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Unleashing the Power of the Hyphen: Application of  
Arts-Informed Inquiry and Psychoanalytic Perspectives in Autoethnography  
to Explore Cultural Hybridity

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### Abstract

In the postcolonial discourse of the social sciences, the term *hybridity*, most commonly used in the domains of engineering and agriculture, refers to “the [complex] interbreeding or mixing of different peoples, cultures and societies” (AlSayyid, 2001). The unique result in such multicultural societies comprising large population sub-groups, including asynchronistic waves of immigrants, is that individuals may experience identity conflict, questioning their membership in local social groups. They may painstakingly negotiate the locus or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977; Mathieu, 2009) of their belonging. To explore and, in case of necessity, to better assist these individuals in coping with potential anxiety, inferiority complexes, and a sense of inadequacy within their social environments different from the loci of their cultural and linguistic origin, the proposed study uses psychoanalytic perspectives to 1) conceptualize *hybridity* in the context of culture, language, citizenship and power relations, 2) explore and expand the personal dimension of *hybridity* by applying the qualitative research that involves a cross-analysis of multiple case studies. More specifically, the data set includes *biotexts*, or *autoethnographic* narratives in para-poetic or visual formats composed by the individuals who study or work in Canada, and who consider themselves populations of dual or multiple cultural backgrounds. To make these narratives, the study participants collected their personal memos, reflective journals, and family stories. The assumption is that such pursuit helps the study populations to better recognize and voice the formative constituents of their cultural belonging and make sense of their citizenship loyalties.

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## CHAPTER I THE TOPIC EMERGES

### **Framing the Inquiry**

*Everything is the same, everything distinct.*

Zen saying

Time flies so fast. Here's me in the picture getting my first degree in applied linguistics, my head full of ideas and packed with knowledge of the field, my mind — overwhelmed with the theories and teaching strategies of the day, and here's another me — after many years of teaching — a bit grouchy, tired, sand in my eyes from the long concentration on papers, marking a tenth student's essay in the row. A long professional journey, indeed. The other day, I have caught myself on the thought that I have been teaching English as an additional language to speakers of other languages for more than twenty years so far. It suddenly crossed my mind that, if, in some imaginary space, I would ask all my students to stand up in front of me or make a circle standing around my desk, there will grow a crowd of people coming from different corners of the world that may count a population of a symbolic town where we met. Remarkably, in that imaginary space of sorts, I can still get in touch with them, wondering about that fascinating mixture of cultural landscapes they come from.

Speaking in technical terms, the EAL classes are usually embedded in the short-term programs to help more student populations pursue their academic or professional goals. Three months and a half — and... after a busy week of exams and graduation ceremonies, and just a short break, a new group of students comes to my class — and again — new faces, new names, new stories. At times, teaching in that kaleidoscopically changing vortex of cultural fusion can be very exciting, at times — very challenging. But one thing is always there: a sense of search for connection to the worlds of the learners, so diverse, so unpredictable. Therefore, teacher-student

contacts are never dull. Our dialogs are never complete. A new name — and a new story emerges to be yet decoded and understood.

Last winter term, before coming to class, I looked up at the list of my new group. One name on that list immediately caught my attention. The first name of a student was Spanish and the last name — Chinese. *It would be quite a rare occasion for a Chinese student to have a Spanish name*, I thought. *This student might be of a dual cultural background*. If it were true, he would represent a mixture of very different cultures — truly, the two distant continents exhibit their landmarks on his name. Before meeting the group, I tried to imagine that student. *Are his both parents Chinese or one of them is Spanish? Where does he live?* I also wondered how he would feel about himself caught “in between” the two so distant ancestral backgrounds. I wondered what stories his ancestors could bring in for a better understanding of what mapped his, their descendant’s, identity. Would that student feel different in class? What culture would he identify himself with — Spanish or Chinese? Would he speak both languages freely or just one? What representations of his dual cultural identity would make the most sense to him and how one could deal with what Firmat (1994) called “living on the hyphen”? How would he feel about Canadian culture?

My curiosity was also doubled by my reading of *Monkey Hunting*, a book by Cristina Garcia (2003) — a dramatic story of a few generations in the family, who moved from China to Cuba — and whose members travelled in between the two countries back and forth over a century. Although I cannot say that it was exactly what I prefer to read, Garcia’s novel truly exemplified “a vivid tapestry of incident and feeling” related to the trials and tribulations of that family and illuminated “a generations-long struggle toward a sense of true belonging” (2003, cover page). I noticed that, by the law of synchronicity, as soon as our mind is curious about a certain phenomenon, life, quite magically, provides us with the encounters of things and people

who become the clues to the matters we inquire into, as if someone overhears our deep thoughts and acknowledges our truth-seeking driven nosiness. In *Monkey Hunting*, my curiosity was also sparked by questioning of how hybridity emerges and functions on both individual and collective levels of consciousness in the context of drastically disrupted cultural developments. What inner processes have to take place in order to progressively, bit by bit, feed a cultural identity that rests its formative matrix on a gap rather than a juncture, on disruption rather than continuity? How does it happen that Chen Pan — the central character in Garcia’s story — who comes from China to Cuba in 1857 in search of a better life, has unleashed a process of gradual cultural transformation represented in his children — Desideiro, Caridad and Lorenzo Chen, his granddaughter, Chen Fang, and his great-great-grandson — Domingo? Was it through a spontaneous mixing of his talk with words from both languages here and there “until he spoke no true language at all” (Garcia, 2003), that pushed him into this process? Or was it through following at first and then dropping to follow all China’s customs and traditions, switching to drinking *riojo* instead of rice wine that made him become more Cuban than Chinese? Or was it looking at his daughter-in-law while she was cooking a sweet-corn soup and steamed fish with vegetables for his lunch and calling her *bing xin*, a pure heart, in his mind, that helped him to ponder over a mystery of the blood lines mixture that he, Chen Pan, had become a cause of back then, almost seventy years ago, when he decided to sign up for a contract that moved him to Cuba as a sugarcane plantation slave? Unexpectedly intertwined, the twists and turns of Chen Pan’s fate in *Monkey Hunting*, and the Spanish-Chinese name of my new student set my mind to inquire what it meant to become, to be, and to represent hybridity in its anthropological sense, this time not on the pages of a literary work but in my language classroom.

**Personal goals.**

*I'd seek my voice elsewhere.*

Kathleen Saint-Onge (2013)

It won't be accurate to say though that only the two events described above — my new student with a Spanish-Chinese name and reading Garcia's *Monkey Hunting* have fueled my interest in the topic of hybrid identity. For the first time I heard the word *hybrid* long before my coming to Canada, back in my home country, in junior school, in Botany class. This term referred to the agricultures that came from different seeds and produced fruits or vegetables with qualities that bore characteristics of each parent plant but with a new image and taste. As a student, the idea sounded fascinating and funny. Further along the school years, the word *hybrid* emerged again in my Physics class. This time it related to the types of engines. The teacher told us that a *hybrid* engine is used in the vehicle that combined the best features of two different energy sources, one of which is electric power. Again, this word sounded funny but there was a new connotation added to its meaning. Now *hybridity* embodied a quality reflecting not only borrowing genes and appearances from parents but also energy, or power. Remarkably, it was only in Canada where I heard the word *hybrid* as a characteristic describing people. Applied in such a quality, this word had acquired a strange connotation for me. It brought in an idea of a confused, tensed and uncertain identity of a person whose roots belonged to a mixed ethnic background or were not clearly defined as a result of migration. All of a sudden, I realized that *hybrid* was no more just a funny word depicting funny things — fruits, plants or vehicles. Now it defined *me*! It was a very disturbing and overwhelming thought, indeed. After some shock, I started exploring my own hybridity, and came to conclusion that, oddly enough, I had always been some sort of a hybrid! Born in the family where the bloodlines of Slavic and Romanian origin had been mixed over a few generations, speaking Russian as my first language, understanding Moldavian and Romanian as my other two languages, and learning English since

I was seven, I did not notice how all of these backgrounds, natural or socially constructed, brought to life ME as a *being*, largely hybrid in her essence from the very beginning. The more articles I read on what constitutes identity, the more I realized that I had never been a pure blood, but sort of a “muggle”, a half-breed all the time, using *Harry Potter’s* discriminatory rhetoric. Perhaps my immigration to Canada, a country that claims its multiculturalism as part of its constitutional doctrine, has paradoxically pushed my questioning of what I am in that multi-colored tapestry of different voices and faces, and what community I can claim my personal affiliation with and loyalty to? Was my wondering journey stimulated after I became a Canadian citizen? Yes, and perhaps as soon as in my passport under the line *nationality* I saw the word *Canadian* for the first time and became aware of the attributions of the generation status that all the Canadians refer to as “1st”, “2nd” or “3rd” + generation, depending on whether the citizen or the citizen’s parents were born in or outside Canada (Data Interest Group for Reference Services, 2013). Perhaps it was nothing paradoxical then in questioning what identity I could ascribe myself to since all of us, newly-welcomed Canadian citizens, suddenly stopped being Russian, Polish, Chinese, Hindu, etc. on that day and became members of that cross-cultural, cosmopolitan and multilingual community, largely hybrid in its essence too. After all, as Feracho (2005) suggested, “The definition of community in itself is as multiple as the identities which can be used to define [one]” (p. 2). Does the membership in such communities in that case automatically turn its members into hybrid identities? If yes, then the influence of hybridity and cross-cultural relationships within that community is critical in recognizing and exploring the redefinitions of the self (Feracho, 2005). I wonder what affects the process of reformulation of my *self* in the multicultural context. I wonder what hybridity means to me personally, socially and professionally. I wonder how it affects my educational experience, both in learning the additional language, and teaching it. And lastly, I wonder what it means to me as a researcher and narrative thinker — another part of my identity that “is encapsulated in stories and

storytelling”, which, according to Bruner (1990) attends to the exceptional that is derived from the commonplace experience:

Narrative thrives on the disruptions from the ordinary, the unexpected, the conflicts, the deviations, the surprises, the unusual. Stories flourish in the overthrow of the existing order by some event or thought that changes our perspective. Stories derive their power from a violation of the normal and the legitimate and the ordinary, which in turn generates the fear and curiosity and excitement which we all feel when listening to a good new story. In this way, stories appeal not only to the mental process of the brain, but are grounded in the feelings of the listener. They thus appeal to both the mind and the heart.

(para. 2)

By means of personal story, my intent is to capture that spirit and logic of hybridity, no matter how complex it might happen to be. Following AlSayyad’s (2001) stance, I want to look into such dimensions of hybridity as a premise for the issues of self-awareness and self-perception, a conflict of allegiances, and/or situations where “dualities are torn open” (p. 3). I want to explore if the process of hybridization will ultimately motivate the members of the multicultural — hybrid (?) — communities to look into the ownership of the universal or global self or quite oppositely, reject the models of universalized or *globalized* identities. Are we entering the era of the global mind (Gardner, 2006)?

In addition, my entry into these issues will be represented through the ways of research inquiry other than formal academic discourse. My curiosity towards the target topic will be expressed through the assumptions, research questions and procedures and interpretation of the two representative formats — poetic and graphic, through a series of poems and/or collages of the participants. Odd as it may seem, these research procedures will serve not only to represent the perceptions of participants on their self-image as people of mixed cultural and linguistic

backgrounds, but also to situate my understanding of the boundaries in and around the narrative inquiry, particularly in reference to how this method can be employed to create space for constructing meaning out of my personal experience. Along with that, as a researcher, I wonder what qualities of the narrative inquiry — and more specifically, autoethnography — are accountable for the possibility of “playing” with different choices of data representation — either in poetic or graphic form.

### **Topic significance.**

Cultural fusion, a marker of the modern global context, belongs to the linguistic repertoire of postcolonial theory that often employs the term “hybridity” to explicate its reference to global migration (Kraidy, 2005). Interestingly, postcolonial theory treats hybridity both as a cause and as a product of its own, or to put more precisely, as a by-product of the postcolonial divided reality. A term, related to racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural mixture, hybridity mirrors the perceptions of the postcolonial divisions of the world as a nexus of complicated structural, relational and functional interactions between different social groups, including the populations that identify themselves as hybrids, and whose background belongs to more than one culture or ethnicity. Applied to people of mixed ethnic origin, the term *hybrid* can also refer to the groups who identify themselves as *diasporic* or *hyphenated* identities.<sup>1</sup> Besides cultural heterogeneity, attributions of diaspora are associated with global deterritorialization and transnational migration when locality is no longer indicative of the collective identity (Kokot & Tololyan, 2004). Despite the existence of nation-state borders, diasporic identities personify cultural memberships of the two-fold nature — when the group originated on the basis of one nation-state cultural field settles down within the nation-state of a dissimilar cultural background. According to the German Federal Statistical Office, the Ex-Soviet Union population in Germany makes 21%, the Turkish-

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<sup>1</sup> Diasporic identities are migrant populations that consider themselves “members of an ethnic or religious group dispersed to different locations” (Meyer, 2014). Hyphenated identity is a term used to describe populations who represent a dual identity, “an ethnocultural one”, which “evokes questions and debates regarding which side of the hyphen the person belongs to” (Sharobeem, 2003).

19%, Polish-11% and Ex-Yugoslavia-10% (Schumann, 2011). Likewise, the populations whose ethnicity or religion are dissimilar to those of the dominating population within a nation-state, represent the so-called *hyphenated* identities or the hyphenated selves who may not necessarily identify themselves as part of a larger diaspora but similarly experience difficulty in identifying their affiliation to their two cultures feeling a conflict arising between these cultures (Sharobeem, 2003). It is particularly in this cohort of hybrid population that a question arises of what side of the hyphen they more belong to and what culture to adopt — the host culture or the one inherited from the country of their origin? For example, consider Italian-American, Polish-American, and Irish-American populations, and, over the past decades — Muslim Americans. Although not literally written with a hyphen, this population struggles with the same issues that the hyphenated identities do because they may fail to blend with their new milieu yet attempt to keep the equilibrium between the two culturally shaped spaces they dwell in (Sharobeem, 2003). The main question for hybrid identities of that category is what extent of the “I” is in this or that side of the hyphen? As Renshon (2011) poses:

You can be Mexican when you arrive, a Mexican-American as you settle in and live here, and eventually you can think of yourself — and certainly your children can fully think of themselves and make legitimate claims to be — American. (para. 3)

Although the two poles between a hyphen allow certain flexibility of an identity range for the populations who identify themselves as hybrids, the choice of cultural belonging to either of these poles raises not only the citizenship and loyalty issues but most importantly — and rather dramatically — the issues of selfhood formation and self-re-identification on a very deep personal level. Traditionally, cultural anthropologists suggest that the mental representations of

relationships or *relational schemas* are developed not as separate entities but as a sense of affiliation to others (Hoyle, Kernis, Leary & Baldwin, 1999).

Given that the role of cultural belonging is critical in the process of self-identification due to the impossibility to identify oneself outside culture (Schumann, 2011), the formative principle of one's selfhood is the identification of differences from and sameness with certain cultural membership (Simon, Pantaleo & Mummenday, 1995). Concurrently, this process is responsible for stereotyping the non-members of the group with further development of self-stereotyping when a person who is aware of her affiliation to collective identity tends to acquire the characteristics of this group deemed as most representative (Hoyle et al., 1999). For example, if the Canadian-born person of Japanese background would like to claim her affiliation to Japanese culture, most likely she would be expected to cook sushi or wear kimono on special occasions. These external expectations may influence the individual's willingness to stereotype *Japaneseness* (Nakagawa, 2010) calling this individual for exertion of certain behavioural patterns. If this behaviour transpires naturally for a person of a monocultural background, for an individual who identifies herself as a hybrid it can present a highly complicated experience. In that case, appropriation of certain contingencies leads to the issues of *interpersonal acceptance* (Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996) when the individual is forced to compare herself with the different other. The inner struggles within the process of *intrapersonal* acceptance can generate quite traumatic experiences when one part of identity perceives its another part as the external, culturally different Other.

On the one hand, the semantics of "hybrid" is associated with cultural assimilation, when the multiple sides of the "I" are willing to reach some unified identity notwithstanding the threats of cultural erasure and gradual adoption of one of the constituent background ethnicities (Gray, 2013). On the other hand, self-identification for many may become a disturbing

continuous attempt to fill in the empty space within oneself that belongs to no certain culture but to a mixture of the two.

As a result, a hybrid cultural identity is a way “to describe what it means to belong to two or more distinct cultural groups simultaneously and the conflicts that can arise between these two or more identities inside you” (Ali, 2009, para. 1). Due to the nature of this phenomenon, the discussion of hybrid identities sooner or later brings in the issue of the cultural conflict between ancestral and mainstream Canadian culture, as indicated by the same author. Why so?

