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1-2

TALKING ABOUT AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: AN INTERVIEW WITH AHMET ATAY

Ahmet Atay'la Otoetnografi Üzerine Bir Görüşme

3

Serpil AYGÜN CENGİZ



Ahmet Atay with the participants
(a screenshot from the course, April 7, 2023)

¹ (Serpil Aygün Cengiz) conducted this interview within the scope of the Research Methods course in the Folklore Department of Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences, on April 7, 2023, in a virtual environment. The interview transcription was completed by Çağdaş Ceyhan, a doctoral student in the Folklore Department. In this virtual meeting, there were also occasional discussions in Turkish; while transcribing the text, the parts in Turkish were translated into English. I would like to express my gratitude to Ahmet Atay for reviewing and enriching the text.

² Ahmet Atay (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University- Carbondale) is a Professor of Global Media and Communication Studies at the College of Wooster. His research focuses on diasporic experiences and cultural identity formations; political and social complexities of city life, such as immigrant experiences; the usage of new media technologies in different settings; and the notion of home; representation of gender, and ethnicity in media; and immigrant experiences in cyberspace, and critical communication pedagogies. He uses media, visual, and autoethnographic methods. He is the author or the co-editor of several books. His scholarship appeared in several journals and edited books.

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Serpil Aygün Cengiz: The recording has started. Dr. Atay, I first saw you at the beginning of January, between January 3-5, 2023, during the *International Symposium on Autoethnography and Narrative* held in a virtual environment. I was very impressed by your presentation at the symposium. Subsequently, I searched for your written works, and they had a significant impact on me. In this period, with our students and my colleagues, we are studying autoethnography in the “Research Methods” course. Three of the reading texts I selected for the Research Methods course were from a special issue of a journal for which you, together with Devika Chawla, served as editors in 2018. You and Chawla prepared a special issue on “Decolonizing Autoethnography” for the journal of *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*. I had selected one article belonging to you [“Journey of Errors: Finding Home in Academia”], one to Chawla and both of you together [“Introduction: Decolonizing Autoethnography”], and one to Mohan J. Dutta [“Autoethnography as Decolonization, Decolonizing Autoethnography: Resisting to Build Our Homes”] to discuss in class from that special issue, and we read these three articles. In other words, we have an idea about your perspective on autoethnography. Thank you very much for accepting my invitation and coming; we are all very excited.

Ahmet Atay: Thank you.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: We will ask you questions about your writings, but first, could we hear your story? We are curious about your education, the process of becoming an academic, and how you started working on autoethnography.

Ahmet Atay: My story begins in Cyprus. Let's start from there. Of course, first, let me turn on these lights. I'll be right back.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Professor, is the room you are currently in the office you mentioned in your article titled “Journey of Errors: Finding Home in Academia,” where you didn't like the paint color?

Ahmet Atay: This is my room, but currently, I am in the United Kingdom, not in the United States. I arrived in the UK two days ago. So, there is no America; everything you see behind me is in the UK today. It's not possible for me to explain certain things in Turkish, so I will speak in English. I apologize in advance.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Perhaps some of the questions that will come to you may be in Turkish. I will also translate them entirely into English when preparing the transcription of this interview for publication. It's very enjoyable to listen to you on our part; thank you.

Ahmet Atay: We can also talk about why English is primary language. Firstly, I was born in Cyprus. My mother and father are also born in Cyprus. I graduated from Marmara University's Radio, Television, and Cinema Department in 1994-1998. I wanted to become a film director. I had no intentions of being an academic. The 1990s were the most important years for music, especially popular music, in Turkey. As a

¹ Special Issue: “Decolonizing Autoethnography”, *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*, 2018, Guest editors: Devika Chawla, Ahmet Atay, Volume 18, Issue 1, February.

young Ahmet aspiring to be a director making music videos, I went to Ohio University in the United States. I started with media arts program where I was trained in critical media studies and media making. Then I fell in love with academia and I stayed for my PhD. Southern Illinois. Sorry. I went to a second master's program in Iowa and then I went to Illinois for my PhD. And then I ended up back in Ohio for my job. Currently I work at The College of Wooster. There are four different types of universities in the US: Research universities, state schools that do education, private liberal arts and community colleges. I am in a private liberal arts university. The main focus is education, so to give you a context about it. So that's my academic journey from Cyprus to America I have been in USA for twenty five years. I never published in Turkish. Also, since I haven't read academic publications in Turkish for many years, the Turkish academic language is quite challenging for me at the moment. That's why, as I speak with you now, I am using both languages, and Turkish words may come out from time to time. I'm going to write about this experience: How to have a conversation with all of you in autoethnography in Turkish? So that is my dilemma and has been my dilemma for several months now. I know Turkish, it's my first language, but it's not my academic language and I have not written anything in Turkish academically. So that's why I'm having a crisis, if you will, about the transnational journeys that I've been taking.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: What you've shared with us is, of course, your academic journey. Ultimately, we have also read your writings on autoethnography. You have a critical perspective.

Autoethnography studies also have a critical perspective, but you have written articles that go beyond critiquing autoethnography and argue for the need to decolonize autoethnography. How did you arrive at this point?

Ahmet Atay: It all began with film critiques. It all started with critiquing films aesthetically. After that, it all began with critiquing television broadcasts. And then, when I went to Ohio University, my advisor, the primary professor, told me, "If you want to study with me, you need to take a feminist theory. You also need postcolonial theory and critical theory." So, Jenny Nelson at Ohio University laid the groundwork. She was trained in phenomenology, so lived experiences were very important for her. First, she suggested I take a feminist theory class. In the class, there were one hundred women and two men, and one of them was me. So that experience really became my foundation about critical theory in so many ways. I guess the course grounded me to have a critical lens towards the world. Of course, Cyprus where I grew up was once a British colony. It was not until 2004 that I took a course on postcolonial theory class which really helped me to think about postcolonial lives and experiences. Postcolonial theory aims to offer frameworks for individuals to understand the world which has been colonized mainly by the British Empire and other empires. By then, I began building a critical toolbox, if you will, to make sense of the world around me, ranging from academia to all the way to the larger political issues. I mean, everything about my foundational background was built on feminist theory, decolonization, and postcolonial theory. In 2001, when I was doing my second master's degree at the University of Northern Iowa, I completed the Qualitative Research Methods course, which was taught by a professor named Leah White. And that was my first introduction to autoethnography, and it was through Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis' work.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: How did the idea of preparing a special issue on autoethnography for the journal of *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* come about, in collaboration with Devika Chawla?

