner, but as a Frenchman in
Algeria during the war of independence, an American in Morocco during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, or an Englishwoman in postcolonial India. What we call the outside is a position within a larger political-historical complex" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 141, emphasis in original). Because culture is the essential tool of anthropology and because anthropology helps to construct, produce and maintain this Other and support fundamental methods of enforcing inequality, Abu-Lughod is suggesting to write against culture.

Said highlights the paradox of cultural translation as a project that seeks to render difference: to convert them [the other] into topics of discussion or fields of research is necessarily to change them into something fundamentally and constitutively different (Said 1989: 210, cites in Kirby 1993: 131). As he points it out: "Translation is always a transformation" (ibd.). As Said, feminists as Kirby do not believe that this Other transformation is something that we can abandon through some salutary humility even if a lot of feminist and postmodern ethnography is situated around the topic how the ethnographer can escape from his or her imperial position. Different ways of writing ultimately engender different ways of producing an object as knowable. Since all of them involve an exercise of power, it would be naive to think that we could get out of the power and knowledge discourse simply by writing differently (Kirby 1993: 131).

Thus, 'halfies', as well as feminist anthropologists, confronting us with the notion that the relationship between self and other can not be one innocent of power. Sexism, racial or ethnic discrimination in everyday or academic life towards an so called Other who is embodied by the feminist scholars and 'halfies', is not just a matter of experiencing the difference but of experiencing inequality. However, Abu-Lughod's critique is of structural rather than of experiential nature. She argues, that women, blacks and people of the Non-West have been historically constituted as others by "white men". By speaking for them the Other becomes a sign and instrument of their power.

**Conclusion**

In the paper I tried to outline that the terms 'natives' and 'halfie' are highly problematic because of their historical/(post-)colonial context and its essentialist implication. Moreover it appears insufficient for who live in a contemporary globalized world. Who can considered to be 'native'? Or asking differently regarding to Narayan (1993: 678): Are we not all natives, insiders and indigenous somewhere even if that does not appear to be so in the context of fieldwork? The social roles and statuses researchers are attributed to but also the positionalities they comply or contest themselves illuminate two problematic issues. Firstly, that the relationship due to class differences might easily evolve between researcher and co-researchers. Secondly, that the

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8 Kirby (1993) identifies "othering" as the identifying symptom of academic discourses in general.
assumption of a native as an 'insider' is an insufficient descriptor for the way native and to a certain extent also 'halfie' scholars negotiate certain identities in the field.

It seems that in order to reassure oneself as an anthropologist who’s bread and butter are cultures that an Other has to established. With this transmitted power of truth the Otherizing becomes an professionalized method of producing and maintaining inequality. As it has been stressed, especially by feminist scholarship an hierarchical relationship between researcher and their co-researchers are inevitable. Terms as 'halfie' and 'native' anthropologist, despite their attempt to break the border between 'us' and 'them', are not capable of fully abandoning this wall, since it is not an ethnic wall but also one of class (and gender). However, it is again due to the system of truth that the anthropologist is embedded in, if, by outlining the negotiated encounters and relationship in the field, the system of power deconstructs and reinvents itself or becomes a vehicle of a more horizontal relationship between the researchers and their co-researchers. In this sense I want to conclude: Yes, there can be a 'halfie' ethnography but only in the inventive heads of anthropologists who try to systematize on paper their difficulties in the field.
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