The development of and interaction between individual and collective identity are long-term complex processes that require much awareness as grounds for claiming social membership. Stimuli for personal and social growth, these processes involve a common identification with one another what fosters an emerging sense of community (Shellenberg, 1996). An outcome of shared historical continuity, group membership is expressed through the multiple acts of cultural exchange over generations who maintain the salient features of their culture through language, traditions and socially constructed worldview. Different forms of social capital are generated in the field of cultural production, where a sense of belonging is introduced as *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1993). *Habitus* is seen as a metaphorical house of being for it represents a sense of place (Hillier & Rooksby, 2002) that creates who we are as much as brings this place to shape by “helping to connect the individual and the collective in a sensory way” — through spiritual associations and subjective experiences that “engage the entire body of being” (Lipis, 2011). In the modern conditions of the world development, often referred in literature as “cultural globalization”, the process of cultural production, in its most traditional sense, seems to be replaced by a phenomenon of “transculturalism” (Kraidy, 2005, p. vii), which refers to the function of cultural development bearing a synthetic nature due to hybridity as its major characteristic.

If, generally speaking, identities are ways of relating and expressing ourselves to the world, the question is how hybridity, being an effect of deconstruction in itself as it largely undermines the historical continuity, constructs, challenges and represents our sense of self in relation to the other, and, most interestingly, how the hybrid identity negotiates the sense of self within and for her *self*? What are the elements of its formative matrix and meaning in both collective and individual sense?

Another significant direction of the inquiry into perceptions of hybridity directly refers to the politics of citizenship. The transformative nature of hybridity is infused with the inquiries not only into one's cultural affiliations being symbolically split in halves by bloodlines or prolonged experiences of living in a dissimilar cultural environment, but also into inquisition about one's claims of citizenship affiliations. As Rorty (2002), talking about Benhabib's book "The Claims of Culture", rightly poses, the resolution of conflicts in pluralistic societies formed on the basis of multiculturalism, largely lies in the ability of these societies to build "a double-track model of deliberative democracy that permits maximum cultural contestation within an official public sphere" (cover page). Truly, the cultural experiences of self and other (Bhabha, 1990) should be based on a continuous deliberate quest into the meanings of diversity and hybridity as its immediate post-colonial outcome. Sought inwardly and outwardly, a question of what citizenship feelings the self may entertain in regards to the official doctrine of nation becomes one of the critical markers in the identification of how cultural self-perception accounts for the citizenship loyalties.

A case in point, cultural diversity has become an integral component of Canadian identity and, technically speaking, Canadian educational institutions, including settlement programs, are "multiculturalism in action" (Taylor, 1997, p. 3). It is safe to assume that the learners who may consider themselves hybrids due to their multicultural and multilingual

background make up a big portion of these populations. Speaking from the perspective of cultural politics in regards to education and curriculum-wise, do these school populations have any special needs to address? How do they feel as Canadians of mixed cultural origins? What social values and loyalties do they develop? Do they experience identity conflict when they attribute their sense of citizenship loyalty to the country of their residence? Can educators address the needs of these populations, say in the language classroom? If a sense of citizenship is a skill more than it is an inherent personal need to express a sense of belonging, how can educators participate in its fostering without breaking the boundaries of free choices in such an intimate matter?

Clearly, negotiation and construction of hybrid identity landscapes take place on a territory abound in tensions. In anthropological terms, these tensions embody a struggle of an individual who is trying to identify the constituents of her identity across two or more cultural backgrounds. From a psychoanalytic perspective, hybridity correlates to a concept defined by the state of being away from a place or person or cast down in spirit (Merriam-Webster, 2013), is most salient in the phenomenon of being hybrid, of being *no one* in particular, or "the state of being cast off" (Kristeva, 1982). From a psychoanalytic perspective, abjection is happening to the parts of ourselves that we exclude: the mother. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva (1982) posed that we must abject the maternal, the object which has created us, in order to construct an identity. Abjection is a process of losing system and order, what disturbs identity and questions its belonging. It is something that does not respect borders, positions, rules; it is all "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (p. 4). As Fraunhofer (2007) summarizes, "abjection is a blurring of boundaries, a contamination of the "proper" center by the outside. The abject is both the zone where contamination occurs and the contaminating matter itself" (para. 2). A hybrid in this case resembles a person who is absent from both

places – her philosophical home and herself, and thus is in a permanent state of identity conflict. To address adequately the issues related to hybrid identities, this phenomenon needs to be further explored and more comprehensively conceptualized. Moreover, a phenomenon of high complexity, hybridity appeals to the scholarly interest in linguistic, cultural, and biological diversity — an area of the transdisciplinary research in the modern age (MacPherson, 2004). At the crossroads of several anthropological and ethnographic fields of study, hybridity can be viewed not only as a side effect of postcolonial heritage, but also as a product of relationships among mixed human networks that encompass the linguistic, social and physical environment as interrelated parts of the whole (Muhlhausler as cited in Maffi, 2005, p. 601).

### **Negotiating the Research Entry**

#### **Why and how to talk about “Hybrids”.**

*Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* by Firmat (1994) has evoked a significant interest to the topic of hybrid identities in the postmodern literature of the 1990's. Although the book specifically introduces the experiences of the Cuban-American populations, its themes and angles of discussion echo the most accentuated topics of the postcolonial discourse and can be equally applied to other hyphenated identities (Martinez, 1996). These topics include: the emergence of new cultural forms and their occupation of the unique space within the nation state; the search, negotiation and construction of multiple configurations of the dual identity status; the struggle with and vacillation between states of conflict and integration of disparate identities within nation state, to name just a few most prominent topics (Bhabha, 1990; 1994; Hammack, 2010a; Hammack, 2010b; Schachter, 2004, 2005). A social condition of transnational capitalism, the phenomenon of hybrid identity becomes a synonym for a double trouble, so to speak, when it comes to its conceptualizing in social research. It happens because hybridity, by the virtue of its inherent ambivalence and nearly never-ending possibilities of individual and

collective representation, generates not only the issue of clear-cut characteristics of personhood informed by the ethnically polyvalent roots but also how these characteristics coordinate with the acquisition of the collective markers of such representations within the boundaries of the state whose collective markers are not necessarily akin to the ones that the hybrid identity embraces. A complex locus of personhood, the self relies on continuous evolving of its constituents yet craves for predictability of its self-image (Hoyle et al., 1999). The “trouble” hybridity brings to the process of self-image construction lies in a low extent on the continuity and predictability of social behaviour that the hyphenated identities exert outwardly. To use Firmat’s (1994) stance, the two forces that largely shape the hyphenated cultures can be introduced as *traditional* and *translational*, where the traditional exemplifies convergence and continuity, or shared concerns and underlying affinities of sorts, while the translational — quite oppositely, considerably speaks of displacement and distancing and certain transmuted meaning that “necessarily entails some mutilation of the original” (p. 3). This discrepancy cannot but disturb the totalizing cultural schema of grand narrative (Lyotard, 1979) with its concept of historical unification and a focus on solidifying and empowerment of the nation within a nation state. In this sense, hybridity will always embody a threat to the continuity of the carefully cultivated legacy of the political culture built into the matrix of the nation state, and therefore calls for adjustments within its context. The adjustments are quite hard to make for the very simple reason that it is not clear what specific adjustments need to be put in place because firstly, cross-cultural fusion defies shared objectives; and secondly, cultural pluralism is amorphous by definition, and therefore ignores power (Kraidy, 2005).

The recent process of disintegration began when, with a domino-like speed, a number of the nation-states fell one after another in Central Europe, Middle East and African countries immediately generated “the demands for identity recognition ...that expand the democratic dialogue by denouncing the exclusivity and hierarchy of existing cultural arrangements”

(Benhabib, 2002, p. ix). Quite evidently, the arrangements of power distribution in these states left from the past are no longer functional in situating the social dialog in a new circumstance. Not surprisingly, “the politics of recognition” introduced by Charles Taylor (1997) a few decades ago reiterates a need for the new approaches to conceptualization of identity. According to Taylor (1997), the idea of how we perceive identity should be based on the intersubjective “webs of interlocution” with a focus on equality and authenticity of self-expression through the “languages of self-understanding” (p. 56). In other words, cultural affiliation of the self may be generated and actualized only in the contexts of subjective expression; however, collective worth cannot simply happen without active involvement of the self in the common practices viewed by the group as a norm. Therefore, it can be assumed that the populations who consider themselves hybrid, may become lost in the manner of how they *are expected* to recognize and understand their languages—only as mere tools for productive socialization or, quite deeper, as tools for constructing their selfhood?

But how easily can the bearers of several cultural traditions, who are often times bilingual speakers of several languages, understand *the* language of their multilingual selves? What is that language like? And—what language? Of what half of the ancestry? How do the bearers of hyphenated identities articulate their hybridity and sense of belonging? It goes without saying, that the choice of their cultural affiliation might be quite difficult. As Maria Gray (2013), a Dominican-American author, states, “I’ve come to understand that the hybrid before identity is an amorphous location — a mutating confluence of multiple factors: personal stories, genealogy, geo-politics, nations, their histories, the pollinating encounters we experience, transnationalism, to name just a few” (p. 3). With the abundance of contributing factors, one can struggle to grasp the most important thing about self — what culture and language truly make her identity? Can she claim her culture? If yes, how?

Even though the topic of identity has never lacked attention in the many linked areas of studies, including sociology, psychology, education, clinical practice, etc., the emergence of the topic revealing the nature of the hyphenated identities, has yet posed many issues. Mostly these issues refer to: 1) “whether or not hybrid identity is seen as a new entity that challenges and subverts hegemonic identities, or if it is just another subject position that will in time be shored up by the hegemonic ways of ‘being’ and living out our identities” (Sandset , 2012, para. 7); 2) if, generally speaking, identities are ways of relating and expressing ourselves to the world, the question is how hybridity, being an effect of deconstruction in itself, constructs, challenges and represents our sense of self in relation to the other; and, 3) most interestingly, how the hybrid identity negotiates the sense of self within and for her *self*? In other words, what are the elements of its formative matrix and meaning in both collective and individual sense? These guiding questions lead to the idea of conducting a study where the participants — those individuals who can claim multiple identities due to their family history or as part of their lived experiences — can express their sense of hybridity in an authentic way — through the language of themselves, in a story. However, to provide the authenticity of such story, the participants of the proposed study will be “provoked by art” (Cole, Neilsen, Knwoles, & Luciani, 2004), by making their stories in literary format to express the duality of their selfhood in poetic language as

a way of researching autobiography with attention to postmodern perspectives that promote language as constitutive; the subject as a constructed matrix of identities; always in process; the interconnections between truth and fiction; discourse as personal and political; understanding and knowledge as fragmented and partial; critique and interrogation as

committing to resisting closure; and, all texts as intertextually connected.

(Leggo, 2004, p. 19)

Along the same line, Kerby (1991) metaphorically emphasizes the connection between the projections of the lived experiences in their fragmented, discrete continuity in a narrative with composing a melody where the musical moments — the separate notes of this melody — can be fully perceived only as part of a larger, continuous, collective melody that has existed before “hearing” the new one. Such fluctuations between “the now” and “before” (Kerby, 1991), us and them, provide a direction and incentive to craft a story in “a form [that] hold[s] the intensity of experience” (Wisecild cited in Crowe, 2004, p. 125). By some accounts, poetry as a way to reproduce aesthetically what is stored in personal and collective memory can become a matrix of such form.

### **Talking about the self: psychoanalytic perspectives.**

Despite the inherent complexity of the topic and inquiry into the nature of hybridity, this study applies psychoanalytic perspectives to the analysis and interpretation of the stories told by the participants. In fact, there is a deep anthropological interdependence between literature and psychoanalytic approaches to the literary text interpretation. If literature can be considered as a branch of anthropology that is recording human memory (Lessing, 1986) and psychoanalysis is a framework that addresses the role of the unconscious stored in memory, we cannot but notice that the goal of both pursuits is to trace a sequence of the human psyche’s development (Galetcaia, 2010). Essentially, both “contribute to an understanding of the creative process as the point of the intersection between the language and being” (Wright, 1998). To this end, the prolific partnership between literature and psychoanalysis established since Freud’s first pronouncements on *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* in 1897 (Schapiro, 1994) has offered a new scrupulous lens to reading literature. Literary characters, whether purely fictitious or drawn from the real-life prototypes, have received a critical rhetoric of the specific epistemological discourse.

Paying heed to multiple manifestations of the unconscious drives in the characters' development, all those fragmented associations, memory traces, slips of the tongue, and daydreaming episodes with their power to invade and disturb the individual experience, the psychoanalytic reading of the text retrieves and interprets the unifying significance of the human condition. This approach emphasizes a deep interrelational link between the author's, the character's and the reader's mind (Galetcaia, 2010). A retrospective account of inner conflicts and struggles in a poem or any other piece of creative narrative often evokes strong associations and visual images in the minds of the author, the reader and the researcher. This helps the research community to identify the recursive themes speaking of causes and developments of the conflict. Attention to and interpretation of these themes engendered on the personal level in the literary work enables researchers to move on to another, psychosocial epistemological level. Not necessarily claiming a possession of some general truth, this approach stimulates thinking socially and psychologically together without "the reductive pressures that work to hold them apart" (Frosh, 2010, p. 39). In a literary work, the personal and the collective is shared by and exchanged between and the writer and the reader, so the boundary between the search for better knowledge of the individual self and the similar quest for the answers related to selfhood in larger audiences becomes quite transparent.

To grasp the meaning of the manifold connection between the individual and the collective and the way both of these dimensions affect the hybrid identity development and presumably evoke identity conflict, this study draws on the ideas of poststructuralist thinkers Bhabha (1991), Butler (1993; 2006), Kristeva (1991), Lacan (1968), Irigaray (2008; 2013), and Žižek (1993) who employ psychoanalytic perspectives in their works that may be viewed as a further evolution of Freudian and Jungian thought; Freudian — related to the manifestations of the individual, while Jungian — in collective domains of selfhood. In my view, continuous tensions between the controlling power of the group and an individual striving for free

articulation of self-identification (while keeping membership of that group) can be better understood with the perspectives on modes of socialization introduced not only by conventional psychology but also by psychoanalytic thinkers. In fact, an experience of group membership and exposure to group management begins with family education. Family instruction begins when parents start to introduce “the discipline of insisting” when the child is expected to formulate her urges in manners prescribed by the family. The simplest example of such micromanagement strategies is instructions for the child to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ when talking to others, greet the others with a smile, and use polite language when asking about something. Thus, “the child learns that she must accept, internalize, and speak “the discourse of the Other” (in this instance, the parents) in order to have her needs recognized, acknowledged, and addressed in a satisfactory fashion. In short, she must make demands couched in terms and conventions imposed by O/others' socio-symbolic regimes” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016, para. 45). If transferred to the process of socialization in hybrid identities, this “discipline of insisting” seems to function in a similar fashion. In this case, cultural production transpires when the socio-symbolic regimes of Others, (e.g. language and cultural traditions of a certain cultural group) are imposed on a social agent with the intent to denaturalize her own urges and dominate her modes of social functioning. Denaturalization progresses with transforming an individual agent into a collective agent. As a result, a feeling of autonomy in populations whose roots embrace more than one cultural tradition, may feel repressed, isolated and manipulated by either of the groups whose membership these individuals share, whether due to their family history or life experience. In truth, they may feel so heavily influenced by any of these groups that they could hardly *imagine* themselves, as so rightly claims John Saul (2008) talking about Metis civilization in his book *A Fair Country*. “Deeply Aboriginal” in their core and yet referring to “institutional and cultural inheritance from British parliamentary democracy, British

and French justice...Western individualism with its important variations”, the Metis populations find themselves caught in elaborated “theatrical screens” of self-crafted mythology, which eventually contributes to their misrepresentation (Saul, 2008, p. 1). So, the parallel processes described in psychoanalytic theories regarding how the development of socialization may cause a repressed state of mind and a feeling of disorientation across individuals under group control can be useful in analyzing the state of a constant search for a personal image of hybrid identities. They may experience similar repression and disorientation caused by micromanagement of her social agency within the groups who claim the ownership of the Nation-Thing (Zizek, 1993), a sense of deeply shared cultural affiliation.