Ahmet Atay: My first encounter with Devika dates back approximately twenty years. When we met, Devika was a doctoral student. Later, we started a conversation about postcolonial theory. After graduation, I was not having a good time because it takes a while to publish things in America as an international scholar. I was having a kind of setback. I was also having a difficult time because I was failing everybody who thought I was very competent. I didn't have time to publish the things I wanted to publish. So I emailed Devika. I said "I'm having a hard time. Could you, could you brainstorm with me about how to move forward?" So then we had a conversation and a year or two later I said Devika, let's have this idea that we have been dwelling on and write about decolonizing autoethnography. One of the things that she and I experienced, we had meetings at National Communication Association panels. Typically they scheduled our panels at 8:00 a.m. These panels used to be very early in the morning. Then Devika said to me, "Let's find people who are working on postcolonial issues" and we reached out to Mohan Dutta who is writing about health communication and culture. He was at Purdue University in the US, and now he is in New Zealand. Currently, he is directing a Research Center at this university. In our journal issue, there is a piece from Khakali Bhattacharya, who is in Florida at the moment, and some of the other people who are not always coming from our discipline, communication studies, but education and some of the other disciplines. So we curated an eclectic piece to have in the special issue. The special issue has been popular, so I know a lot of people have read the issue. I think we hit the target, and is just fulfilling what we wanted to do is having a good response.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: In this journal, such a special issue has indeed become very interesting. I wonder, what is the status of the magazine among academics in America, and how do they evaluate it?

Ahmet Atay: A very good question. This journal is interdisciplinary, not disciplinary. The editor was Norman Denzin, a sociologist, and he used to be the director of *the Center of Cultural Studies* at the University of Illinois. He is a very well-known name, and wanted to have journals dedicated to qualitative and critical cultural research. So he built this one as well as *Qualitative Inquiry*, *International Journal of Qualitative Review* and another journal. He has four journals. *Cultural Studies / Critical Methodologies* became one of the leading journals in Cultural Studies and critical cultural work in the US. It is now very well respected by interdisciplinary scholars. He also has organized annual conferences in Urbana Champaign Illinois. That happens every year in May, and that's the collective that he's been gathering around the world to think about cultural studies from a very critical cultural perspective.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: I had asked you this question for the following reason: I chose these texts to read for my course, but there is indeed a very critical perspective in the texts. The theoretical perspective is very new and has a rich content. On the other hand, in the autoethnographic writing where you describe your own experiences in academia, there is also suffering that you have endured. In fact, not too long ago, I watched a presentation by Carolyn Ellis in a virtual setting; Ellis recounted how she experienced mobbing before retiring from the University of South Florida. What Ellis went through is very similar to what I experienced when I was very young at a state university in Turkey. Listening to Carolyn Ellis and reading her work on this topic, particularly the article "Failing to Communicate in a Communication Department –A Former Chair Calls Her Spirit Back," published in the book edited by Jay Brower and Benjamin Myers, titled "Critical Administration in Higher Education," made me think that, in some ways, things are quite similar

in these two countries.

Ahmet Atay: Again, the issues and the struggles are so similar. Everybody wants ways to express themselves. Everybody wants freedom. Everybody wants things that somebody is trying to limit. So I think most of the things that autoethnography is doing and if you read, and I'm sure you have the earlier work of Carolyn Ellis, most of the things we are writing, are about the human struggle by observing, by experiencing. So we are writing about the struggles and the struggles around the globe. These are very similar struggles. Women are struggling, minorities are struggling, and people want freedom. And we also have the academic freedom. So it's easier to write about these things and not easier to publish them. But somebody needs to pick them up and publish them, and that's the hard part. So Carolyn and Art fought along with Norman Denzin because nobody was publishing these pieces in conventional disciplinary journals. So they created book series, journals, and conferences to open up spaces for people to write about these issues and publish them.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: I would like to ask you a very simple but important question for me now. In your writings, you say that it is necessary to decolonize the language of the dominant and that the best way to do this is for individuals to tell their own stories. You also emphasize that critical reflexivity is essential for this process. My question to you is this: How can a person establish a relationship with the larger context while telling their own story, that is, by staying within the narrative of their own story?

Ahmet Atay: This excellent question. Autoethnography is personal storytelling to critique the larger cultural issues. So that means the stories you're telling need to somehow address the cultural and larger structures and somehow connect with them to critique them. And that critique could be through poetry, could be through curation of some sort, or writing of some sort. So the idea is to use the story to critique the larger meta-narratives around us. Let's say you wanna write about feminist struggles. Your stories could be about feminism. It could be about the oppression. So it's going to critique the larger structure, and that story is humanizing it but also offering a critique.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Thank you. Now, if you'd like, let's take questions from the participants. The first question comes from Çağdaş. Çağdaş is working in the field of communication sciences and is also pursuing his second doctorate with us.

Ahmet Atay: Excellent.

Çağdaş Ceyhan: Actually, I would like to ask you two questions. The first question is about the convergence culture that you mentioned in the article we read last week, stating that it creates certain possibilities for liberation. For example, the internet, on the one hand, serves as a method for autoethnography and other identity-revealing approaches. However, it is also a space highly subjected to surveillance and commercialization. Considering all these aspects, doesn't it sometimes become a medium that can hinder these practices of liberation? That's what I wanted to ask. My second question is this: Yes, you went from a country that had been colonized, Cyprus, but you went there with Turkish as your native language. Now, when we focus on postcolonial theory, especially through autoethnography, in our experiences in Turkey, where we don't have a colonial experience aside from that, how can we make it more operationally applicable?

Ahmet Atay: The Internet is a tool for us, to connect and communicate with one another. So from the get-go, it was created for the military. It was about surveillance, it was about watching people. And then became commercialized. Then it became a place for people to sell products, goods, and ideas, but also communicate. And then it became something that we are highly situated in, right? I am on social media, and smartphones, and I am not in Turkey, but I'm able to communicate with you through these devices and platforms.

On one side like all of the media that we are situated in or at least most of the media that we are situated and using are profit-driven, right? So it's going to make a profit and that's unquestionable. This is the first time the audience to whom we have access is able to make things and put them into the world. Therefore, they become audience producers. That is something very distinct from the traditional media, journalism, magazines, television, radio film, and so on and so forth. So this gives some kind of power to us as an audience to sit in the front seat and talk about issues. Those of you who are old enough, you might remember Myspace, right? That became a platform where people created content, so they became the producers to sell things. And then of course we got all the other social network sites. But one of the things that is important for me as I theorized it. The Internet is the first medium that cut across time and space and connected people very differently than before. It also allowed people to organize things that could be seen but might not be seen.

It also became very instrumental in social movements. We've seen this in the Arab Spring and then we've seen it during the Black Lives Matter movement, that the organizing can be very quick and it can leak outside of cyberspace. So then it became a platform within the commercial domain to do both, right? It's not ideology-free, and it's not money-free. It is doing both for the first time. I think what is useful to for us to think it allows people to create content and disseminate it around the world very quickly. Yes, you might be punished for it. Yes, they can just take it down, but it exists somewhere. And that's power, I think, that we got to start thinking about. And also we've seen with people about blogs, right? So there are lots of blogs writing about people who have mental illnesses, people who have health issues, bulimia, cancer. They go out and write blogs that their narratives weren't readily available to people. So it allowed people to tell stories.