Furthermore, psychoanalysis has been always viewed by Freud and his followers as a laborious process of learning about another human being with attention to all possible oddities of and disruptions in her experience. Felman (1982) asserts that due to this capacity psychoanalysis can be well viewed as a pedagogical experience, or “as a process which gives access to new knowledge hitherto denied to consciousness, it affords what might be called a lesson in cognition (and in miscognition), an epistemological instruction” (p. 27). In addition, Freud’s idea of learning in pedagogical practice presumes a higher exploratory value given to gaps rather than to lines, silences than utterances, and to discontinuities rather than to perfectly linear conventionalities of “absolute knowledge” framing. In this regard, similarly to the multiple representations of cultural hybridity as a social phenomenon, with all its oddities and ambiguities, the current work attends to multiplicity of the expressed and silenced meanings of the autoethnographic pieces generated during the study process, to which end the arts-informed modalities of data collection and interpretation are employed. In addition, the proposed study uses theories of social conflict presented in the works of postpositivist and poststructuralist thinkers, including the theory of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1933) and theory of assemblage (DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

With all these theories in mind, the main research question of this study is how do the participants make the meaning of their experience as persons of dual/multiple background and what cultural as well as linguistic background do they mostly affiliate themselves with? This question is further specified by the two orienting questions: 1) Do the study participants consider themselves hybrid or hyphenated identities? 2) What citizenship loyalties do they entertain as part of their identity?

In sum, the researcher engages in the theorizing of ambiguities and complexities that make what we call hybrid identity, and proposes several perspectives and methodological approaches to explore its formative and discursive contexts. In Chapter Two the writer locates key terms and concepts related to hybrid identity found in literature; in Chapter Three she attends to the methods used to explore the critical contexts of target populations through composing biotexts or autoethnographic narrative pieces that are expressed in poetic, visual and mixed media formats; in Chapter Four there is a description of study design and research procedures; in Chapters Five, Six and Seven the writer summarizes data analysis and connects the findings with educational practices. A piece of narrative between Chapter Four and Chapter Five titled *Interleaf* interrupts the traditional sequence of academic discussion established in dissertations with the purpose of bringing the voices of study participants closer to the reader. On the one hand, *Interleaf* serves to exemplify a corpus of data entries and makes the participants' claims more visible; on the other, these entries are viewed as a means to provide the reader with an opportunity to weave the research texts into a practice of interpretative knowing, or, instead of moving from life to language (Janzen, 2011) to move from language to life leaving the space for alternative discourses. Further on, in Appendices, the accompanying documents are attached.

## CHAPTER II

### LOCATING TERMS AND ISSUES

#### **On Terms**

On the most basic level, the terms *hybrid* and *hybridity* used in social sciences relate to material culture in a historical perspective yet to more abstract concepts with an extension of its material essence. In the postcolonial discourse, *hybridity* refers to “the interbreeding or mixing of different peoples, cultures and societies” (AlSayyid, 2001). Not infrequently, there is a distinct negative connotation referring to the biological origin of this term when applied to people. The most common association that comes to mind relates to a mixture of bloodlines that easily brings us to an issue of a pure blood versus that of a “muggle”, a half-breed, using *Harry Potter’s* discriminatory rhetoric. Truly, a splitting of the whole can be naturally regarded as a challenge toward normalcy. While growing up in the Bronx, the author of the *Meanderings on the Making of a Diasporic Hybrid Identity*, Maria Dulce Gray, an economic refugee of the civil war in the Dominican Republic, confesses that she “often yearned for parents who were “normal” Americans, parents who weren’t immigrants, didn’t work in factories, and didn’t speak too loudly” (2013, p. 1). She further admits that the word *hybrid* speaks of “assimilation, integration and cultural erasure” to her, because adopting American ways has to transpire inevitably by way of giving up Dominican ways. Therefore, as she writes, “becoming hybrid can negate anticolonialism” (Gray, 2013, p.1).

Another shade of tension is expressed in Bhabha’s (1994) *Location of Culture* when, describing attributions of hybridity in postcolonial stance, he speaks of the discriminatory effect of a “strategy of disavowal” that is present in “the dialectical power struggle” of a hybrid identity torn “between the self and other” and “the self and its doubles”. This tension is reflected in the conflict of interest mentioned by Bhabha happening between “mother culture and alien culture” and — most dramatically — between “mother culture and its bastards” (p.111). Clearly,

both Gray and Bhabha view the process of hybridization as an invidious evidence of the never fully vanishing colonial presence, resulting in emergence of the new representative human agency that bears “the trace of what is disavowed — not repressed but repeated as something different — a mutation, a hybrid” (Bhabha, 1991, p.111). These accounts are twofold: firstly, they testify to the politicised sense of hybridity as a disturbing social experience — a tangled nexus of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, ideological and political confusion largely evoked by the mimicry of the colonial authority who is hiding the true representations of power, and secondly, they speak to the perceptions of exiles, émigrés and refugees or people scattered on the edge of foreign cultures unsure about themselves and their place “in the nations of others” (Bhabha, 1990).

In a similar fashion, the term *hyphenated identity* originated from the politics of language referring to the extent of the loyalty the US citizens were expected to qualify for in the late nineteenth century. It was while addressing the Knights of Columbus in New York City on 12 October 1915, when Theodore Roosevelt said: “When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans.... a hyphenated American is not an American at all.... The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else” (Sengupta, 2008, para. 1). Although the times of the overt proclamations pertaining to such ethnocentric values seem to have dissipated in the centuries to come, the semantics of hyphenated identity is still equilibrating within a range of negative connotations including nomadism, rootlessness, temporariness, which speak of inadequacy and inferiority, and, consequently, unfaithfulness and disloyalty. In that sense, the bearers of the hyphenated identities are seen as “cultural chameleons” (Kraidy, 2005) or those without kith or kin. More so, according to the same author, the acts of mimicry and simulation, when younger generations of immigrants mimic snapshots

of Western lifestyles not being really attached to the western values, reflect not so much their identity crisis but manifestations of debunking the very idea of identity construction, due to the deterritorialization and cultural emptiness of an artificially crafted, pretended, “fake” culture.

The literature suggests that hybridity is a too murky term to be determined unilaterally (Benhabib, 2002; Kraidy, 2005; Martinez, 1996). Its terrain, synthetic by definition, is malleable and manifold as is the context of its phenomenological origin — the era of “cultural globalization” (Kraidy, 2005; Tomlinson, 1999) or what Marshall McLuhan described by the term "global village" analyzing the effect of the modern world’s ability to connect and exchange information resulting in “homogenization of certain aspects of the economy and the society (Mishra, 2004). Hybridity is poly- and multi-continuous and boundary-free and at the same time it is a source as much as it is a product of discontinuity and disruption in the course of the expected evolutionary movement ahead. It is transforming as much as it is transformative. Rather an abstract rhetorical notion than a univocally defined concept, it confuses more than it explicates, disturbs more than agrees, and therefore it often becomes a subject matter of critical and/or antagonistic discourse (Hall, 2000).

To be more specific, in recent cultural studies *hybridity*, mostly referring to theorization of and debates on hybrid identity, is discussed as a topic of a postcolonial, poststructuralist and postpositivist discourse (Bhabha, 1994; Butler, 1990; Derrida, 1998; Deleuze cited in Stivale, 2005) in the context of *critical transculturalism* (Kraidy, 2005), *communication practices* (AlSayyad, 2001; Gray, 2013), *postcolonial text* and what Deleuze (cited in Stivale, 2005) calls “the realm of common sense” referring to the requirements of habit and what Fairclough (2001) attributes as “common sense in service of power”. The latter echoes the idea of “*commonsense knowledge*, what everybody knows in a given group or society” (Schutz cited in Riley, 2007,

p. 5). As opposed to theoretical knowledge or formalized discourse on the essence of things and phenomena, *commonsense knowledge* refers to the make-sense search of the beliefs and values in real-life situations brought to attention not necessarily by scholars but by the members of the target group, in this case — by hybrids. Above all, this type of study and knowledge in my view contributes more to the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) than stacks of scholarly texts written without the presence of their — hybrids' — voices. With all its complexity, hybridity as a phenomenon of the mixed origin, quality and ideological message that float along the wide spectrum between an “identity-to-imagine”, “identity-what-is”, and “identity-to-become”, can be — and largely is — conceptualized in literature through interdisciplinary intellectual traditions of thinking. Yet if there is much consensus on the qualitative importance of conceptualization of hybridity in the context of modern theories of self and identity, there is still much debate on the criteria of its development, characteristics and oddly enough — its right to occupy a separate niche in the sociological inventory of the myriads of identities mentioned above. In other words, how legitimate are claims of hybrid identity as an abstract postcolonial label for its declarative uniqueness in the sense that in biological terms as species we all originate from two biological parents, a question which is asked so reasonably by Sandset, (2012), “If hybrid identity is seen as formed at both the biological and cultural level, an important question arises: are we then all hybrids?” Are we, really? A case of “a Metis nation” described by John Saul (2008) in *A Fair Country* mentioned above can be a good illustration for that argument. If all Canadians are hybrid, as Saul poses, then a number of Metis people can feel that their true identity is misrepresented because their Aboriginal roots will be largely washed out by a universalizing definition of hybridity. It may feel like they lose their real face and their claims to sovereignty, as a *Metis* population will be subjected to displacement and denaturalization. Will an approach

to hybridity as a sociological universal that describes everyone and nobody in particular bring even more dependency and isolation to these people instead of a larger autonomy? Or will it rather evoke a nationalism of the marginalized? How helpful will this universalized notion of hybridity be for contributing to a Metis population ability to more clearly describe themselves and avoid falling into even a larger denial of their reality? By posing these questions, Saul (2008) explores Metis' continuous frustration over tensions between their natural striving for sovereignty in the European sense and pursuing of an indigenous idea of self-governing within a nation state whose entire population is hybrid.

Another dimension of the inquiry into how hybridity should be considered in scholarly terms, is a matter to decide whether it should be looked at as an artifact that speaks of its own culture, or as a process that reflects the occurred discontinuities along the way when one culture encounters and communicates with another — the process that may allow us “to measure change through the types and direction of acculturation that occurred in diverse contexts” (Hoover cited in Martinez, 1996, p. 5). Both of these approaches seem valid yet unfeasible if being taken one in the absence of the other, because dealing purely with material culture often leaves the behavioral aspects of cultural fusion and its ability to produce new cultural forms far behind (Martinez, 1996). Human ideas and expressed motivations are conditioned by the biological and social environment that dictate and promote certain patterns of behavior within social groups. Neo-Darwinists claim that cultural variation is rooted in the mechanism of “a second system of inheritance, memes, or culturally transmitted ideas, and as such cannot be understood in the same way as other animals can” (Nettle, 2009, p. 223). Memes, by the analogy to genes, represent cultural units that “self-replicate, mutate, and respond to selective pressures” (Graham, 2002, p. 196). Leaving a heated debate between Darwinian adaptationists (Geertz, 1973) and sociologists on “the social-versus-biological” origin of culture behind, we can assume that both factors play a significant role in the explanation of cultural variations' genesis, and obviously, a

phenomenon of hybridity, in vein with its multiple nature, is a concern of multiple scholarly gaze: that of anthropology and evolutionary psychology, sociology and cultural politics.

### **On Issues: The Nation State and Hybridity: Origins of [Dis]continuity**

*Hybridity can only exist in a world with borders.*

Smith (2008)

Despite an obvious absence of consensus on what *is* hybridity versus what *makes* hybridity, across the scholarship, the meaning of the term reflects the issues that this phenomenon represents. The populations that can be called hybrids would never identify themselves as such if not for the environment of that happenstance that Bourdieu (1993) calls *a field of power* or *a field of cultural production*, a field that is constructed, generated and procreated by the nation state. Why so? For better or for worse, the tribal character of the human societal structure quite inevitably — as much as regrettably — calls for a determination of certain boundaries that set up the representative format of that structure. When attempting to define a nation — a certain societal entity fixed in time and space with different types of ideological glue — political, historical, religious, ethnolinguistic, etc., we have to apply such attributive aspects of nation as geography, language, race, religion, culture, etc. (Renan, 1990). On the surface, it is a self-explanatory or “deceptively simple-seeming” (Tomlinson, 1997) notion. If asked what a nation is, most likely we can say, it is a group, a tribe, a land, a language “incarnated” (Zizek, 1993); a social construct that claims territorial and political independence from its neighbours. However, the ambiguity of *nation* is rooted in its own semantics. Etymologically, the word *nation* came to English from the Old French word *nacion*, which originates from the Latin word *natio*, literally meaning “birth, origin; breed, stock, kind, species; race of people, tribe,” or “that which has been born” (Harper, 2013). It comes both clear and quite ambiguous. Is nation a land or a tribe? A language or the government? The shared history or, rather, shared stocks? If the nation state is “a structure where population of some land is controlled by its own government”

(Merriam-Webster, 2013), can we say then that national identity describes anyone who identifies herself with the group representing the nation-state? The answer is yes and no. In Marx's (cited in Schelleneberg, 1996) stance, the nation state initially emerges in economic terms, as the tribal property, which in the course of time is being replaced by the private property. He writes, "through the emancipation of private property from the community, the State has become a separate entity, beside and outside civil society" (p. 81). In this analysis all aspects of social life, including politics and culture are not separated from the economic domain as might have been proposed by liberal thinking (Jeong, 2000). Due to the fact that nation and nation-state represent a tandem of symbolic-ideological character they reflect structural agencies whose main function is to serve as an instrument of national unity in all spheres of life including economic, social and cultural domains. Apparently, the mode of influence of the two on the collective and individual identity is that of a formative, uniting and defensive nature.

### **Visiting Sites of Identity: Location, Language, Culture**

The first and foremost task of linking identity to that of location and language is to create a nucleus of what Zizek (1993) after Lacan calls "the Nation Thing"(p. 595) — the bond linking together its members on the ground of sharing that Thing. Hardly expressed yet intensely felt, it is this Nation Thing that cements the building of the elusive entity of nationhood. Its forced power is aiming at the proclamation of sovereignty and often passive-aggressive self-advertisement in the form of nationalism. Being an amalgam the critical aspects of personal life, such as place of birth, and collective consciousness — represented in the language spoken and the culture shared — the agency of being is often permeated by nationalism like none other. No wonder, when we think of our identities we rely on the same features that constitute nation — place, language, cultural norms and values. It is through them that we negotiate the eternal question of who we are. Does it mean then that the adherence to the nation state or the nation reflects who we are?

Undoubtedly, nation, along with the formalized mode of its corporate existence — the nation state — largely affects the development of collective and individual identity through the two main types of the politically charged glue — the politics of location (Hall, 2000) and the politics of symbolic identification and continuity—that is, the politics of language reproducing the power of collective memory over time. Both serve the purposes of maintaining the unity of the territory, equality, and the right of the dominant ethnic group to self-determination.

Unfortunately, the establishment of these agencies is accompanied by a destructive influence because it leads to the arrangement of contradictory and self-serving authoritarian liberty based on the antagonism with the Other. Besides the emergence of the quite controversial practice of *distributive justice* (Rawls, 1999), when social benefits are distributed with the view to what “we” as a “nation” deem important for the success of “them” — the individuals of alternative backgrounds who also live on “our” territory, the most destructive consequence of such a formative principle of the nation state is the development of the “authoritarian personality” (Baars & Scheepers, 1993; Zizek, 1993). It is this very pattern of national self-identification that provoked the rise of fascism in the 1930s, and the most misanthropic dictatorships of the modern history, including the so-called democratic states such as North Korea and the Democratic Kampuchea, the bloody nation-state of the Khmers Rouge, sadly infamous for the overt genocide against its own population. All of these ideologies combined the elements of Marxism with an “extreme version of nationalism and xenophobia” (Jongman, 1996). The seemingly positive doctrine of the authoritarian personality, one fostering a virtuous conservative who is loyal and obedient to the national idea and its government — in reality stimulates nothing else but the manufacturing of the “fixed identities” (Zizek, 1993) who entertain prescribed ideological positions. The reproduction of the national ideal according to this doctrine is carried through the all-population appeal to the construction of nationhood, strict subordination to patriarchal authorities, adherence to traditionally perceived gender roles and supporting claims for the

sovereignty of the socioeconomic development. It is what de Silva (cited in Jeong, 2000) describes as “the emergence of consciousness of a separate ethnic or national identity [that] leads to the insistence of the congruence between the political and national unit” (p. 230). Put simply, the appropriation of nationhood becomes a political act.