There were stories that people couldn't tell them in the public domain. Now they can. So that is powerful. And the second question is about the decolonizing. Decolonizing is not always as Devika and I envision it and the others, it's not only about people from the colonies writing about the power. It is about anybody who is oppressed writing about the systems to challenge them. So there is a whole autoethnographic movement in education departments in the US because they want to decolonize education the way that we teach people, the way that we write about the way we interact with people. So in that sense, decolonizing autoethnography is going to turn the structures upside down inside out in education systems, you know, historically education is created by certain people for a particular purpose. So they are trying to find different ways of educating people. So same goes for decolonizing industries. Right. So I am in the UK at the moment. There are a bunch of people who are talking about the media industry being so white, and they want to decolonize it to bring black and brown bodies into the media making. So that is the decolonizing. Therefore, autoethnography is a method. It's a tool to tell people you can find ways through narratives to challenge the structures to head on. Fight the structures through the storytelling.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Autoethnography was born out of new ethnography, but you criticize autoethnography born from new ethnography. Your critical perspective is very impressive.

Ahmet Atay: That's because when I arrived at autoethnography and I took a class in 2004 on autoethnography, I was the only international student in the class. The rest were people from America. Of course, English is not my first language, but it is one of my primary languages. So when you write about things in English to an audience that you feel intimidated, right, Because you are questioning, is it gonna be good enough? Is it gonna be poetic enough? Is it going to be, you know, strong enough? So people like me and Devika Chawla started to question, how we find a space within the main autoethnography. That we love so much, but also we want autoethnography to do different things that it's not doing. So there are scholars who started writing autoethnographically about race, such as E. Patrick Johnson, Bryant Alexander, and Soyini Madison. And people like them started to talk about race and autoethnography and a turn like Devika and I took. It's a turn for postcolonial or transnational autoethnographies. So we are critiquing autoethnography even though we are heavily situated in.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Dilek has a question.

Dilek İşler Hayırlı: I always struggle with the ethical aspects because I am conducting an autoethnographic study about my father. I constantly think about how much I should write and how much I should refrain from writing. I'm curious about how you resolve ethical dilemmas in autoethnographic texts when you encounter them.

Ahmet Atay: An excellent question. The piece that you read, "The Journey of Errors," is a good example of that because in that article, I critique my university and my own department. Of course there are no names. People cannot identify any of those people, but they can. So one way to achieve confidentiality is to use very descriptive but ambiguous language, story, or words. We must assign pseudo names so we cannot identify who those are. Carolyn has done that in some of her writing, and sometimes by merging not one story but two stories together. It's almost like lived experience fiction that the story is a blend. It's not one but two merged stories, so it's not even identifiable to anybody. And that is the power of it because there is a genre of autoethnography that either deals with fiction or poetry. So you could either remove the identifiers or make the story ambiguous but very powerful. For example, if it's your father, yes we're going to know that. We're going to know that it's your father. But try to use less descriptives. I guess with the father example, it is hard because you are talking about your father, and your reader would know it. Sometimes I talk about my parents, and people would know they are my parents. But we need to use descriptives that no one would think when they read it or someone else is going to read it, the language is not going to be hurtful, right? So there is the ethical dilemma, and if it's someone that you don't want to identify, definitely mask the identity of the person, and that's the best we can do because otherwise, you know, there are the IRB boards that you have to go through. However, autoethnography is exempt because of storytelling. It is a whole oral history. So unless you are interviewing the person, then you are free of that. I think the dilemma is there. The dilemma is there for all of us.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: I wonder if all universities in America require ethics committee approval for autoethnographic thesis studies. Is there a consensus on this matter?

Ahmet Atay: They are called IRB or HSRC. Those are for straight-up ethnography. So if you're doing an ethnography you 100% need their approval, but if you are using an autoethnography based on that ethnography, then you need it as well because you are using those participants. But if you are doing an autoethnography or oral storytelling, then you don't have to go through ethics approval. But my first book is about cyber ethnography. I had to go through an ethic board, and my method was new at the time. And they had no idea about how to treat people online because we didn't even know who the participants were. So, how can we get their signatures, right? It became rather impossible to identify them, let alone get them to sign paperwork. The ethic committee said yes, protect yourself and protect them. These are the guidelines, and that's the best we can do. It's similar to the autoethnography. It's your story. As long as you are protecting the others in the story, you are perfectly within the limits of not getting one.

Dilek İşler Hayırlı: Thank you. It's very nice to see you here.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Ece, you may ask your question.

Ece Araz: After graduating from the communication faculty, I pursued a master's degree. Then I took a break for a while. I started my doctoral studies again. Meanwhile, yes, I am working, Sir. I work for an American company, a foreign oil company, to be precise. I work in its Turkey office, dealing with issues related to land permits and regulations. I read your article "Journey of Errors: Finding Home in Academia," and it was truly wonderful. I'm curious, after you published it, did you receive any feedback from your colleagues in academia? I mean, after an article of yours came out, did anyone approach you and make any implicit remarks or directly ask if you were referring to them in the article?

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: And did you paint the walls of your office in purple at the university?

Ece Araz: Yes, I was also curious about the color of your office walls. I saved this question for the end: Are the walls of his office mint green or purple? I'm really curious about that.

Ahmet Atay: In America, hospitals, and I believe hospitals in Turkey too, have this light blue color. They paint it that way. I wanted light purple. They painted it light blue. It's a color somewhere between mint green and blue. You know, it feels like you are sitting in a hospital. That kind of atmosphere.

I created my department, Global Media and Digital Studies, but I was also asked to chair Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies. So I became a department head, and I moved from that office. So the person who left in it is dealing with that mint green. I have no idea how they are dealing with it, but I felt like that was oppressing me so much that I feel like I belong there. It was a terrible, terrible color. It was a cold color, and I don't do well with the cold colors. The first question nobody came to ask me about that. But I think that that article became instrumental that I became more vocal at the university level too in order to have a different kind of conversation with the Provost and the Dean about the spaces we all occupy on campus. I use that as the stepping stone. But that piece, I got so many emails from people in academia, in the US, and around the world about how much they identify with the story because, at the end of the day, office spaces are important. We spend most of our days in them and if you don't feel good about it, that becomes so. So

really, you know, I guess very so. Colleagues did not. But I also joke that now I have become one of those very loud voices at the college and thanks to that piece I speak my mind more often and I do more often at the organizational level too. So I was in England, I went to America for a conference and I became the president of the society. So I never thought that I would address 800 people as the first international president of the organization. So people came up to me and thanked me for speaking my mind in trying to make spaces for other people. And that piece is really about that.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: When Ece read your article, she was particularly impressed by the naming in the dialogue section, where you say “Voiceless Moment 1”, “Voiceless Moment 2”, “Voiceless Moment 3”, “Voiceless Moment 4” and “Voiceless Moment 459”.