Once the collective identity of the ethnic group is shaped and nurtured, this group acquires the more developed sense of self-awareness sustained by the accumulation of the cultural capital (Bourdieu cited in MacLeod, 2009). Being accumulated over time, as mentioned by Shutz, this capital or the “bank of knowledge” (Lederach, 1995) is rooted in culture: through the schemes of the culturally constructed social meaning, it is transmitted to the next generation recreating the patterns of collective consciousness in the individuals of the same ethnic group. Similar to how an individual negotiates her sense of selfhood by act of comparison (Lederach, 1995), the ethnic group develops its sense of nationhood by projecting its selfhood against the other. The more the national thing is nurtured, the stronger the group becomes and, metaphorically speaking, the louder the voices of its members vocalize aspirations for self-governing. It is from here that such groups can move ahead to more assertive fighting for the equal participation in the political processes and distribution of resources.

The main pitfall arises though when the idea of the uniform citizenship, paradoxically, undermines its own premise — the idea of the state integrity — because the call for the national unification challenges the legitimacy of subgroups living on the same territory. As a result, the flow of the smooth development prescribed and preprogrammed by a grand narrative of the nation state is disrupted by the emergence of mixed identities. The processes when “things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterised, classified, and known in the same way” from one generation to the next represent the state of discontinuity (Foucault, 1994, p. 247).

Discontinuity breaks the fixedness of the loyal identities from inside and proclaims the order of things that is no longer based on habitual dichotomies. Hybridity, as Princeton (2013) argues:

...refuses oversimplified dichotomies of God/human, colonizer/colonized, black/white, male/female, or Asian/American, preferring to speak of the complicated and often conflicted space “in-between,” ...in “the Third Space”, where identity and meaning are constructed and negotiated in often messy ways. (para. 4).

Therefore, we can say that these “messy” ways challenge the ideal of the national identity not from outside but from within — as a result of the inherent structural conflict that is being born when the nation state is.

In terms of the politics of language, Fairclough (2001) argues that language is not only a form of socially engendered practice but also a social process, never external to society. Social phenomena are linguistically shaped — they are described, interpreted and explained through language. Therefore, the *politics of language* is another contextual influence on the formation and dynamics of hybrid identities in the nation state. Compared to the politics of location, it can be said that cultural activity is expressed through language on a personal level much more than it is through the collective level. It is one thing to associate one’s identity with a group and quite another to appeal to the idea of the *national* self one-on-one to yourself. On the level of collective consciousness, self-determination reflects the basic human need of the group that shares such objective characteristics as language, religion, historical tradition and ethnicity (Jeong, 2000) to satisfy its aspiration for self-identification. But what happens on the level of the individual consciousness? According to Chaudhary (2004), “each new individual born to society is unique also because of the way nature, society and the unfolding future coincide” (p. 199). Following this stance, we can assume that “the dynamic of the unique and the common” makes

the canvas of “the interface between expectations and outcomes” (p. 199). In other words, we are the products of our own experiences, and our self-identification begins with our experiences with language. Cultural discourse, no matter how socially conditioned it happens to be, starts within individual consciousness formed and developed by native language. To a large extent, language, as a constructing material for building the bank of collective memory of the “nation” (Rodriguez & Fortier, 2007) also bears the grain of discontent. Through its semiotics, semantics and culturally rooted intentionality (Searle, 1979; Kristeva, 1991), it articulates and somewhat suggests the accepted models of subjectivity. Providing an ethnographic account of the development of Navajo language and the extent of its control over the Navajo worldview, Witherspoon (1977) emphasizes that “the value orientations and behavior patterns of the Navajo correlate with their basic metaphysical assumptions about the nature and operation of reality” (p. 194). To specify, through the first mention of the word “air”, the Navajo child will not only receive a concept of the wind, breath and natural element of the world related to the sky and clouds, but also a concept of how life is structured by and through air because according to their beliefs “air contains the supreme power of motion in the universe and ultimate source of all knowledge” (Witherspoon cited in Galetcaia, 2013). According to Navajo, it is with language that man is creative and powerful, because through language “the man finds the meaning of his being” (Witherspoon, 1977).

These accounts illustrate that language constructs and restores the patriarchal order of things and reproduces the patterns of thinking and self-identification. To exemplify, it is enough to mention the specific forms of address to the senior speakers in Korean or the application of different forms of *you* in Russian signifying the power relations in formal contexts. Like a litmus paper, language reveals the subjective choices the self makes for the communication with

the Other (and for what purposes she does so) and also constructs the inner code of the self — a framework for expressing subjectivity, or what Heidegger calls “self-disclosure and protection” (cited in Gosetti, 1999).

Notably, the existence of the standard language comes as a result of “economic, political and cultural unification tied up to the emergence of capitalism out of feudal society in Britain” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 47). It does not only suggest a dichotomy of standard versus non-standard language variations — pure, elite, etc., vs. reduced, vehicular languages — but also precipitates an analogy between “standard”, “fixed” and hybrid identity. It occurs that national identity gains an imagery of the moral value that needs to be strived for. From this perspective, hybrid identity, with all its multifaceted constituents and inconsistencies, splits the solidity of the standard, fixed — national — identity with its pure, well-established forms and expected patterns of discourse. Thus, the absence of the expected features in hybrid identity disrupts the structural hierarchy of power. The colonizer/colonized relational dynamics between the Master nation and the Slave nation of the colonial and postcolonial eras is over the course of time replaced by the images perceived as the superior and inferior representations within a nation, say a vision of Afro-Americans residing in Brooklyn as the lower strata of the mainstream American society while the Afro-American professional managerial strata — as its upper layer (Bush, 2008). Such a hierarchical divide does not stop at offering a supremacist ideological labeling of these cohorts in accordance with their social status, but goes further by profiling them differently even from the point of view of moral standards; — the first group is considered “not merely inferior and lacking in values” but is also claimed to be “immoral or amoral” (Bush, 2008, p. 157).

To recapitulate, the literature suggests that the origin of the kind of hybridity I am addressing in this thesis is rooted in the very essence of the nation state. A signifier of discontinuity, an “incidence of interruption” in the Foucaultian stance, hybrid identity can be best understood as an oppositional element of the dichotomy — national vs. hybrid identity. Its

“messy ways”, best seen in contrast to those of the fixed identities of the nation state, undermine the collective immaculate image of the national identity that by the ideological prescription needs to bear the traits of the dominating, ethnocentric majority who speak the official, national language, is loyal to the Nation-Thing and often conveniently occupies the higher echelons in the hierarchal structure of power.

**Defining symbolic: entry into collective memory.**

Defining the symbolic, both Jung and Lacan view this concept as the major influential force on selfhood in reference to the experience of the socialized and linguistic self. According to Jung, symbolic can be defined as “the best possible formulation of a relatively unknown thing ... standing for something that is ... not yet clearly conscious which depends chiefly on the attitude of the observing consciousness” (cited in Jones, 2007, p. 28). In other words, Jung specifies the meaning of the *symbolic* as a representation of attitude towards content on the part of the subject who interacts with the outer world and distinguishes the objects from itself using a system of signs or symbols. Expanding on this conception, Lacan states that besides mind images symbolic is expressed through language as a system of signification when the very instrument of the word is idea-symbol where “the particular effects of the element of language are intimately linked to the existence of the set or whole, anterior to any possible liaison with any particular experience of the subject” (Lacan, 1968, p. 37). Clearly, both thinkers specify the meaning of the symbolic as an act of attitude towards content on the part of the subject who distinguishes the objects from the outer world and who expresses her subjective experience through language — a symbolic entity that emerged before the subjective experience but serves to express it — subjectively. Furthermore, symbols which emerge sensationally through an *associative thinking*, to Jung are also characterized by their function to perform a *directed thinking* (Jones, 2007), when the association based on similarity or dissimilarity of images logically creates a symbol that can further be related not only to the subjective mind work or fantasizing but — the creation of a

symbolic reality which is reflected in cultural production. Borrowing Lacan's notion of *the imaginary* related to mirror-stage when cultural practices are reproduced in an individual ego development, the psychoanalyst Castoriadis (1987) refers cultural production to the order of *social imaginary*. Social imaginaries refer to "the ethos of a group in the sense of a society's shared, unifying core conceptions" (Ivy, 1995). Citing Castoriadis, Strauss (2006) emphasizes that the focus in formation of symbols in cultural production through collective imaginary is "on unity, rather than multiplicity":

What is it that, amidst the infinity of possible symbolic structures, specifies one symbolic system, established the prevalent canonical relations, orients in one of the innumerable possible directions all the metaphors and metonymies? ... We cannot understand a society outside of a unifying factor that provides a signified content and weaves it with the symbolic structures. (p. 160)

In the similar vein, talking about subjective experiences, Jung separates the *personal unconscious* from the *collective unconscious* that takes part in symbol formation. For Jung collective images or archetypes make "the innermost layer of psyche that accumulates inherited experiences or "a reservoir of the experiences of our species" (Jung, 1991). The latter resonates well with the idea expressed by a number of sociologists on the nature of aggregated human experience that they called collective (Durkheim & Giddens, 1972); or cultural memory which "exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance" (Assman, 1995, p. 130). These collective "figures of memory", as Assman calls them, reflect the symbolic of the cultural collective experience and emerge in the flow of communicative practices. They include images, texts, rituals, poems, festivals, etc. which form

the “islands of time” and create a unique, “completely different temporality that is suspended from time” (Assman, 1995, p. 129) with no strict boundary between conscious and unconscious, where the personal and collective blend to form a no less unique “cultural” self. This stance resonates well with Lipis’s (2011) mention of texts as the symbolic house of being as well as those described respectively by Bourdieu and Deleuze as habitus and assemblage.

How does it refer to the inner conflict related to hybridity? The assumption suggested by literature is that due to the multiplicity of the hybrid identity’s formative matrix the hybrid self is affected by the polyvalence of its formative constituents. The internal discomfort is caused by the ambiguity of the influences coming from the amalgamation of symbolically distant cultural sources and a hiatus that emerges due to the losses of adherence to common symbols and meanings (Stein & Jones, 2010). Besides, the formal markers of habitus — a niche of belonging which a person constructs in the social hierarchy of values — push the agent to the unduly anxious comparison of herself with the attributed, imagined, stereotyped self — the one that is imagined by the observer not the person to whom the markers are ascribed. Here is how Fred Wah describes his struggle of self-identification, provoked by his girlfriend’s father’s comments about Fred dating his daughter:

He says ...you’ve got sneaky eyes and I don’t want you seeing my daughter anymore...I can’t even speak Chinese, my eyes don’t slant and aren’t black my hair’s light brown and I’m not going to work in a restaurant all my life but ...my name’s still going to be Wah and I’ll love garlic and rice for the rest of my life. (1996, p. 39)

Although Fred scorns the stereotyped attitude towards him, he cannot make sense of some symbols of one of the cultures that reflects his bloodlines:

Almost everything in Chinese stands for good luck, it seems. You're not supposed to use words that might bring bad luck. Aunty Ethel is very upset when we choose a white casket for my father's funeral. She says, that no good! White mean death, bad luck! (Wah, 1996, p. 25)

It seems as if Fred, annoyed by the love of Chinese towards superstitions, fell victim to that double denial of his own reality that John Saul attributes to struggles of Metis populations in Canada. To usefully reflect and represent themselves Metis people have to create a context of their reality and build up self-confidence within that context (Saul, 2008). Instead they often fall into self-denial by trying to represent something they are not. Being drowned in endless arguments around superiority of one culture that constitutes their identity over another, they stumble in adherence to their colonizing roots and lapse into double denial because "their real history is not part of how they describe themselves" (p. 21). In Zizek's terms, these people fail to grasp a Nation-Thing that establishes a framework for an "elusive entity called 'our way of life'" (1993). Similarly, Fred denies his Chinese identity by claiming his Western identity, yet cannot fully deny it. To represent his Chinese identity, Fred needs to make sense of symbolic language of the Chinese traditional lore; to represent his Western identity Fred has to deny these Chinese symbols because they make no sense for a him, a self-claimed Westerner; however, if being denied, these symbolic languages of each culture cannot but tear Fred apart because he may feel abjected from something that partly makes his identity, whether he wants to admit it or not. As a result, he denies both, being lost in cross-cultural battle when the symbols of one culture constitutive of his identity univocally reject the symbols of the other. He is Chinese as much as he is not.

Like a hero of Nagesh Rao's poem *I'm a door*, who is "caught between two rooms": Indian and American cultures, the hybrid identities are in a constant state of transition from one

virtual space of collective memory to another. More so, they are in constant search of something common or new in between the two, some formative glue that can be used to symbolically construct their selfhood and overpass the influential existence of the dissimilar artifacts — the “figures of collective memory”. Truly, learning to see themselves is a matter of a long effort.

The focus on unity and continuity that dominates the collection of the symbolic artifacts of collective memory simply cannot actualize in conventional terms in the hybrid self because of the structural and inherent multiplicity of a hybrid. The polyvalence of the formative bricks of a hybrid identity creates the space where the different sides — those primordial, archaeological sites of the self — may constantly weigh what bloodline and whose symbolic prevail, or even may question the legitimacy of each other. In psychoanalytic terms, the inner conflict in hybrid identity may lie in the fact that the other is not someone who can be called *you*, some unknown, impersonal outsider, but a strangely thinking, feeling and acting insider — *I*. In this case, the Jungian idea of “wholeness as a combination of “I and You”” represents an encounter of the I and You who, unlike in national identities, construct their selfhood not from one but from symbolically different sources. Furthermore, each virtual side of the hybrid identity has the right to be listened to and heard and then the inner debate may unfold around the centres of quite often antagonistic inheritance when the collective memory from both sides is marked by the suffering and bloodshed due to historically experienced violence (e.g. in representatives of African American descent or mixed First Nations and European heritage). In psychoanalytic terms, the suppressed side in hybrid identity may rebel against the hegemonic side, so to speak, which cannot but create an ongoing latent conflict.

### **Performativity.**

Louise Erdrich's "Robes or not, I am human, she said to herself", from her *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001) explains well another psychoanalytic perspective that may add to our understanding of the hybrid identity expressed through the arts-informed auto ethnographic narratives. It goes about the concept of performativity introduced by Judith Butler in her essay *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988). Using the Freudian notion of identity as an entity structured in relation to the normal, and feminist Luce Irigaray's argument that "women constitute a paradox, if not a contradiction within the discourse of identity", Butler formulates an approach to gender identity defying the traditional meaning of the norm. Performativity defines gender not by biological, "natural" or socially established markers but by the performance of gender. She compares a performance of gender to a performance of the actor in the theatre, where individuals can function as actors of their gender. Butler suggests that if gender is framed as a set of fixed simplified characteristics, its function is inevitably reduced to a certain required code, like a dress code, for example, or as a sequence of repetitive acts, rituals, and stylistic preferences. As a result, socially constructed sets of fixed gender characteristics are reflected in the regulative discourses, outlining the codes of presupposed behaviour that cannot but promote the presupposed mode of thinking. By questioning normativity, Butler's alternative approach to identity undermines the prescribed discourses of the national identity in the nation state — which voice the same rhetoric of who is considered a national identity: one is what one should do instead of one is what one does. Obviously, Butler's view of gender and sexuality is not based on a search for differences between the two sexes, but on a possibility for gender representation in the context of what seems authentic on an individual plane.

In this respect, performativity adds a new dimension of what hybridity may mean. If described performatively and not prescriptively, or how one exists and whose functions are being performed on the individual plane, the image of hybrid identity may lose its threatening sense of

an alien element of the system that defies the rules of its existence. Rather, such a disobedience to the rules occurs not because the rules in the eyes of a hybrid do not exist but because for her they are different. To specify, the person who identifies herself with two cultures — say the Aboriginal culture and the French culture — may not support the policies against one or the other because of a lack of patriotic feelings but because for her patriotism has a different meaning extended to both cultures not one. Therefore, the hybrid self defies an oversimplified generalization of her loyalties and should not necessarily be seen as “the cursed for all times” (Weber, 1977) an aberration of the norm, a renegade form of the expected image of one who has to fully inherit or represent the essence of the formative culture. In a word, collectivity and collective memory, what generally is being understood as an unquestionable asset for formulating adherence to some unified culture, may quite legitimately be absent from the set of characteristics of a hybrid identity due to its performatively constructed habitus and mixed, unrepresentable assemblage (Deleuze et al., 1987).

### **Unrepresentability.**

To formulate performativity as the main principle of how to approach “gender trouble”, Butler builds her argument around Irigaray’s stance that “women signify a category of *unrepresentable*, a sex which is not one, but multiple” (1985, p. 10). For Irigaray the inequality of the two sexes lies in the fact that they are not equal in essence, and, consequently are incomparable, because they are operating on different existential levels that never get crossed. In the Freudian and Lacanian representation of the nature of feminine sexuality, it is perceived as a “lack” since the theory of sexuality is construed within a “phallogocentric” framework. From the latter, perceptive female sexuality is seen as a void under constraint that is eternally craving for what is lacking in woman’s body — a phallus. As a result, both Freud and Lacan treat “female sexuality as a nonexistent entity. Irigaray finds this view discriminatory and to oppose this explanation, she proposes her counter model of female sexuality stating that it is more complex

than that of male's and does not depend only on one sexual organ but on the entire body that expresses female sexuality as one. As such, it cannot be reduced only to one organ; otherwise, we would fall into the same error as Freud did. Irigaray does not want to explain female sexuality using the same logic when Freudian theory talks about the development of human as a man. Irigaray shifts this point of reference, by opposing the male-related frame of reference to the existence of a parallel, different, alternative and therefore — incomparable entity.

The latter definition of female sexuality surprisingly matches the collective descriptors that we observed before in literature applied to hybrid identity. The resemblance may become quite striking and salient if by analogy we replace the dichotomy of male-oriented and female-oriented framework in the construction of gender and sexual identity by a similar dichotomy of the nation-oriented and hybrid-oriented construction of social identity. The dominance of the first and the subversive nature of the second elements in each of these dichotomies are obvious. Such a resemblance testifies to the parallel, alternative and therefore incomparable and unrepresentable nature of hybridity in relation to the national identity. Thus, there is a relational difference between the two. Paraphrasing Irigaray who speaks about how women are being deprived of their right to express their subjectivity in the male-oriented hierarchical world, the unrepresentable hybrids similarly struggle with their incongruence with the world in which *I* sees others only as objects related to the multiple domains of that *I*. It is the world of *Is* that find comfort amongst the very similar *Is* (men in the men's world; national identity amongst the like); others exists only as the objects of the use for the dominant *I*. In contrast, in the female-oriented world, the relation of the *I* to the world is based on seeing *I* together with equal others, a world that “promote[s] female values — coexistence and sharing in the difference” (Irigaray, 2013). Thus, the subversive identities have yet to negotiate their place and ways of self-representation in the hegemonic world and “determine for themselves how they want to be defined” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014, para 2).

**Abjection and hybridity: is hybrid — the abjected incarnated.**

If in the Irigarayan stance the relationship between the national identity and hybrid identity resembles the relationship between the male-oriented and female-oriented world, Julia Kristeva's concept of *abjection* may vividly illustrate one traumatic aspect in another intricate relationship that has always been critical in psychoanalysis — the one between a mother and a child. To add to the drama, in hybrid identity the state of abjection is reciprocal. According to Kristeva (1991), *abjection* or "the state of being cast off" is happening to the parts of ourselves that we exclude: the mother. This stance describes the necessity to abject the maternal, the object which has created us, in order to construct an identity and become independent. Abjection is a process of losing a system and order, what disturbs identity and questions its belonging. From the perspective of personal development, abjection resonates most of all with the period of adolescence, or rather the transition periods from infancy to childhood and then — to adolescence.

As much as the state of transition it marks, abjection symbolizes something that does not respect borders, positions, rules; it is all "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva, 1991). An infant associates herself with mother and structures her identity in relation to the attachment and sense of trust she experiences towards her mother. It can be said that the figure of mother is another primordial representation of the place of belonging or symbolic house of being when the child cannot yet make a strict separation of her identity from that of her mother's.

For a hybrid, a person with the ambiguous, transient sense of belonging, abjection can describe a process of being and feeling cast away from her abjected and abjecting mother. If the process of self-identification is by analogy viewed as a process of the early childhood development, the figure of mother that is abjected and also that abjects can be represented

through a number of figures of symbolic order — a nation, a nation state, collective memory, language and culture.

If the Irigarayan stance of unrepresentable engages the concept of [gender] identity in a dramatic way, Kristeva's notion of abjection, if transferred to hybrid identity, turns hybridity into a deeply traumatic experience. In her view, the human mind creates self-identification only as a result of a trauma of letting go of something that inherently belongs to the body yet something it would still like to keep. The detached nature of one's self-identification as a hybrid, echoes the idea of abjection or exarticulation of oneself moving beyond the order of symbolic (Kristeva, 1991). Not certain which language of those who formulate her selfhood to speak, which nation of several traced in her blood lines to represent, what locus of belonging she can choose to situate herself in, the hybrid identity abjects itself from the nation(s) that participate in building up its matrix. Consequently, in the absence of or difficulty in articulation of what collective memory to use for co-creating her identity, she may experience the feeling of being cast off and therefore — abjected. Similarly, the nation state cannot see the hybrid identity as its “normative”, compliant to its idea of national representation and simply abjects what seems alien and never clearly defined. Thus, the hybrid identity becomes the abjected incarnated, the entity on which and by which a long process of continuous incarnation of the Nation-Thing (Žižek, 1993) has ended. To exemplify, a latent conflict between the Canadian nation state/nation and the hybrid identities such as Metis refers to the state of the continuous reciprocal abjection — either of the sides tries to let go of and yet is missing the lost part of what genetically is one.

In summary, all three methodologies in the proposed study — arts as a method of extracting personal stories aesthetically, psychoanalytic perspectives as a tool to interpret these stories, and a reflective pursuit of composing autoethnographic accounts, or biotexts — are seen

as effective ways to explore not only one's mixed cultural spaces but also a "relationship between personal creativity and social responsibility" (Gablik cited in Springgay & Irwin, 2004, p. 78). By all means, the participants' engagement in recursive reflection upon their selfhood's constituents through autoethnographic artwork is the act of *participatory aesthetics* that opens a window to a transformative vision (Gablik, 1991; Springgay et al., 2004). It is this type of vision, transpiring somewhere at a crossroads between the individual and collective, realistic and abstract, that develops a language of learning and knowing the self in the most personal sense. Remarkably though, this act of so personal inquiry may, in the long run, contribute to social change by articulating the concerns related to the development of a collective identity (Melucci, 1989) and the cultural membership in populations who consider themselves hybrid.

## CHAPTER III

### DEFINING METHODOLOGY

#### **Narrative Inquiry, Autoethnography and Arts-informed Inquiry**

In this chapter I focus on the following principal frameworks pursued in the study: *Narrative inquiry* (Clandinin & Connely, 2000), *arts-informed inquiry* (Butler-Kisber, 2010) and *autoethnography* (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). My work is based on a participant-oriented research and production of *biotexts*, or autobiographical poems (Wah, 2000; Saul, 2006). Notably, autoethnography is employed as a congruent part of the narrative inquiry principle, drawing on the researcher's story as well as those of the study participants. Narrative inquirers participate in “intense reflection and questioning of their own position, values, beliefs and cultural background” (Trahar, 2009, para. 15). Thus, articulation of self-awareness and reflexivity pertaining to both autoethnography and narrative inquiry are believed to enrich research in intercultural communication (Fox, 2006).

In addition, I continue to demonstrate how the psychoanalytic perspectives discussed above can contribute to our understanding of what hybridity means to people of mixed origins. The main principle of psychoanalysis — a search for the meaning by freeing one’s associative memory in a series of self-reflexing sessions with its valuable therapeutic effect (Beystehner, 1998) — is believed to help the study population to 1) recognize the origins of their complex identities; 2) find the causes of identity conflicts if participants experience them; and 3) restore the sense of their cultural integrity and “facilitate pursuit of their cultural recognition” (Nakagawa, 2013, p. 123). Finally, in this chapter I clarify the methods that are used for data collection and analysis, and discuss the reporting strategies in detail.

Accepting the role of a volunteer researcher (Glesne, 2006) who initiates a more in-depth insight into the transformative processes the participants may experience, I have

determined that a participant-researcher role is more applicable in my chosen research design than simply the role of researcher studying others. In becoming one of the participants of the group, one who shares lived experiences with the participants, my intent is to defy an accent on hierarchal relationships or attachment of a specific value to my personal observations. Instead, I planned to present the participants' reflections and those of my own as an integral whole to eliminate authoritativeness and power-related implications.

Speaking more specifically about art used as research data, poetry, chosen by me as one of the main formats of data collection, speaks to the three referential methodological strands that 1) illustrate the possibility of framing an arts-based research as a terrain for qualitative inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2010); 2) consider poetry as representation of auto-ethnographic narrative that showcases the author's subjective experience in regard to collective perceptions of the study population; and 3) demonstrate the appropriateness of applying methods of psychological analysis of personal stories presented in the poetic or other artistic form to retrieve and explore the key identity-related research themes.

In fact, the nature of autoethnography and that of poetry phenomenally overlap. Autoethnography is a pursuit that combines both self-reflection and ethnographic, that is, exploring cultural phenomena, writing (Hayano, 1979; Walford, 2013), while lyric poetry, compared to the postmodernist LANGUAGE poetry which deemphasizes expression (Bernstein, 2012), is a genre of creative self-expression. For Bochner and Ellis (2003), autoethnography concerns personal identity and "the desire to make sense and preserve coherence over the course of our lives" (p. 11). For Carl Leggo (2004), poetry, to a large extent, *is* an autoethnography that lifts an individual effort of making sense of one's life experience to a collective level; it's a way to live and observe life. He claims, "I live in the world as a poet. In my autobiographical writing

I do not narrate events and emotions with slavish attention to factual accuracy. Instead I write with attentiveness to evocative engagement. ...I am constructing a plurality of selves — potential locations for knowing and living and becoming in the world” (2004, p. 19). It is at the crossroads of these domains related to ethnographic exploring of life that a new context arises, which oftentimes reflects the “non-belonging but longing” (Keefer, 1998) of the self in the search of selfhood in reference to the multiple sites of a symbolic home. From this perspective, writing autobiographical poetry may be viewed as a process of entering into the world of a “improvised” and often “unpredictable” (Leggo, 2004) research puzzle where the boundaries between the role of the author and research participant become loose.

Notwithstanding the quite widespread stereotypical association of art-informed research with an artistic activity, which mostly pertains to the domains of literary analysis or clinical studies, there is a growing tendency to equally validate its applications in social sciences, including educational research (Barone & Eisner, 2006). The multidisciplinary use of poems, many of which are autobiographical accounts of personal experiences, is on the rise in educational psychology, cultural anthropology and clinical sociology. Social researchers use poetry as a catalytic medium of qualitative inquiry that can provoke in-depth insightful responses, providing for a better understanding of “the ethnography and perceptions of a particular group or population” (McCullis, 2013, p. 83). Keeping in mind that the epistemological value of ethnographic inquiry is reflected through stories that individuals construct to deal with their experiences, we can assume that, if ethnography attempts to discover the sociocultural aspect of a community (Patton, 2002), the creative means of self-expression in the poetic autobiographic narrative can be also employed as one of the methods of narrative inquiry that emphasizes the value of subjective experience. As Richardson, (1996) argues, by “retelling lived experience ... the lyric poem, and particularly a sequence of lyric

poems with an implied narrative, comes closer to achieving that goal than do other forms of ethnographic writing” (pp. 8-9).

Furthermore, apart from self-knowledge activation, the researcher’s focus on and use of the subjective self as a source of data in autoethnographic or arts-based research echoes in these regards with a psychoanalytic interpretative approach to study vulnerable populations. If applied through the interpretative lens of psychoanalysis, the autoethnographic reflexivity of poetry-informed storytelling can be supplemented by the analytic reflexivity of psychoanalysis that explores the nature of poetry as a tool of qualitative research for understanding human experiences. In addition, psychoanalysis represents a methodological framework of multiple purposes. First, these purposes include acquisition of member researcher status for the study participants and second, of the narrative visibility for the researcher’s self (Anderson, 2013). As an additional asset, application of psychoanalysis in the studies of hybrid identity through art-based research may enhance the capacity and variety of the methodological arsenal to the body of theoretical analysis in social sciences. Thus, the researcher can get an additional lens to review the strengths and limitations of using arts-based research and autoethnography to inform the psychoanalytic theory as methodological framework to study hybrid identity and postcolonial self.

In addition, autoethnography suggests the use of a formative stance most authentically reflecting the task posed in the study. By offering personal accounts of language learning, a participant can present herself as part of a group or culture, describe the conflict of cultures within the self, attempt to see the self as others might by analyzing differences from inside, and explain what it means to feel othered (Bennett, 2007).

To further specify, of Schram’s (2006) three paradigms of qualitative inquiry, namely ecological, interpretative, and critical, the intent is to apply the interpretative one. It is chosen

because it provides the best way to attend to the multiple subjective perspectives of the participants by actively engaging them in the study procedures. It is through the direct exposure to the participants' experiences and manifold interactions that researchers can concentrate on and refine their interpretations (Creswell, 1998). The objective here is to gain access to a better understanding of the phenomenon of hybridity through the interpretation of the participants' personal narratives in poetic form related to their perceptions of their dual cultural and linguistic affiliation.

**Poetry and collage as methods used in autoethnography.**

*In a sense, as we are creative beings, our  
lives become our work of art.*

Cameron & Bryan, (1992, p. xvi)

Chalmers-Brooks (2013) observed that of recent more “researchers are looking for ways to better connect with the public to get their findings out of the lab into the hands of people who can benefit. They are recognizing the need to go beyond academic journals and get creative ...” (p. 11). This could be a play, a poem, a musical piece, a video or a photo collage. Of these, poetry and collage seem particularly to share a number of similar features. Both genres appeal to our senses conveying ideas and emotions in compelling and contracted forms (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Also, these genres belong to the word-picture-performance (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003) or a mode of telling a story through the metaphors expressed either verbally or graphically.

Poetry has been used in qualitative research as early as 1982, and its main purpose was that of providing means for self-therapy and reflexivity (Butler-Kisber, 2010). The term “collage”, derived from the French verb *coller*, embodies the idea of cutting and sticking different images represented in photos or magazine and newspaper clippings onto a flat surface. A specific form of artistic representation, collage combines the elements of painting and photographic image. As Butler-Kisber (2003) further explained, the first collage was

brought to life in 1912 by George Braque, and then developed by Pablo Picasso who pressed a piece of oilcloth against an oval canvas and framed it with a coarse rope. No wonder, a blurry imprint of a chair that stood for the image of a café still life, not only drew immediate attention but also confronted the traditional approach to conveying a message in painting.

How can these two genres be employed in narrative inquiry and, more specifically, in educational research? To make artwork as a mode of self-representation is not new. Dwelling at the crossroads between the matter-of-fact literary text and artistic performance and the out-of-the-ordinary expression of the experiences, both poetry and collage explore ways of articulating research assumptions, doubts and open-ended conclusions, and therefore, can be used as a reflective tool to create stories. Dramatizing the data in poems or picturing the data in collage, the participant's or — in the case of autoethnography — the researcher's creative energy is fueled by the artifacts retrieved from the personal memory box or lived experiences critical for the study.

Both of these sources of creativity not only present the author with the stories' plots, temporality and memory landscapes but also with the meaning that becomes “a source of knowledge and fractured boundaries between the arts and the sciences, therapy and research, theory and activism, knowing and caring” (Bochner et al., 2003, p. 508). Furthermore, Ely (cited in Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) explained that “poetry allows for maximum input in and between the lines” (p. 575). This view echoes with the story told by Anna Neumann (1997) about the power of silences and gaps in the narrative. It is not about how much we say and how well we can create a research text from the field text, but *how* we do it and *why*. The value of narrative as research text lies in the hidden lines as much as it does in the utterances.

Additionally, autoethnography, an interdisciplinary method, represents self-narrative whose purpose is to reflexively consider the situatedness of self in relation to others in a social

construct (Kurki & Starr, 2010). A pursuit of personal inquiry into the tensions arising in the depths of experience, autoethnography can benefit from both poetry and collage used as its representative means. The first of the two can more closely represent the way we think or perceive reality with all our pauses, hesitations, gaps, repetitions, shifts of tone and rhythm etc., and the second can exert the eloquence of the fragmented images reflecting the multiple levels of associative thinking.

In this study the researcher employed both genres while reflecting upon the topic stated above: what is hybridity? Is it a process that determines self-identification in immigrants or sojourners who spend a long enough time in the new cultural and linguistic milieu or is it just a new label used to distinguish a monocultural and monolingual identity from a multicultural and multilingual one? Is it a psychological process or a social construct? Perceived through the eyes of the participants who consider themselves to be of dual or multiple origin, how will their assumed hybridity contribute to a better understanding of these populations and our time?