Ece Araz: You have a truly creative writing style, very different from classical ethnography.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Yes, you also use the Circular Storytelling method in your text, which is also different from the classical ethnographic writing style. Could you talk about that as well?

Ahmet Atay: I lived in Cyprus, and I go back to visit my family. Every time we get together to tell a story about what happens, somebody interrupts us and takes the story somewhere else. We spend some time on the sidelines, we come back to the story, and somebody continues. I felt like that's the way I learned to tell stories. It's not linear. It goes in and out of other stories. I don't know how many of you are from the Mediterranean, but we are always so excited about something, right? We take a route to go somewhere else and come back to it. I figured that's how I wrote, and people didn't like that. I told the readers that's the way I write the stories. I used that metaphor. And those of you who want more about that. There is a Handbook of Autoethnography, 2nd Edition, edited by Tony Adams, Carolyn Ellis, and Stacey Jones. I do have a piece, it's about it's about tango. It's about how we communicate with the readers. I told the readers flat out I'm going to not apologize for writing a circular story. But this is the way I know the storytelling and this is the way we are going to communicate with with one another. Keith Berry, who is also teaching autoethnography this semester, invited me to the University of South Florida. His class and I talked about that. There are stories that we pause, and we come back to them, right? I don't necessarily live in Cyprus. I drop in, and I drop out. I am there for 5-10 days a month maximum. I experienced the stories as fragments. People are living the story that I drop in and drop out. I never get a full picture of the story. So I wanted to implement that as a storytelling vehicle so that you can still understand the story with the snippets of it, or in a very different order if it's told very poetically or well done. So that's what I try to do there.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: The non-linearity of the story is a kind of challenge, and I think this writing style might be criticized for that.

Ahmet Atay: Of course. I think that's the that's the decolonial, right? That's how you can decolonize autoethnography, which is a linear storytelling.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Waseem wants to ask a question. Waseem is a Pakistani who conducted an autoethnographic master's thesis on space at Istanbul Bilgi University. The title of his thesis was "A Proposal: Can I Stay in Your House?" It is a very interesting thesis. He was a guest in our class last week, and we asked him questions about his thesis. Today, he's here to meet you.

Ahmet Atay: Hi!

Waseem Ahmad Siddiqui: Hello. Thank you very much. Now, I am also a guest, and I am a guest in this class as well. I have a question for you: When discussing the method, both decolonial and postcolonial terms are used, especially in the social sciences, referring to the changing literacy representation and its closely related ambiguous representation. Turkey did not experience a colonial period. Can the postcolonial theoretical perspective still be expanded? I am trying to understand this. I am also pursuing a master's degree in anthropology. In such programs, classic theories are often taught. What are your thoughts on this matter?

Ahmet Atay This is excellent. Let's work with the postcolonialist and then we will work with the Colonial in a minute, as those of you might have read it. Postcolonial came to us from literary studies. It was a movement in the literature that was, you know, they were using narrative structures that were kinda in dialogue between the past and the present, the colonial and the posts. So then it became a postcolonial work, became an artwork and it became a method. It became a theory and methodology in a variety of ways. So when we think of the colonial pasts, we know that the countries were colonized. When the colonizers left, what the colonized left with was the postcolonial experience. Meaning that the colonizers are gone but the ideas, the art, the thinking, ideologies, the structures are left behind. So people like Homi Bhabha and others talk about hybridity. They write about what happens to people when they are stuck between the past and the present. And the past and present are where the artwork started to happen, to blend the new and the old. And critique both of them. Postcolonial scholars started to look at what happens when people from the colonies move to the centers of the colonial powers. Right. London is not far from me. It's 25 minutes away. When you go to London you see a huge diaspora from different parts of Africa, from India, from Cyprus, and so on. So people from the colonies came to the land of the colonizer and they brought, what they know, the language, the culture, the practices, the food. So what we have now is a constant hybrid phase that is left behind in the colonies. They change I guess the structure, the culture of the colonial centers, right? I go to Main St. in the town and I walk. There are a bunch of Turkish kebab stores. There are a bunch of Polish stores because of the movement of the bodies. So then we are looking into this idea that nothing is the same anymore before the colonial past. Nothing is the same. We have to think about the idea of hybridity. There are two branches of colonial thought. One is the Native American perspective in the US, which claims that the only way to decolonize something is to give the land back. The idea of giving America back to the natives and getting out. That's the only way they are going to decolonize it. The second way is more about experiences of people in India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia, or other former colonies. This branch questions what people in the former colonies are doing. What happens to them when they are so dependent on British culture and the English language? The ways in which they learn things, even the art making the architectural designs, how can they claim it back? And what is left to claim it back? What are we going to claim back, right? And we cannot claim back the 1665 culture anymore in 2023. So what are they going to claim back? So the idea is when we decolonize, it becomes going against the structures. So in architecture, if you want decolonize and do something right, how do you blend, perhaps the past architecture designs with this idea of 2023, and how do you create a space that does the ball? And in 2023, nobody's going to give their land to anybody back, so that's not going to work. But what are the other ways of trying to push? Trying to push a mix of space in art and performance in cinema, right? There are accented directors that are making films in Europe, right? There's Ferzan Özpetek, and Akın is another one. In their films, they are using different tools

from their home country and the home country to create a fusion, and I think Decolonial is interested in that fusion as an idea. It's a place of empowerment, right? How do you push against the structures through the fusion, and I think it's very present in architecture too. I hope this is leading you to the right way or the one way of thinking about decolonial.

Waseem Ahmad Siddiqui: There is still a macro scale, and it seems like very little is discussed about those micro aspects.

Ahmet Atay: Macro is easier to tackle in some ways because you have to understand the structure that you are operating with. I will come back to Art in a minute but let me give you another example. I was in Turkey in the 90s. In the classrooms, the classroom setting we have a professor, we have the students, and professors talk for two or three hours, right? And that's how education worked back in the day. When I got to the US, it wasn't that way at all. People were telling me you have to speak in the class. I have never spoken in a class before in Turkey. I was not empowered to do that work. For example, in most of the classes, when you want to do a decolonizing work, what do you do? You shift the power from the instructor to the students. How do you do that? I don't lecture unless I have to because we are in the lecture room. We sit in a circle, so I am part of the students, so we erase the power. I took courses where we removed the chairs that we had to sit on the floor. That distracts how we educate. Right. So in the spaces, we can decolonize the structures because we are accustomed to facing the power, and the power is the teacher giving us the information. But when the teacher is not in the center, then it's decentered, right? And that's the decolonizing work. And you can do the same work with art. What happens if you find it? Elements from Western art, and Southeast Asian art blend and critique them in that blending. So there are films that use songs as part of the postcolonial moment or decolonizing moment, but the narrative is very Western. So in that combination aesthetic is different. The aesthetic is shifting from both ends, therefore, there are smaller moments where you can do decolonizing work. It could be a small introduction if you are into fashion. A garment piece could be decolonizing if you are a music composer. A particular rhythm is going to be decolonizing. If you are into education, not sitting in a particular way is going to be decolonizing. It is about finding nuances and acting on them. And that's the power of decolonization to get us to start thinking about how could you do something outside of the structure but still be very impactful.