**Biotexts: provocative cultural performances.**

The term *biotext* was introduced by a Canadian poet, George Bowering, in the late 1980s, but it was Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996) that made it widely spread in the literature. Wah sees biotext as "an innately cumulative performance" (Beauregard, 2014, para. 1) or a literary format that promotes the non-traditional reflection of tensions between the "bio story" with the focus on personal genealogy, family history and cultural background and the text as a locus of self-expression through creative writing. Remarkably, biotext can function both as a tool for thinking through one's lived experiences and a method of extorting glimpses of the most inner, hidden markers of shifting identity, often lost between several worldviews. Besides unleashing the power of self-revealing narrative, this process also abounds in therapeutic self-healing. The authors of such narratives can deliberately distort verbal forms and syntactic structures to mimic connections between social life and games. Bourdieu (1993) calls this

connection of text to contexts a *structure of feeling*. Furthermore, in Milner (1999) we can find that the cutting edge of the context lies in application of liminal forms of experiences as a category of *pre-emergence*. This pre-emergence of the contexts of the unconscious, awakened by creative processes such as writing poetry, is in tune not only with the principle of arts but also with psychoanalytic vision, therapeutic as it is in its healing effect on the vulnerable, “dislocated” ego that has been modified and altered by its traumatic experiences (Schafer, 1997). By all accounts, the research “puzzle” surfaced in this type of research community validates the honour of subjectivity, spirituality and emotional intensity of the lived experience narrated through art that grounds a process of knowing in a less orthodox format (Young, 2005).

Using Bourdieu’s rhetoric, composing biotexts in arts-informed research and analyzing them through psychoanalytic perspective may provide an approach that is “simultaneously structured and structuring, materially produced, and generation-specific” (Browitt & Nelson, 2004, p. 107). Such autoethographic narratives are believed to have a power to raise the participants’ awareness of not only their inner conflicts or weaknesses but also strengths because through their stories the participants share their cultural, social, intellectual and creative capital with the audiences.

Saul (2006) calls biotexts “provocative cultural performances” (p. 11). It is hard not to agree with that. Adding more performative characteristics to this pursuit, Wah speaks of biotext to explore “the politics of lived experiences and cultural construction” (Egan cited in Saul, 2006, p. 13), because its purpose is to reflect the tension between the “bio” part in the self-narrative and the text as a means of rendering fragmentary pieces of personal experience in the format of non-traditional writing (Beauregard, 2014). Put simply, the author of biotext is performing two tasks: tells her story about herself, and chooses the most expressive form to put that story forward for the reader. But what actually makes that tandem of performative self-expression *culturally provocative*?

The answer may well rest in the multiple nature of what biotext is. In essence, it exemplifies several things: first, the method of searching for one's truths; second, the process of expressing these truths; and third, it attends to the specifics of the graphic representation of such truths. In agreement with these functional characteristics, biotext is provocative because it brings in an intimate value of one's experience being willingly exposed and shared with the audience in unexpected and unimagined contexts. It is where biography is disclosed through art in most syncretic ways. To illustrate, one of the poems in *Isadora Blue* by Wah, entitled "Forwards", stages a visual form of some "linguistic materiality" as a site for the "co-production of meaning":

forwards or's africa  
 that's old of whose  
 rocking life countenance  
 from trike as peeled  
 to chair's got dis content  
 last night's signals core  
 ancianos bird or gated roof  
 on america's another lust  
 fraying wire forever rust. (Jaeger, 2010, para. 18)

Additionally, the provocativeness in writing biotext directly refers to the postcolonial context of dealing with "the terms of antagonistic or affiliative cultural engagement" (Bhabha, 1994, para. 6). This controversy stems from "a contact zone of colonial encounters" or "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Kim, 2008, para. 3). As such, biotext often embodies the sentiments typical

of what hybrid identities often experience, those of disquiet, discontent, uncertainty, resistance and anger. To render such a wide palette of unbalanced feelings, the authors of biotexts frame their stories in textual contortions and irregularities that may seem odd to the reader of the traditional poetry or prose. Metaphorically speaking, often these texts' structure also seems "unbalanced", as if the disproportions and contortions of the postcolonial world divide throw themselves against the zigzags and gaps in the broken lines of these texts. As Crowe introduces, creativity involves "crafting a form to hold the intensity of experience" (2004, p. 125). For example, looking at Fred Wah's poems, the reader may sense that it is the feelings that hurt that make the lines break, chain dash, hyphen each other, rush away or jump one on another like two angry, quarreling entities, who at the same time are just halves of the whole *being* ruthlessly torn. In his poem, *Race, To go*, published in Butling's & Rudy's *Poets Talk* (2005), Wah uses the following structure to illustrate the dramatic nature of his personal experiences:

*You ever been to ethni-city?*

*How'bout multi-culti?*

*You ever lay out skin*

*for the white gaze?*

*What are you, banana*

*or egg? Coconut*

*maybe?*

*Something wrong Charlie*

*Chim-chong-say-wong-leung-chung?*

*You got a slant to yr marginal eyes?*

*You want a little rice with that garlic?*

*Is this too hot for you?*

*Or slimy or bitter or smelly or tangy or raw or sour*

— a little too dirty on the edge ~~hiding underneath~~ crawling up yr leg stuck  
between the fingernails?

On reading this poem we may ask — what cultural space does this text configure, embrace, and exemplify? What song does it sing? Asian? Canadian? Both? Neither of them? Hybrid? Who does the author refer to? A randomly chosen outsider or the author himself? What is the purpose of this poem — to entertain the audience by restaging the oddities from personal experience through the unusual performance, or to release the performer’s bitterness caused by such experiences?

Through the complex, multilayered modality of overt and hidden meanings coming in the catching metaphors, concocted graphic representations, and syntactical inversions, poetic texts like this may truly resemble a performance of the roving entertainers — the musicians, the jugglers, the rope walkers, wandering the lands, homeless, always somewhere in the unknown places, in the midst of the familiar, yet not really “motherly” tongues. It is clear though that the environment perceptible through the broken, dashed-all-over-in-many-places lines, emerges in these texts not so much as an external factor of the “performers’” development, and their physical world where they search for visible markers of their self-identification, but more like the only factor that develops their identities. This type of the physical world appears to be never “the home” but always as its artificially created, surrogate modification. Such “homeless” identities come out to the reader as uncertain, insecure, struggling individuals — with the twisted, dashed, hyphenated lives, being neither fully recognized by the locals they “perform” for, nor fully accepted by their never really existing cultural communities. By all accounts, these populations are seldom fully understood by their temporarily found cultural communities, which by the sheer right of birth, they have to share their life with. This circumstance may bring us back to the setting of *Monkey Hunting* by Cristina Garcia (2003) mentioned in the opening

chapter of this thesis. For the central character of the book, Chen Pan, Cuba becomes the land of a newly-added side of his Chinese identity, yet soon it becomes the only land, and the only environment for the development of his children's hybridity. Desideiro, Caridad and Lorenzo Chen speak Spanish as their mother tongue, but does Cuba represent their real, symbolic or only imaginary home?

It is hard not to notice how the described circumstance echoes Lacan's (1977) view of the formative constituents of identity, with his utmost attention to language as a formative matrix of our symbolic, or cultural self-identification. Borrowing Lacan's rhetoric in a more specific context, we can view "environment" as the critical source of the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic background that cannot but reflect an "outside" social noise which influences our personal development and is rendered so well in biotexts — that routine street talk of the day, full of either hostile indifference or overt arrogance and even latent hatred towards marginalized, presumably displaced populations. Such poetic tuning to the living environment that often becomes the cause of such distorted feelings in these populations can be also referred to as an example of ecopoetry, which attends to the "figurative and aural capacity of language to evoke the natural world in powerful ways" (Knickerbocker, 2012, cover page). It is the poetic depiction of the environment's physicality where "the life on the hyphen" transpires that makes Knickerbocker (2012) say that "This in-between quality of poetics ...resemble [the] thematic and imagistic mixing of nature and culture" (p. 75). Yet on reading of so graphic stories told by the biotext authors who call themselves hyphenated identities, the questions remain the same — what nature does this poetics depict, and, most importantly — what culture? It is my intent to come closer to the answers in the course of the proposed study.

## **To Find the Other in Yourself: Application of Psychoanalytic Concepts in Autoethnography**

Cultural practices of the people who speak the language, to a large extent, *are* their language. In a word, culture speaks through language that symbolically represents that culture. The fact that we construct our selfhood beginning with the first sounds of our mother tongue that signifies the impressions of reality around us is critical in building the archives of our life story. The collective story of our family, told in our first language, cannot but serve as an artifact that will shape our individually perceived material and spiritual culture, which — almost immediately starts bricking the basis of our selfhood and influences choices for the templates of our multiple identities. As Greene (2004) rightfully assumes, “from particular situated locations, we open ourselves to fields of perception” (p. 73). Following her thought, we do so not as outsiders who record mechanically what we see and hear but as a dynamic part of the “prereflective’ or, in the metaphorical language of this work, prehistorical landscapes that we encounter before any verbal or written records come in place. We touch and taste and make visions of our sensations; we listen and watch, and by that we create layer by layer the clusters of non-verbal images — the strata of our only emerging identity, an identity-to-be. This process, with a focus on what Merleau-Ponty calls the “primacy of perception” (Greene, 2004), that relates to the mingling within the social world around us constitutes the major basis for cultural learning.

Talking about that prereflective period of life, we cannot help but ignore a psychoanalytic view of the psyche that relates its development to the intricate dynamics between conscious and unconscious — hidden or repressed impulses that originate in childhood. When this dynamic gravitates towards the negative edge of the continuum, a wide range of mental or emotional disturbances, such as neurosis, anxiety, resistance, depression, etc., may occur (Freud, 1962; Klein, 1948). The negative dynamics can be rightfully replaced by the word *conflict*. It is

the causes and effects of the deeply-seated internal conflict and the ways of its resolution that are the major topics of psychoanalysis. The concept of identity though in psychoanalysis, so central in much of contemporary sociology, emerges less critically but is attended mostly scholarly as one of the characteristics of the self, as a by-product of socialization rather than as a separately investigated venue the way identity is discussed in education, cultural studies and applied linguistics' research. As Minolli (2004) states, "Identity is not a Freudian concept. Freud was reluctant to see human psyche in a broader dimension than its mere functioning as an apparatus. He feared that psychoanalysis might lose its bearings by stressing everyday phenomena common to general psychology" (p. 237). It would be more accurate to say that, because of the differently unfolding inner conflicts and ways of resolving them, the individual's adaption to her early socialized environment results in the process of self-identification. Therefore, psychoanalysis, whose primary aim is to reveal the identity conflict rooted in childhood and find solutions to resolve it, may work as a "framework for examining individual differences in terms of distinctive experiences of early socialization" (Schellenberg, 1996, p. 49). No wonder, the application of psychoanalytic concepts may provide an additional lens to characterize the internal processes related to hybridity.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STUDY DESIGN AND THE PROCESS

In this section, the reader can find details on study design and recruitment of the participants. Because the research questions (see pp. 21-22) are aimed at elucidating the participants' perceptions of their identities rooted in their lived experiences as populations of dual or multiple cultural backgrounds, and related to their experiences in personal, professional and academic settings, data collection was envisioned in the format of multiple case studies with a following cross-case analysis of the participants' stories. The research procedures included a set of pre-task and post-task interviews, in which the topics for participants to reflect on were introduced, then the participants were offered to compose the research texts, or to be more precise, biotexts, based on collection of field notes by writing personal memos, journaling, and, producing photographic images in a collage format, if applicable. Following Young's (2005) route, topics for making the multi-layered background of my research puzzle, drew mainly on childhood and adolescent memories, family stories, school experiences, meaningful moments related to negotiation of beliefs and cultural values, as well as the participants' making sense of their identity in multiple contexts. Focus on these topics allowed me to 1) elicit enough data to understand the target phenomena, 2) meet the criteria for time availability, and 3) use different sources to triangulate data and thus augment the trustworthiness of the study. To conform with the narrative inquiry paradigm outlined by Clandinin et al. (2000) and to provide a reflective balance and triangulation, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, personal memos, reflective, journals. To set up study procedures in order to retrieve data considering informant's perspectives (Nakagawa, 2013), 10-15 volunteers were to be recruited through a newspaper column placed in local and the University of Manitoba on-campus advertisement board. The advertisement (see Appendix A) described the expected participants' population as individuals who consider themselves to be of a dual/multiple, diverse cultural and

linguistic background, and who were interested to try their hand at creative forms of self-expression when asked about their self-identification. There were no restrictions on age and gender nor on what cultural backgrounds they represented. They were viewed as well-educated, articulate, reflective individuals who had the ability to focus on and share their experiences as research community to provide data for cross-case analysis (Kouritzin, 1999). For the purposes of the study, the recruited volunteers were visualized as being in two cohorts, where the first cohort would consist of the participants who consider themselves bilingual and bicultural from birth (a bilingual Canadian citizen, born in Canada from Chinese parents-immigrants, who speaks Chinese) and the second group would consist of the individuals whose perception of their acquired hybridity stems from a continuous sojourning in the country of their current residence (for instance, a sojourner from Morocco who is studying in Canada, and who identifies himself as a Moroccan speaking French, Arabic, English and Spanish).

### **Research Procedures**

A consent form was signed by the researcher and all participating volunteers so that they understood that their participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Before signing the consent form, each participant received a Letter to study participant (see Appendix B) that clarified the topic, purpose and method of the study. As noted above, this study explored the aspects of hybridity through the eyes of the participants who considered themselves to be of dual or multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In terms of research procedures, the participants were offered a series of pre-task and post-task semi-structured interviews preceding and following the collection of the accounts of personal stories in the form of notes, memos, and reflective diaries. The participants were asked to use the materials collected in writing biotexts (Wah, 2000). It was also noted that if some of the participants found it too difficult to use the poetic language of self-expression, they would be offered an opportunity to use these materials

in making a collage as a tool of self-representation “in the compelling and contracted forms” (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

On data collection completion, the personal stories in creative formats (poems or alternatively, collages) were analyzed and interpreted with the application of the *hermeneutic phenomenology* (van Manen, 2002) and psychoanalytic perspectives introduced in the works of the psychoanalytic thinkers mentioned above (Butler, 2008; Irigaray, 2008; Kristeva, 1989; 1991; Lacan, 1977; Zizek, 1993). The creative narratives were further selected to demonstrate the participants’ perceptions on their hybridity in the format of multiple case studies.

Following Kouritzin’s (1999) stance of introducing multiple case studies, they were used to accomplish several tasks:

1. To describe the participants’ views on the origin and self-image of their hybridity, focusing on the juxtaposition of their identity, the use/ knowledge of language, traditions and worldview of the cultures constituting that identity;
2. To provide the target populations of mixed cultural and linguistic backgrounds an opportunity to voice their understanding of how the diverse cultural spaces that shape their identity develop their sense of belonging to certain community, and incent their participation in social life of this community;
3. To offer the target populations a venue to express themselves in and experiment with composing non-traditional forms of autoethnographic narratives or *biotexts* (Wah, 2000) in which they can expose their living experiences.

### **Research Instruments: Interviews and Research Tasks**

Two interview sessions took place in the study: a pre-task and post-task follow-up interviews; the task was making a collection of personal stories, memos, journals, photos, drawings, if applicable, and using them to compose biotexts by the participants or by the researcher in case the participant found it too challenging. Biotexts were viewed as

representation of the main themes of the personal stories told by the participants during the interviews or through correspondence. The participants were given a choice of making their own poems, collages or bringing in mixed media for their biotexts. In case biotexts were composed by the researcher, they needed to be revised and approved by the participant before it would be attached to the body of research data.

Each interview session presented a semi-structured 40-50 min interview that included up to 10-12 questions (see Appendix D). The aim of the pre-task interview session was to encourage the study participants to reflect on their experiences related to their multiple cultural and linguistic affiliation and identify themselves as hybrid identities, and express views on their citizenship loyalties. The post-task interview session was aimed at asking the study participants about their experiences on reflecting and collecting their personal materials to better recognise their cultural affiliation.

The interview questions arising from the research objectives are aimed at eliciting the following:

- 1) How do the participants make the meaning of their experience as persons of dual/multiple background? What cultural background do they affiliate themselves with?
- 2) Reliving the memory: What spaces, connections and memories make and are embedded in the worldview of the cultures constituent to the identity of the participants? How do these cultural spaces affect the individual sense of belonging?
- 3) What role does the language ownership play in self-identification of the participants?
- 4) How does the background cultural affiliation affect the sense of citizenship that the participants may entertain as part of their social position? How “stretched or shrunk are the boundaries” (Kanu, 2006) shaping that sense, if any? How much are they connected to the territory?

5) Do the participants observe a developed sense of loyalty to the culture of their ancestry or the culture of the country of the current residence, “*home*” (as origin) culture vs. “*host*” (or appropriated) *culture*?

6) Is hybridity accountable for the inner conflict the participants may experience viewing themselves to be of mixed cultural and linguistic origin, and if yes how does this conflict unfold?

7) How can a more informed understanding of hybridity enable language educators to better imagine, situate and empower language learners with mixed cultural backgrounds as *communities of practice* (Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) in the language classroom?

8) Is a sense of affiliation and loyalty to a certain culture in case of hybrid identities a natural or a learned, acquired quality, happening as a result of experience? Is it trait or a skill? What contributes to its development?

To preserve anonymity and confidentiality, the study participants were asked to use study pseudonyms of their choice or, alternatively, use their real names. Each participant was invited to receive a final report via Email or hard copy as preferred. Participating in the study was positioned as a voluntary, anonymous and confidential process, short of the distinction between participants of different ethnic backgrounds and spoken languages, age, gender, level of education, etc.

### **Study Limitations**

Aside from the extensively voiced criticisms over the past decades aimed at discrediting psychoanalysis as a valid methodology to be wider used in education, a sceptical eye may also find strong arguments against using psychoanalysis, autoethnography and arts-informed research as “regular” methodologies in education. These arguments centre on the following limitations.

First, the absence of a unified, strongly grounded theory of applying psychoanalytic perspectives in educational research may undermine the methodological validity and integrity of the research design and cause tensions related to the reflexive presence and evaluative ability of the researcher that can compromise the research outcomes. It is critical for the analyst and the participant to establish a good rapport and a mutual sense of trust in psychoanalytic sessions. Not infrequently, the researcher and the participants may have difficulty in finding common ground and mutual trust that may impede the process of data collection and its interpretation. Also, psychoanalysis is an umbrella term for a set of psychological and psychotherapeutic theories and associated techniques studied in many schools ramified from the initial Freudian theory. There are more than twenty theoretical orientations regarding approaches to study human mental development. The various approaches in studies of mental problems called "psychoanalysis" vary as much as the theories do (Reuben, 1990). As a result, there is no unified conceptual framework that embraces all schools and directions in psychoanalysis. This aspect makes psychoanalysis a controversial quasi-methodology built on the resemblance to the theoretical frameworks used in qualitative research but the one that lacks solid conceptualization. Finally, the clinical focus is still prevailing in psychoanalysis, so it refers to a very specific setting of techniques that may put the participant in place of the patient—that is “sick” person. This can raise ethical concerns related to viewing of the study population from a very specific and unwished-for perspective.

In terms of limitations in arts-based research, the multiplicity of dimensions to explore, including themes, formats, the media, aesthetic traditions, etc., may appear too overwhelming for the researcher, which may set back the research procedures and unravel the connection between the purpose of research and its outcomes. Another issue may arise regarding the aesthetic quality of the research texts, because no matter how deeply emotional the memoirs, descriptions and experiences in these texts may appear to be, they still need to comply with

certain associative logic (Butler-Kisber, 2010) shared by the research community. This aspect is directly linked to the meaningful audience engagement as well as the participants' personal interest, aptitude and commitment to the task in this arts-based research project. Greenwood (2012) mentions that "the concept of the aesthetic evades congruent definition. It is a complex and dynamic concept, which is culturally situated, multi-faceted, emergent, ambiguous and essentially non-verbal" (p.17). Barone et al. (2006) also suggest that the diversity of literary forms of language and other stylistic devices may not be sufficient or instrumentally congruent for revealing what might not be apparent; therefore, certain aspects of the educational or research situation may be compromised.

It may also happen that the participants will not be able to overcome cultural, emotional or intellectual tensions during their participation, which can lead to a high rate of attrition. More so, the participants may manifest an unwillingness to disclose or reflect on personal information on the sensitive topics, especially if it refers to traumatic experiences.

Furthermore, the presence of "the visible and active researcher in the [auto-ethnographic] text" (Anderson, 2013, p. 78), who can take the reader not only to the depths of reflexive ethnography, but also to her "self-absorbed digression", may pose ethical concerns. As Denzin (2006) states, "autoethnography is not an innocent practice ... [it is] performative, pedagogical, and political. Through our writing we enact the worlds we study" (p. 422). What both scholars, Denzin and Anderson, mean here is that there is a high degree of responsibility in writing autoethnographic accounts (despite the overall liberating stance of the pursuit) in regards to accuracy of records, claims, and interpretations. Accuracy of records belongs to the "relational ethics" which are heightened for autoethnographers (Delamont, 2013; Ellis, 2004). In sharing personal experience, autoethnographers reveal facts not only about themselves in their work, but also others (Adams, 2006; Etherington, 2007; Trahar, 2009). When we write about

*personal* experiences we still have to be aware of what impact our writings, including language choices and factual details, can make on those whom we also wrote about and who will read what we wrote. At no point should a writer of personal account forget that she acts as “a producer and carrier of the knowledge in the academy” (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008). Not infrequently though, the aesthetic part in first person writing may provoke the author of the narrative to pay a bigger importance to the artistic form of expression than to the importance of “the insider meanings” (Anderson, 2013). As emphasized by Agar (1980), narratives in the inquiry should not be solely aimed at providing all the details of the participants’ biographies, but rather should strive for distinctive selection of the contexts relevant to the research questions. If this due balance is not preserved, criticisms for autoethnography of “being self-indulgent, narcissistic, and introspective” (Atkinson, 1997) sound very reasonable. Acknowledging the value of access to subjective interpretations of the symbolic meanings in arts-based autoethnography and psychoanalysis, all parties of the research community have to focus on providing personal yet trustworthy and credible insights.

The criticism mentioned in the last point resonates with a more specific educational criticism that refers to the ethical issue of appropriateness of students’ artwork evaluation with the due educational rigour, on the one hand, and the appreciation of students’ art through the practice of *educational connoisseurship*, on the other. Besides the issues related to the adequate perception of the participants’ artwork, there should be also much awareness of the most critical research question from the perspective of pedagogy — *How can the educational and personal life of students be enhanced by what is being studied and practised in the research process?* (Barone et al., 2006). Put simply, the educators and researchers have to re-

evaluate constantly whether the research procedures and outcomes contribute to a better understanding of the target pedagogical issues. Finally, because all three methodological frameworks — psychoanalysis, art-based research, and autoethnography — draw on the subjectivity of the participant, an interpretative freedom of the researcher, and a perceptive ability of the reader which requires certain “knowledgeability” in poetry or visual arts, for example, the research design that employs all three domains may present too big of a challenge in identifying the general in what is particular, thereby sacrificing the trustworthiness and reliability which are critical to any type of research inquiry.

Next, in the eyes of conventional social science community, co-composing of biotexts, namely a series of autobiographical stories rewritten by the researcher, may pose another concern in regards to the integral validity of the study. The question here may be about how much of the text in each story belongs to the participant and how much to the researcher? If we view the present work as a sample of a collaborative research project, then whose claims do the biotexts, as the product of collaboration, truly reveal—those of the participants or mine? Although I locate myself within the reformist research community (Polkinghorne, 2007), whose claims on knowledge validity differ from the conventionalist stance focused around evidence-based epistemologies (Denzin et al., 2005) often considering qualitative research non-scientific, I would like to articulate my position in this respect more clearly. First of all, today few would say that “experimental and reflexive ways of writing ethnographic texts” (Denzin et al., 2005) are less valid than the ones written in conventional scientific formats. In an autobiography, writing about her present and past experiences, the author assembles these experiences using retroactive thinking (Bruner, 1990; Freeman, 2004). More so, “the author also may interview others as well as consult with texts like photographs, journals, and recordings to help with recall” (Ellis, Adams

& Bochner, 2011, p. 275). At the same time, culture can be written differently (Denzin et al., 2005), “retrospectively and selectively”, being influenced by different relational practices to unpack meanings for both “insiders” (cultural members) and “outsiders” (cultural strangers). In part, these revelations “are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 276). To better understand a culture, the researcher become not only observers of that culture but also participants of some cultural happenings by interviewing cultural members and examining their ways of socialization and expression that can be framed in a story. To write that story the researcher puts on a role of that cultural identity that needs to be expressed, and to this end she uses a set of theoretical and methodological tools to maintain the validity of the story that now belongs to both — the cultural member, the participant, and the researcher. To me this is what a collaborative research process is all about. Thus, the story written by the researcher is an outcome and composite document of collaboratively produced meanings, where no new experiences are added or modified unless it is being negotiated and decided by the two writers — the author (the participant) and the co-author (the researcher). As Ellis (2004) suggests, although the focus in autoethnography is still on the participants and their story, “the words, thoughts, and feelings of the researcher also are considered, e.g., personal motivation for doing a project, knowledge of the topics discussed, emotional responses to an interview, and ways in which the interviewer may have been changed by the process of interviewing” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 278). Predominantly, “narrative researchers assemble storied texts that they analyze for the meaning they express” (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 479). As a result, the research text may represent a layered account of collective experiences emerging through a progression of evidence (Perelman, 1982). Such evidence may involve ambiguity for it is open to more than one interpretation, and it may call “for a degree of acceptance of a claim, not a total and irrevocable acceptance” (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 478). In

that case the narrative identity of the assembled text, the ethnographic “*I*” of the story, may be shared between the two coauthors mentioned above. Its product’s purpose is to usefully complement and extend the meanings of the collective research identity, in our case—a collective hybrid identity.

On revealing that few of the participants were ready for creating their own biotext poems, I had to use plan B, which was mentioned in my study proposal, namely to opt for co-composing of biotexts. Being concerned about this side-tracking from the study design at first, further on, on finalizing the found poems with certain input and approval of the final versions by the participants, I thought that instead seeing this as a drawback I could treat this happening as a research finding. I came to conclusion that, although initially biotexts were viewed by me as a central reservoir for data analysis, over the course of the process their research value somehow had been decentralized, shifted, and moved to the folder where *all* information received from the participants became *the* central data. Notably, oftentimes the biotexts did not reflect all the themes of the participants’ stories. For example, if we look at Chelsey’s collage, with its peaceful images of green fields, blue skies, and the brick-colored barns, we would never attribute this serene image to her story of denied identity, quite poignant and dramatic. Besides, there is no mention of the word “Mennonite” that became most critical to her story about her passionate struggle of who she is. In the same vein, if we look at Satoru’s collage, we might not feel the hidden truth of his polyvalent identity and perhaps hidden struggle of coming to terms with who he is a Shiman-chu, with a Japanese citizenship and a Canadian spirit craving for equality? Yet if we read his story, the images of his collage seem to unfold with new deep meanings like the colorful, merry pockets in the 25-days-to-Christmas Advent chocolate calendars; the collage images pop up and let the viewer look deeper, beyond the sunlit sand beaches, gorgeous skies and happy smiles. Is the value of biotexts being diminished? Not really. Instead, their value

became even more profound, as the differences between the stories appeared in the interviews and the same stories presented in the collages might better signify the dualistic, variadic nature of hybridity, when the participants' shadowed identities may or may not sprout through the polished surfaces of the images selected for the collages.

At the same time, looking back at my study design, I am thinking now that perhaps pre-task and post-task interviews were somewhat redundant, because they had distanced the participants from the composition of biotexts. It appeared that some of the participants thought that their role in the study finished as soon as we discussed all the themes of their stories in the interviews and in back and forth communication after them. At the same time, it was the interviews that helped many to open a memory box and start reflecting on their experiences as hybrid identities in multiple contexts, so I cannot fully discard the value of the interviews either. Thus, on the one hand, I feel somewhat uncomfortable that there is too much of my involvement in a number of the final biotext poems; on the other, I honor the research design and time invested in the interviews, both mine and that of study participants, and consider the interviews quite critical for the overall process of data production. After all, it is our ongoing dialogue that started in the interviews that allowed me to retrieve the themes and threads of the collected stories.

### **Implications for Educational Research and Practice**

*The images talk.*

Hamilton (2004)

To recapitulate, I believe that the complex interplay of various methods described above can effectively meet the high demands of the research tasks. I believe that narrative inquiry with elements of arts-informed research and the application of psychoanalytic perspectives can make a framework that will help enlighten our perceptions of cultural hybridity. I also believe that a solitary pursuit of reflecting on and recollecting one's cultural memory through composing

biotexts — self-made poetical and visual stories of their perceived hybridity — may turn into a fulfilling quest of communicating shared meaning. Reading and composing culture may be as well rewarding as listening to and writing it. As Neilsen (2004) argues, “Aesthetic work opens us up; opens up a space that interrupts the ordinary. It forces change — ours and others” (p. 47). For one thing, even challenged by the non-traditional format of biotexts, the audience — the academic community at large — may benefit from encountering a unique mixture of cultural patterns, experimental play of texts and accounts of lived experiences. For another, by projecting dialectical continuity and disruptiveness, which occurred as a result of the many historical, geopolitical and economic migratory processes, onto their personal story, the study participants — those who live on the hyphen — may better recognize their uniqueness and the lost-and-found membership in cultural communities of their blended ancestry. Composing a biotext, “a condensed version of [silent] conversation” (Hamilton, 2004) with the self and others, through its syntactical non-traditional imagery, exemplifies engagement in a valuable two-fold practice. Firstly, biotexts can help the study populations to connect to the collective cultural memory of their kin; secondly, they give participants a chance to experiment with a mixed rhetoric of more than one linguistic pattern. In biotexts, the thought patterns of one cultural realm may be creatively used to express someone’s hybridity through mixing them with the patterns of another, often quite dissimilar cultural tradition. As Davis (2013) mentions, biographical accounts reveal beliefs and values through explicit statements and through analysing one’s worldviews. Thus, biotexts can remarkably exemplify a blend of worldviews expressed in poetic patterns, and by that means represent a metaphorical literary image of what such a blend can look like if being transferred onto paper. In these stories, when visualized and voiced, the essence of hybridity like a stereoscopic photography, can attain its 3D form.

To continue, keeping in mind that cultural variance and hybridity in the postmodern era may soon become the norm more than an aberration, educators will benefit from the studies of

hybridity and accumulation of *cultural diplomacy* (Mark, 2009) in reference to fostering a sustainable model of cross-cultural communication in educational contexts. To be more specific, cultural diversity has become an integral component of Canadian identity and, technically speaking, Canadian educational institutions are “multiculturalism in action” (Taylor, 2005, p. 3). It is safe to assume that learners with an amorphous cultural background comprise a significant portion of these populations. But what do we know about cultural hybridity of our student population? Do these learning populations have any special needs to address? How do they develop “Canadianness”? What social values and loyalties do they entertain? Can educators address the needs of these populations, say in the language classroom? If a sense of citizenship is a skill more than it is an inherent personal need to express a sense of belonging, how can educators participate in its fostering without breaking the boundaries of free choices in such an intimate matter? The assumption is that the proposed study will increase self-awareness of the study participants and enhance their self-image by situating their “claims of culture” (Benhabib, 2002). Awareness of these perceptions will help educators become more knowledgeable about their students’ mixed cultural backgrounds that can suggest considering new avenues to making an “ecological” model of a classroom dialogue. This dialogue can include the professional use of biotexts for the truth-claim representation of students’ cultural stories in a multicultural classroom setting. Looking for and finding links between individual and social in their story, the students are believed to feel more adept at building social connections, despite on what half of the hyphen they tend to live in.

### **Study Participants: Collective Profile**

Although I planned to draw study participants mostly through the advertisements in the city newspaper and University of Manitoba bulletin boards, it happened that after I found the first participant through a fellow graduate student, and met another one by chance in a student lounge, the snowballing effect of self-emerging recruitment took place. By the time my

advertisement was pinned on the University of Manitoba bulletin board as planned, I had already found eleven study participants and after I approached a few other participants whose cultural stories I knew about from some previous contacts I was able to finalize the process of recruitment at reaching fourteen participants (four male and ten female) who read the Advertisement on Recruitment of Study Participants (Appendix A) and the Letter to Study Participant (Appendix B) and agreed to participate in the study.

Of those one person withdrew from the study after the first interview due to her stressful life circumstance – she was graduating from a Master’s program and concurrently started a new job. That left me with thirteen participants, five of whom were sojourners who came to Canada to study or to work on certain projects, and nine immigrants to Canada. Remarkably, of those five sojourners, one person appeared to be an immigrant from Ukraine who lived in Germany, so it added a case of some favorable diversity to the participants’ profile as it allowed me to compare the processes transpiring in the participants’ identity adjustment that referred not only to their living in Canada but also in another country as well.

The participants’ backgrounds represented a wide range of cultural landscapes and places of origin, including Canada, China, India, Iran, Israel, France, Germany, Japan, Morocco, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Venezuela. The languages spoken, besides English, included Arabic, Bakhtiari, Cantonese, Farsi, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin, Moroccan, Panjabi, Russian, Polish, Shimaguchi, Spanish, and Ukrainian. (See the chart below).