Güzin Ağca Varoğlu: I had conducted an autoethnographic study with my group of female students. I want to share it here. In fact, this study was initially an assignment for anthropology and spatial sociology classes I taught. I had asked the students to conduct an ethnographic research, describing the environment they lived in. However, the pandemic happened, and I was afraid they might get sick, so I discouraged them from going to social spaces. I explained the autoethnography method to them, thinking it could also be used as a valuable tool in anthropological education, especially given the circumstances. As a result, the students wrote autoethnographic texts. I received about a hundred such texts. From these, I selected the stories of nine female students and embarked on a process together. It was a process that lasted about a year. We held Zoom meetings, deepened our discussions, and shared our experiences. I translated the prepared text into English. I was hesitant during the translation process because I intervened in their texts, but this process also facilitated their learning of English. I initially submitted our work to Norman Denzin. Norman Denzin responded very politely but rejected our paper. Later, our paper was published in the *Fe Journal* in Turkey. Throughout this process, I realized there were structural issues, such as knowing English, that posed serious

challenges. It turns out that even language alone can be a significant barrier to expressing oneself. Because those female students, let alone English, had learned Turkish later in life.

Ahmet Atay: It is very difficult to publish anyway. But, if you are somewhere else and you are using English as your second, or third language, it becomes even more difficult to get these stories out there. One of the things that I talked about at the conference in January, is what happens if we do bilingual autoethnography is what we are accustomed to. And because we are so conditioned to read articles in one language, not multiple languages. We have some of the voices as in Turkish, or you know, Urdu or some other language, like French, what happens to those? And I think there is room for that argument..

Güzin Ağca Varol: Yes, if we had published our paper in Turkish, it could have been dangerous for these women because they criticized the patriarchal structure there and discussed family dynamics. The English publication of the article reduced the accessibility for those in their own community to reach the paper.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: When I read the article and saw its content, I said, "I'm glad they published the article in English."

Güzin Ağca Varol: There was also this issue. Our article ended up being authored by a total of seven contributors. In Turkey, when you publish, if your article is single-authored, you receive a high score. If there are many authors, you get a low score. When I published with six of my students, I thought I brought a critique to this scoring system, to this perspective.

Ahmet Atay: That's very interesting because most of the social science articles in America have no single authors. They are all multiple authors and I have seen one piece with 32 authors on it. So so it's I guess it's a different orientation of what they do because they take the statistical data set or some kind of data. And they shuffle. And whoever is shuffling it, that person becomes the first author. And it will still get, you know, a bunch of points, if you will, for that kind of public question.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: The title of your article is "Journey of Errors: Finding Home in Academia." When I saw the title of the article, I felt really bad about myself. The thing is, I've been in academia for thirty years, but I've never found a home. I've always seen myself as a stranger within academia, an outsider, marginalized, on the periphery, and unwanted. That's why I don't understand the meaning of finding a home in academia. I know you are also decolonizing this quest in your writing. I'm aware of that, but I still want to ask: What does it mean to find a home in academia?

Ahmet Atay: That's a very good question, and I am still angry with my institution. I'm still there ,and we can talk more about that because we choose this profession. Being a teacher is very difficult regardless of where you are. We choose this profession, and you commit yourself to it. There are days that I work from 8:00 till midnight. Nobody works in those hours, right? Unless you are having two different jobs. People do 9.00 to 5.00 they go home, and they're fine. We take work to home or home is always in work. So what is for me also a sentiment that we belong to a place where we are going to spend most of our lives, and that is our second home, academia. How do we feel good about it? How do we feel that we belong there or they embrace us? We are not in the margins, but we are. So I am critiquing that academia. For some, it's easier to be at

home, and for some, we are just not going to feel at home until we get to the right location that feels a little bit more home to us. I live in Ohio in a small town, and I often critique that. I live in America. I don't live in New York City. This is a different kind of America. But the academia has been very good to certain people and not so good for the others. People get denied tenure, don't get to associate professorship, and they don't graduate with their PhDs because there is no support system. I also wanted to critique the academia for that. How do people survive if they don't have enough tools, or mentoring, or people to support them? So we are all, I think, searching. We are all taking journeys to find a home in academia, and for some, it is not untenable, but we try, right?

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: I hope everything unfolds as you wish. It didn't happen that way for me; retirement is not too far away, and I still haven't found my home in academia. But today, with this course you are also participating in, something else is happening here, of course, and I can breathe. If I were to ask a question now: In the special issue you prepared, you essentially talk about four themes: Home, history, hybridity, and resistance. Why specifically these four themes, I wonder?

Ahmet Atay: Because memory is very important for postcolonial studies. People are always trying to capture what is left behind, which is the pre-colonial time, and we are always looking for the past. And we assume that the past was so good, was it really that good is the question. So the memory, because all of us are yearning for something in the past, whichever that was. And most of the time, we idolized it. Here's an example. During the COVID-19 pandemic, everybody taught online. People were saying, "oh my God, I miss being in the classroom. It was so good." Was it that good? It wasn't that good. So people are just holding on to the memory for good reasons or some other reason. So, we wanted to capture that memory resistance is also in the DNA of the decolonial work, right? We have to resist to the structures to create a space or alternative ways of knowing, and that's one of the the themes. So, the themes emerged from postcolonial and decolonizing frameworks guided us in curating the pieces.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: If you were to release a second special issue of the journal, what theme would you choose as the main focus?

Ahmet Atay: I think it has to be something about the future. So something about OK, we all have been critiquing things. So what? What are we supposed to do? We need some kind of solution. We need some kind of guidance. So I'm thinking about the future. It has to be there. So if we are going to change, what do we want become, right? So I think change is one. I am also interested in cultural amnesia. People forget things, right? We forget things and societies forget things that are as if they never happened. So I am also interested in cultural amnesia. I am definitely going to stick to the home because that's important for me. One of the things that I am heavily questioning is belonging. Where do we belong? Do we need to come to one place? Can we belong to multiple places? So I go to Cyprus, and that's home. I live in America. I've been there for 25 years. That's my home. But when I came to England, it felt like home too. Then where is home? Can we belong to multiple places as these implants or people are circulating around the world? Like where do we belong? And I think one of the pieces, one of the things that I'm also riding heavily now, is about arrivals and departures. And I think that is going to be one of the themes in the new series. Why do we arrive at a particular place or an idea and why do we depart from them? What motivates us to come to it and then leave it?

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Absolutely, and we would also enjoy reading the journal. Perhaps, who knows, there might be contributors among those currently listening to you here.

Ahmet Atay: I would like that too.

Ece Araz: What I'm curious about as well is this: the world is changing so rapidly. In your opinion, how do you think autoethnographic studies will evolve or what new developments might emerge in ethnography fifty years from now?

Hacı Bayram: I was also thinking about exactly this at the moment. In the texts included in the special issue you prepared, there are various dualities, such as precolonial and postcolonial issues. Therefore, at this point, autoethnography comes to our aid. In the future, I wonder how we might encounter a term loaded with an alternative perspective, a protest perspective, but with a different definition? Because roughly, social and academic issues seem to continue in a similar vein. Perhaps there won't be humans in front of us; it will be artificial intelligence.

Ahmet Atay: It is an excellent question about multicultural societies. I think it is a very good one. We think multicultural society is a new idea. It is not right. Globalization started recently, but the world has always been global. Before the nation-states, we had this massive empire, right? The Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, and there were a bunch of other empires that really were mixing people, and people have been mixing around the world for centuries. So people have been moving of course more frequently and fast nowadays because of the technologies. But we have always been multicultural. So here's an example. I just finished writing a piece about being from Cyprus. Cyprus has been occupied by Assyrians, people from Anatolia, and the Greeks. The Arabs came twice, the British came in twice, the French, Italians from Venice, and Italians from Genoa. The Ottomans came, but the Ottomans brought Albanians, people from Georgia, and different parts of the world. Cyprus has been multicultural for centuries. If you look at people's DNA, it's a complex DNA because of all of these mixing. So the world as we know it has been that. But the nation-states made us a little bit more conservative. We are from this nation, even though they are all imaginative, right? If you look at it, Germany and Italy were a bunch of little empires that they formed each other. They imagine that they are going to create a nation-state. They erase things. And the language became the primary identifier for a lot of nation-states. So I think because of all of these movements, people are asking you where is home or, where are you from. Why? Why do we care? Because we want to label people about. They are from here, or they are from there. But when they ask me where my is home, I wonder what they want from me. Where do I want to start the clock? Is it the Cyprus? Do I tell them about my parents coming from somewhere to Cyprus? I do not know where my ancestry came from to Cyprus. So when I say where are you from, I say down the street, I live there. That is where I am from. And people are like, no where are you really from? So last week I was at a conference. I arrived in Saint Louis. We were having a reception, people who were working, setting up the the food, the the, you know, all the buffet. They spoke to me in Spanish, and I do not know any Spanish. But

they thought I had a Spanish background. And so I should know the language of my ancestors. That is not my ancestry. I don't know the language. I looked at her. I was like, how do I even respond to this woman? She was thinking that I am from a particular place, and I have actually never been there. We are really

pushing this idea. Where are you from? But we don't know what the intention is. Why do we care where the people are from? What are we investigating? And the future? I have been writing a lot about cyber autoethnography. So Hacı Bayram's question is also important. These are important questions, where are we heading? I think we started to tell stories online. We are telling stories on social media. We have to start thinking about cyber autoethnography. What does it look like when you write your stories? And when you write the stories online you are not the only storyteller. The stories are co-constructed by a bunch of people. If you have a Facebook, you post things. People add other stories and photographs, and all of a sudden, you have a story

Ece Araz: Teacher, in my opinion, the personality on social media and the personality in real life become two very different things, of course.

Ahmet Atay Absolutely.

Ece Araz: On social media, everything is so beautiful because there's a rosy life, La Dolce Vita. When it comes to real life, it doesn't seem to be quite like that.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: But Ece, very different readings can also be made. For example, with those diverse interpretations, when you look at the photos shared on social media and the stories told, you can even see aspects of that person that they never wanted to be known. Through readings done in different styles, you can conduct a very in-depth analysis of that person's psyche.

Ahmet Atay: But it also shows that the stories that we tell are fragmented. But we tell stories differently to different groups of people, and that's the key, right? Who is your audience, and what kind of story are you? To whom? To what effect? What are you hoping that that story is going to achieve? I am thinking about the story that is featured in a special issue Kakali Bhattacharya and I co-edited for qualitative inquiry about Transnational voices in academia. One of the pieces is a cartoon. It's a drawing. The entire piece is drawn out. It is a story, but it is all about image-making, right? Think about the images as the stories. And of course, what is after postcolonial, I think we have to start thinking about this global transnational storytelling and storytellers. We don't live in one place anymore. We are consistently moving around the world, and sometimes we don't have to move around the world physically. The world comes to us in the form of media. The stories that we are going to tell because we are all experiencing them are through transnational global lenses. So that's the next, I think the next destination is how do we create stories that are going to speak for beyond the nations and beyond the cultures that we are occupying?

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: You are using the concept of power in the Foucauldian sense, aren't you?

Ahmet Atay: I mean, microaggressions that we experience in relationships are about power. Somebody wants to exercise power on us, right? For example, I had a department head who used to come to my office to see if I was in my office or not. That's power. That's the power trip right there. Right. If I take attendance in the class to see if my students are in the class or not, that's power. I'm exercising power because I'm going to deduct the I am going to deduct points from their final grade.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Of course, this “power” doesn't always carry a negative connotation.

Ahmet Atay: Absolutely not.

Güzin Ağca Varol: There are studies indicating that the new generation, the new generation of Turks in Berlin, define themselves not necessarily through identities like “I'm Turkish” or “I'm Muslim,” but rather by finding an identity like “I'm from Berlin.” They attempt to adopt a hybrid identity through this, distancing themselves from traditional categorizations. The first thing is, “You are not white.” Secondly, “But you are here, and you speak English so well; you express yourself so effectively; you could be a European.” So, fundamentally, it's a power relations issue. It's always about implementing a form of power on a micro level. Erasmus students often mention this. When I went to Germany, they thought I was Italian. They said this as if it were a good thing because it is associated with having a Western identity.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: So let's ask Dr. Atay, did he enjoy it when he was asked a question in Spanish?

Güzin Ağca Varol: He must have liked it, perhaps.

Ahmet Atay: I didn't even know how to respond. I'm like, no, I don't even know that language. I was thinking what am I supposed to tell this woman now? She is also a working class, and I am not. I don't want to exercise power to tell her what she knows. But this is how we mark people. For example. One of my friends who teaches at university in the US. She's white with blue eyes. And when you see her, you might think she's European. She's from Syria. She's like, “I am Syrian. I am not this or that.” The idea, what the people are supposed to look like is, you know, it's the beginning of the power, right? If you look like this, then you should be this. And if you don't, then you got stuck in this or that, right? The power is letting us categorize people. Sometimes categories fail, and we cannot put them into a category.

Waseem Ahmad Siddiqui: I have a brief question. The development occurs when new categories and methods are present, right there, at that moment, in that space. In other words, new theories and methods develop not only through writing or speaking but sometimes by doing both. Actually, disrupting decolonization, leaving it behind, seems valuable. How could this be in the future?

Ahmet Atay: Excellent question

Waseem Ahmad Siddiqui: For example, thinking about queer feels liberating to me. I know I'm talking very abstractly. Because my professors tell me to “be more concrete,” I don't know, am I speaking too abstractly?

Ahmet Atay: Your question is very important and I have worked on pedagogy quite a bit. I have a couple of books on pedagogy. One of the things that just you know to go back to is Freire Brazilian educator and the book called Pedagogy of Oppressed. It has been instrumental in my thinking as well as bell hooks' work.

bell hooks, because she argues that most of the time academia, at least in the context of the United States, was not meant for people who are black, brown, or have accents. Most of the structures were set for the

white people, at least in the context of the United States in academia. When you think about the pedagogies of oppressed, that means very shift in our logic and argues that we have to think about how we empower the based on students in the classroom to learn differently, and to do things differently. Based on that idea, several of us have been toying around with the concept called critical communication pedagogy. For this approach, the end goal is training the students, and giving them tools, so they can look at the world from a critical perspective. Therefore, the end goal is changing for the better. How do we do that? So there is a ton of literature out there in the US that is working with that. How can we empower the students? One of the things that I've done, I taught a feminist pedagogy class last year in the fall. One of the things that we've done in the class, is we didn't go into the class with the syllabus. We didn't have readings picked up. Instead, we sat down with the students and asked them, "what do you want learn?" We made a list. We asked them to find readings. We created the reading list. We read it together the things they came up with. I asked them, do you wanna run workshops for the faculty, staff, and students about these issues? They said yes. In the spring, with eight students, they created the workshops. I helped with the oversight of the workshop. They run workshops for the faculty to educate them about the things that matter to them. So we shifted the power, right? We shifted the logic of who is educating whom. So the question then becomes, how do we shift the classroom? How do we shift the way in which students learn, right? I am making an argument. Because of the coverage, my students are learning more online. When I go to the classroom, I cannot ban them from using a computer because they need the computer to look up something, right? I have international students who are searching for an example or a word. So they can understand what's going on. I think it's finding where they are and getting them tools to learn differently and us finding encouragement to think outside of the box so we can teach differently. Is it hard? Absolutely. It's very hard because we are not conditioned to do that.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: Can we call it a form of activism when you reverse power relations like this? I mean, do you think being an activist academic is something like this?

Ahmet Atay: That's exactly activism in the classroom. You give your power to students to design the classroom and the class. We didn't have any grades, so it was pass or fail. That's it. You don't have any points attached to anything. And they were like, how does this work? I'm like, you either do it or you don't do it. They come up with what we were going work on. So it wasn't even us driving the assignments.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: "The issue of becoming an activist is a bit complex for us. For example, I have no connections to any organization or political party. In Turkey, being an activist is understood as being in such a political position. Actually, though, when you reverse power relations, isn't that a kind of mobilizing people as well?"

Ahmet Atay: Critical thinking gives them tools, so they can think about the world around them. And that's the basis of the education. Don't teach them what to think, just let them find their own thinking, but give them the tools to think.

Serap Duman İnce: I want to ask a question. I am currently writing my master's thesis. I am writing an autoethnographic text for my thesis, but I also want to make an autoethnographic film to accompany my text. However, I don't want to feature myself too much in the film. How can I create such an

autoethnographic film to complement my autoethnographic text? Do you have any films you can recommend for inspiration?

Ahmet Atay: That's very good. I like how you think this is an excellent question. I love this. I don't have films, but I have several performances that I have seen that are typographic that come out of Louisiana State University LSU. There is a Turkish professor they are who graduated from New York University. She does a lot of work with performance. She's a performer and trained PhD in performance studies. You should look her up. She is in Louisiana State University's communication department. She will be an excellent connection for you. And in terms of the filmmaking, that's that's the key. The camera is the key, right? So as filmmakers, we are often behind the camera, because we want to capture other stories. But what happens when you are in front of the camera and behind the camera, right? So that opens up a different way of storytelling you are telling your story, and maybe you are looking at yourself and your own story critically because you are also behind the camera. So I'm thinking you are going to have a hybrid position. You are going to be in front of the camera, tell a story. And behind the camera to capture the larger story that you are critiquing. So that's one way of doing this. The 2nd way of doing this, I don't know. We can also work with other directors to co-create the narrative. You are in front of the camera for a purpose. That shifts the logic because as a filmmaker, people want you behind the camera, not in front of the camera. So that's another way of looking at it. And I think also we've been thinking about the collages of Postcolonial or decolonizing motifs. So I wonder if the collage is a film that is not linear, it's your story, but it is patched together story that is a bunch of stories making you narrate a larger story. A collage could be one of the good ways of thinking about it. What happens is that you use different snippets to create a larger story. Look up the concept of collage as maybe an art montage for filmmaking aesthetics. So that might be useful. But there is an excellent I would love to see what you're going to do with the films because that's one of the directions that I'm hoping I will go to as well. So more power to you. I am looking forward to seeing what you're going to do.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: I am Serap's thesis advisor, and I am eagerly awaiting the outcome. What kind of film can be created for such a project? We are attempting something like this for the first time in the field of folklore in Turkey. It will be both a thesis, a written text, and a film accompanying that thesis. Hande Çayır did this in the field of performing arts, but such a project has not been done in the field of folklore yet.

Ahmet Atay: Sure. So I know I don't have PhD students, but I have all of our undergrads have to write a thesis. One of them was a double major in film, media, and photography. So what she did was she wanted to go to Ghana, where she's from, and study the idea of beauty for women in Ghana. So what she did was she wanted to film them. But she also gave them a camera so they could film what beauty is for them. So in the end, she created this still image exhibition that she captured. They were capturing the idea of beauty. Right. So we're looking at two different cameras. They were capturing the meaning of beauty for them, but at the same time, she was capturing them, capturing the beauty around them. So using multiple cameras, and multiple lenses to capture reality could be also very productive.

Çağdaş Ceyhan: Earlier, you spoke about power relations. Specifically, you mentioned wanting to decide with students what to read or do in class. So, what should one do when those in education or those under pressure do not make a request to transform power relations? For example, when your students say they

have no opinion on the matter or do not want to do it, what approach should be taken? Is it necessary to break this power relationship again, or should the demand actually come from the suppressed?

Ahmet Atay: That's an excellent question if people are in a driver's seat. What do you do if they don't wanna change anything? I think that we have a serious problem. So I will sit down for a couple of weeks to try to explain to them, why don't you want to do this? Like, what is the problem here? What's going on? And oftentimes time I have students, international students who have never been empowered. They would not come to say I wanna be in power, right? They sit at the back and they don't say anything. So I have experienced that. But in the end, when they go along they realize Oh my God, this is actually the best thing that ever happened to me because nobody gave me any power to dictate my education. So when they understand the end goal, and you explain the end goal for them. It will be an easier ride. But some people are like, yes, I am ready to go. And some people are like, no, I do not know, because everybody told me my entire life, this is what you do. And I did it. So now I cannot even figure out what I want to do because I've never been told to do that. So that's, I think that's an area that we have to talk to them about, make them understand we need to have more power in their lives.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: I hope so too. Does anyone else have another question, perhaps?

Ece Araz: The examples you provided are mostly related to academia, but the situation is not very different in companies. In fact, it can be even more restrictive in various aspects in other organizations. Before my current job, I used to work in a defense industry company. It was a place that was half American and half military, where there was absolutely no mobile phone reception inside. There were jammers everywhere, and high-security measures were in place. You couldn't get up from your seat without the bell ringing. Even if you wanted a cup of tea, you couldn't just go to the kitchen on your own. The hierarchical relationships were also very sharp. For instance, I couldn't have lunch with a project manager. It was impossible. They couldn't even come to our floor; we could almost ask for permission to go to theirs. There was such a rigid distinction, as if it had been drawn with a ruler. However, there was a lot of turnover. People coming to work, leaving, coming, leaving. At the helm of the company was a former combat pilot. He had participated in some military operations back in the day. There was also a tremendous level of robotization. When I objected to this and said that a more humane approach was needed, he said, "We are not here to have a love affair." I was surprised.

Ahmet Atay: They would not come to say I wanna be in power, right? They sit at the back and they don't say anything. So I have experienced that. But at the end when they go along they realize Oh my God, this is actually is the best thing ever happened to me because nobody gave me any power to dictate my own education. So when they understand the end goal and even you explain the end goal for them. It will be an easier ride. But there are people who are like, yep, I'm ready to go. And some people are like, no, I don't know, because everybody told me my entire life, this is what you do. And I did it. So now I cannot even figure out what I wanted to do because I've been never told to that. So that's, I think that's an area that we gotta talk to them about, make them understand we need to have more power in their lives.

Bülben Yazıcı: I work in design, focusing more on things like design and empathy. So, I work in a different field; I tried to understand ethnography and autoethnography by attending Serpil's classes and listening to

my friends this semester. I have been a professor at the university for almost twenty years. My classes are very personal. For example, I have a child, and I give examples from him in class. Then, when the children are struggling, I say that the class should be enjoyable for me as well. Now, therefore, I cannot figure out how to formulate this. Of course, I will read autoethnographic texts, but I can't seem to grasp how to do it. In the end, I say, "What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas" and I leave the classroom, but it won't be like that when I write. So how will this happen?

Ahmet Atay: OK, so autoethnography is "auto" self, "ethno" is the culture, and "the graphy" is the writing, right? So you are writing about yourself in the culture. So culture is part of the self as well. So what is hurting you is the personal, but the cultural as well. So there is a cultural dimension. So if you have been oppressed because of your gender or race, you are writing about personal in political and cultural too. So it is about telling the story of a personal about the cultural and the political. So that is why, for example, you know most of the autoethnographers are writing about cultural injuries that are in the shape of a personal injury. Yes, we know you are hurting. That is the self. But somebody hurt you. And that is the culture. The culture is oppressing you. The culture is doing something to you, so you are hurting. Right. For example, I just finished several essays about international students in America. They don't have mentors, so they don't really get decent jobs. So they are hurting, but the culture is what hurts them because they do not have mentors. Or you are applying for a job, but you are not getting a job because you are an older woman, and the jobs are going to younger ones. I Because we live in an age of society. The society is hurting you, right? So the story is going to be about your personal hurt or about personal joy. That comes from the cultural and the political. So that is why ethnography is saying that this is not about me, it is about me, but it is about me and a culture. We are critiquing the culture through the story. The pain that you are articulating is aiming to critique the culture that is oppressing you. I mean, it is about you. But it is about the culture. It is about me, but it is about academia. It is about me. But it's about being an immigrant, right? Why did I become an immigrant because of the structures, right? It is about people. For example, there are, there are a lot of them coming out now about the refugees, right? The refugees are hurting. They are hurting because of. The larger structures, right? It is about personal, but it is about the culture.

Bülben Yazıcı: OK, so in my case I can transform it to a material form of concept.

Ahmet Atay: Yes, absolutely. And that would be so fascinating. What kind of designs can you do about you and the culture, right? That is so I think that the unique part of it.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: You mentioned being hurt and its expression. Next Wednesday, I will give a presentation on autoethnography.² In the title of my presentation, there is a line from a poem by Birhan Keskin, a poet from Turkey: "*Acı mihlanıp bir kalpte durmasın. Ortada dursun.*" ["May pain not stand still, stinging in a heart. Let it linger in between.]."

Ahmet Atay: That is because at the end of the day, think about why people tell stories. Why do we tell stories? What is the point of storytelling? We are telling stories to get the pain out there, to share the pain. But we are also telling stories to educate people, to inform people, and also to leave the stories for the next

generation so they can remember, right? You might not know your grandmother, but you know the grandmother because they told you stories about her. I might not know your pain, but I know your pain because I read your piece, right? So it is about telling the stories for a particular reason. And that is one of the things autoethnography is doing. We want people to tell the stories so they can feel empowered that they have the right to tell stories in an academic context that we know when someone reads it, they might cry. I mean you cannot believe there are pieces that I've written that people are emailing me. Oh my God, I was crying because I saw myself in that piece. You are telling my story, but it is your story. In the end, the stories transform us, and those stories could be in an art, it could be in a building, it could be the stories are everywhere, right? And that's the beauty of it. How do you tell the story to make an impact?

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: "I intertwined two concepts as you were speaking, and I really liked that. You know, Carolyn Ellis says stories heal us. You also used the verb "empower." Yes, it seems that healing and empowerment are actually intertwined and perhaps are the same thing, part of a whole.

Ahmet Atay: Absolutely. The Journey of Errors, it's my piece that I wrote to survive. So it's healing, but it is also empowerment, right? You know, some people are telling stories about abuse or death. Right. They are healing in the process, and there are stories that they are telling, so they feel like they are empowered to do something. Those two are the keys of autoethnography.

Serpil Aygün Cengiz: When I emailed you, you wrote back to me saying, "I am being invited to Turkey for the first time." I was so surprised, given that I know your writings. Now that I have gotten to know you a bit more, I am even more amazed. I think you should have more connections with Turkey in some way. People should learn from you. Thank you so much for taking the time for us.

Ahmet Atay: Actually, thank you very much.