As indicated above, three participants came from a mixture of cultures by family history and the rest exemplified cultural hybridity that has been acquired in the process of hybridization due to their immigration initiated by their parents or by marriage or other personal circumstances. Or both. For example, Satoru, one of the study participants, who came from

Japan and identified himself as a Shiman-chu, had a hybrid identity before immigrating to Canada.

In terms of further demographics, age groups, educational and professional backgrounds, the age span of participants ranged from nineteen to mid-forties. Among them, three students were currently in their undergraduate programs and two in graduate programs; eight participants hold Master's degrees and three people hold a PhD as their highest level of education. The areas of study and employment of the participants included: education, management, French studies, English studies, business studies, tourism and intercultural management, linguistics, Doctor of Dental Medicine program, nursing, social work and counselling. For confidentiality reasons, and by request of the participants, the details about the employment status and place of employment of each individual will not be disclosed. At the same time, when offered to use study pseudonyms, to my surprise, a few participants insisted on using their real names instead, motivating their choice by saying that they were going to talk about their self-identification and therefore in their view "hiding" behind the study pseudonyms sounded somewhat inadequate to the very purpose of that process. To honour their decision, I asked these participants to sign a waiver form according to the ethics protocol stipulations in order to use their real names in all study materials including thesis and articles meant for publication in professional journals or presentations at the conferences.

In total, the recruitment process and data collection took six months. I must admit that the first round of interviews was accepted more enthusiastically by the participants than the task itself and even less so — the second round of interviews. Notably, to reproduce the interview topics in artistic format appeared to be challenging for quite a few participants. So, along the way, I had to send several reminders to those participants who seemed to avoid talking about their task's progress. In addition, to ease the tensions for those who found it difficult to generate

their arts-informed biotext, I suggested crafting their biotexts by applying the technique of found research poems as it was described in the study design: the participants received transcripts of their interviews and were asked to highlight the words, phrases and places, most meaningful to them in reference to the research questions and reframe them to address the most important experiences we talked about (Reilly, 2013). Despite some twists and turns along the way, after some puzzled looks, disappearances for months and unanswered emails, and me becoming a pestering bore who was sending reminders about the due date promises, by February 2016 all the tasks had been successfully submitted, filed and discussed. Now reflecting back on the process, and looking at the beautiful images and through the diary notes sent by the participants, I felt very lucky to have been able to find such responsive people who, despite their own personal commitments, a prolonged time span and engagement in a rather unusual study task — of composing their biotext in artistic format — were responsible enough to finish this time-consuming process and so meaningfully contribute to the study. For this I would like to extend to all of them my heartfelt and sincere gratitude.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Languages</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Cultural background</b>	<b>Home country</b>	<b>Citizenship</b>
<b>Jaspreet</b>	n/a	Panjabi, Hindi Chinese English	Teacher	Panjabi- Canadian	India	Canadian
<b>Marianna</b>	n/a	Ukrainian Russian Polish German English	Professor	Ukrainian	Ukraine	Ukrainian /German
<b>Ismail</b>	22	French Arabic English	Student	Moroccan	Morocco	Moroccan
<b>Lumen</b>	20	Spanish Mandarin English	Student	Chinese	Venezuela	Venezuelan
<b>Natalya</b>	n/a	Ukrainian Russian English	Teacher	Ukrainian	Ukraine	Canadian
<b>Zola</b>	n/a	French English	n/a	French/Spanish	France	Canadian
<b>Victoria</b>	n/a	Russian Ukrainian English	Teacher	Ukrainian	Ukraine	Canadian
<b>Tanya</b>	29	Russian Hebrew Ensign	Dentistry student	Russian Jewish	Russia	Israeli
<b>Dina</b>	n/a	Russian Hebrew English	Nursing student	Russian Jewish	Russia/Israel	Israeli
<b>Satoru</b>	n/a	Japanese Shimaguchi English	Professor	Shima-guchi Japanese	Tokunoshima, Japan	Japanese
<b>Paul</b>	n/a	Farsi French English	n/a	Iranian /Bakhtiari	Iran	Iranian
<b>Vivi</b>	n/a	Mandarin Cantonese Japanese English	n/a	Chinese	China	Chinese /Canadian

**Tensions of representation: shaky grounds of witnessing the stories.**

Along the process of data collection, I oftentimes felt “a crisis in representation” (Anderson, 2013; Reilly, 2013). This crisis relates to the tensions of the presumed invisibility and the omniscient presence of an ethnographer who becomes a figure resembling a literary construct rather than a researcher in her own flesh and blood. Quite conversely, my crisis of representation was oddly different. I felt more like a *too* salient and *too* visible ethnographer who had initiated a very intimate talk for the study participants about themselves being somewhat “different” from the others, and therefore my presence for that reason seemed largely out of place. After Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), I often asked myself: Will they be honest and open about their experiences with me? Surely, I had my doubts regarding the participants’ readiness to present their stories of how they might visualize their cultural ambiguity to me, a stranger to their social world who was most likely packed with bits and pieces of challenging life events, at the same time knowing that their stories would eventually be presented to larger audiences. I realized though that my doubts mostly stemmed from the labyrinthine process of data collection which was by my own virtue (or vice?) twofold and so were the roles of the participants: firstly, they were asked to be interviewed and secondly, they had to represent the themes of their biographies emerging out of the interviews in some literary or visual format. Thus, the task was quite demanding: the participants had to take on not only a role of passive informants for data collection but also one as composers or co-composers of the study texts (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2009).

Not surprisingly, for some participants, mainly those in younger years, the idea to engage in the biotext composition appeared quite foreign. Their struggle to more actively engage in the study process, reminded me of Brian’s *microstories* from Kouritzin’s (1999) *Facets of the First Language Loss*. Brian was the youngest participant in that study and, to the researcher’s disappointment, his narrative consisted of chopped, often unrelated and therefore

hard to follow anecdotes. To the researcher it seemed that Brian didn't fully see a bigger picture and the purpose beyond just mentioning disjointed episodes from his life experience.

Experiencing disappointment, close to one expressed by Kouritzin, sometimes I felt that in my study too the desired result of the participants' accounts of their living on the multiple edges of their selfhood was to achieve "ambiguity rather than clarity" (p. 107). Yet, keeping in mind that ambiguity was part of the process as well as the most characteristic feature of the hybrid identity continually shifting back and forth along the edges of the diverse cultural frameworks, I tried to be patient and even sympathetic to their struggle. At these times, I held firmly to the Deleuzian view of the "identity emerging" described as assemblage, as entity never fully complete nor perhaps never seeking for completeness. As a result, I took this ambiguity and the oftentimes contradictory accounts of the emerging identity for granted as part of the evidence testifying to how truly fragmented a sense of self could be, especially in younger multilingual minds, who "haven't really lived enough yet...and who haven't reflected enough to be able to tell the stories yet" (Kouritzin, 1999, p. 107) due to the lack of experiences. No wonder, the task I posed for them was way too complicated.

For this group of participants, who were apparently struggling with the task to write a poem or make a journal, I opted for the methodology of finding the poems in the interview transcripts (Glesne, 1997; Kouritzin, 2006; Poindexter, 2002) and composing biotexts in the form of poetic stanzas. As suggested in literature on research-based poetry (Becker, 1999; Richardson, 1994), each transcribed interview of those participants who struggled with the choice and composition of their biotext, I copied phrases, sentences, or paragraphs which were highlighted by the participants in their interview transcripts, and arranged these phrases into stanzas that best reflected the intended meaning. After the initial member-check, and several

discussions going back and forth via email or in person, the intended meaning of the biotexts found its form in the finalized research poems.

I have also noticed that the trials and tribulations of analytic autoethnography emerge as a result of certain stages of the research process (both during interviews and biotext composing) depending on how deeply the questions “disturb” the seemingly calm waters of the selfhood surfaces. These stages seem to fall into the following patterns — at first the task sounds very easy — just to answer all those standardized, repeatedly asked in formal papers biographical questions — who? where? when? The participants may feel relaxed yet unprepared for being puzzled when a series of more difficult questions soon arrive. This second, more reflective stage of the study process of asking the why and how questions *to themselves* rather than giving a quick answer to the researcher, becomes truly perplexing. I’d call this “a pause” stage — a stage of silence, when the verbal representation is not yet formulated, and when the participant needs time to stop talking, and look deep inside, and *think* of an answer. I learned that at this stage I had to give them time to think, and not be afraid of long, and often awkward, pauses. Finally, after asking those difficult questions and not having the answers, there’s a stage when the participants might get absolutely confused about the purpose of that “annoying” inquiry into one’s deepest “hoods” of sorts, (using an expression of one of the participants), such as selfhood; that type of asking goes beyond the comfort zone and therefore creates tensions that we experience during the study process. It was at this stage that my “crisis of representation” emerged in its full swing — the time when both the study participants and I must have felt equally confused and awkward. For one thing, I was prepared for such tensions in collecting and selecting the field texts, tensions of looking inward and outward and back and forth considering the complexity of my task; for another, these tensions gave me the sense of the responsibility as well as awareness of my own vulnerability as the person who had to synthesize so many voices, talk about places where I had

never been to, including the virtual spaces of my participants' minds and the world of their complex experiences and emotions. No wonder, Clandinin et al. (2009) consider the tensions that "we experience as researchers alongside participants as we live on their landscapes" to be indispensable to the narrative inquiry because they "could help [us] illuminate what it means to engage in narrative inquiry as a relational methodology" (p. 84). The paradox of narrative inquiry lies in the fact that for better understanding of the stories, the relationship with the participants needs to be established, and once it is, it may be quite difficult to pull yourself out of the context of this relationship as well as out of the landscape you are trying to grasp simply pretending to be indifferent to the very source of the received information. The tension, a modality of narrative inquiry that may be viewed as a reflection of the dynamics between the researcher and study participants, in effect, can be as challenging as it can be intriguing because it may mark a certain degree of the developed closeness between the two agents of the study. It signifies a possibility of "gazing through the cracks into the interior" of the seemingly smooth surface. Following that stance, I had to come to terms with the fact that my interpretative lens could be far from being objective, and that unwillingly I might focus more on some things while turning a blind eye to the other. More so, the salient themes emerging through the cracks on the surface, that lens also needed to attend to obscurities and silences. Although my study was not designed solely in the format of narrative inquiry, I employed its formative elements and passed through the similar stages of entering the participants' stories, opening their memory boxes, witnessing their struggles and victories, and sometimes feeling as insecure and perplexed as they might seem to be.

### **Three categories of research [bio]texts: the levels of hybridity**

A recursive pattern of listening to the participants' stories, reading about them in the interview transcripts, retelling them to the participants, clarifying the details and reshaping them finally in biotexts truly resembled the first readings of the roles and multiple stage rehearsals

before final theatrical performances, when the actors have to attentively listen to each other in order to create a shared context. The study participants and I also had to “move forward, backward, inward and outward to make sense of [their] past and present pieces and wondered about [their] lives in the future” (Clandinin et al., 2000, p. 67). Furthermore, as a person who considers herself a hybrid identity, while listening, retelling and co-composing these autoethnographic stories, I was also reflecting on my story and even if it didn’t result in composing a biotext as in case with the participants, I felt as part of their group. I felt as a person who was also sometimes crystal clear about what made me who I was, and sometimes completely in the dark about how to deal with so many mixed things and events related to the ambiguous cultural landscapes settled around me and in my mind.

As a result, all research texts emerged in the study can be placed into three categories: 1) participant-constructed, 2) co-constructed, and 3) researcher-constructed. The first category represents the biotexts created by the study participants themselves either in the form of collages, series of photos, poems, reflective notes or mixed-media representations. To illustrate, a series of pictures taken by Paul came from him directly, without my participation. Reflecting on the topics of our first interview, Paul took these pictures one by one at different times, and sent them to me, and later on brought them to our second interview. So, this is an example of the first category of participant-constructed biotexts. The same refers to Marianna’s, Jas’s, Chelsey’s, Satoru’s and Vivi’s images used for their collages.

The second category reflects the products of cooperation between me, a researcher and the study participants, when both parties participated in the composition of either poems or collages with a different share of participation. In some cases my intervention was minimal, in others—more pronounced. A diamante poem reflecting Lumen’s experiences of hybridity can be included in the second category, where the words and symbols of his interview transcript



can walk in university campus and when people speak Russian to each other I can understand them and they don't even realize that I understand them. I can sort of hide..." (Dina I, lines 234-240, p. 8), in her found poem we can see the following rendering of these phrases:

I think that languages are tools,

A definite advantage over many when you can understand what they are

saying But they don't know that you can do it, hiding safely in your other

"I"...

Clearly, there is a slight difference in technicality of the mentioned above process, when the researcher asks a participant to highlight the meaningful phrases in the research transcript and reframes them in poetic stanzas compared to when the researcher compliments the selected phrases with her words or when she combines a few shorter sentences from the transcript into one longer sentence. However, for me both subcategories still belong to the blurry territory in terms of authorship. I mean, how much of the autonomy of the participant is left after the researcher reframes the participant's words from the interview transcripts, as well as how much of the researcher can be found in the phrases selected by the participants— the phrases that all the time belong to the participants, not the researcher? To me the process of finding poems in the research texts is always bidirectional, recursive and reciprocal, belonging to and reflective of perceptions of both parties. Therefore, the subcategorizing of the last category exemplified above is quite eclectic and descriptive; it is given for the sake of a better understanding of how composing of the found poems takes place in effect.

Phenomenally, this division of the research texts into three categories mentioned above reflects the multifocal and multivocal nature of the target concept of hybridity. Not only has this categorization showcased the multiplicity of approaches used to composing biotexts, but it also brings in a high degree of ambivalence into the borderlines between the categories. For example,

the mixed-media collage with the text coming from Satoru's interview transcripts combined with the images chosen by him for his collage, cannot be strictly referred to as his work solely because the themes emerged in the interview transcripts prior to composing of his biotext-collage, were based on the research questions. More so, the genre of his collage as well as Chelsey's and Marianna's biotexts is also ambivalent — it represents both a text and a series of visual images as one verbal/visual story. Notably, found poems can be well referred to as textual or literary collages (Poetic Forms, 2014) due to the similarity of the process involved when the words/images are selected to reproduce or reconstruct an earlier perceived meaning of the personal or collective experience.

Speaking of the latter, in the midst of the interview, Satoru asked me “Why this topic?”, and this question caught me by surprise — working on that topic became so habitual, so natural for me that I started losing the main initial intent that lay behind the whole thing. Satoru's question brought me back on track, and since then I knew exactly what I was doing and why — to make sense of my own story through the stories of other people who might also consider themselves hybrid identities and to answer the question — what experiences made me who I am now? I found this process both very creative and complex. It turned out that the challenges and surprises took over the predictable things along the way. But I am a hybrid, after all. I am also complex and ambiguous, hardly representable and therefore often stereotyped; I live in the world with and without borders; I am a fragment of my own cultural story caught somewhere in the middle of the never fully told and never truly assembled whole, which nevertheless does exist. No wonder, I liked that process, because I like to be surprised.

**Collages: telling and retelling the stories through symbols.**

The idea to offer the study participants an option of reflecting on the constituents of their identity in the visual format came to my mind in reasonable anticipation that poetry for some could be a too specific means of self-expression not so often practiced across the board. Besides,

in all fairness, I have to admit that I did not mention a willingness of trying poetic autoethnography as one of the compulsory selection criteria in the letter to prospective participants, so I thought there had to be a safe outlet for those participants who might appear to be more visual than poetically verbal. When seven out of thirteen participants had immediately chosen to make a collage as the main medium for their biotext instead of a poem, I was glad they had this choice. My main objective was not to limit creativity of self-expression in the participants and after we finished the first interview, I asked them to reflect on the themes of their interviews and tell their story in the most comfortable and meaningful way for them. Bearing in mind that “collage has been used in [social] inquiry in three basic ways — as a reflective process, as a form of elicitation, and as a way of conceptualizing ideas” (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010, p. 3), I intended to use collage biotexts for the same purposes — to allow the participants to: 1) express their views on their [hybridized] identities in the context of the interview themes; 2) avoid traditional research linearity that was already present in the interviews and by that encourage the appearance of more subtle, perhaps unexpected tangents and understandings of the themes discussed; and 3) evoke the appearance of the themes or subthemes that for some reason were not expressed during the interviews and other field notes to complement the interview data. On a meta-cognitive level, I wanted to exemplify for the study participants a creative way to tell their story reflectively, by thinking about the story they told in the interviews; reflect on what they have already told, and then retell these stories attending to the additional or new meanings through diverse symbols, colors, specific arrangement of images without or along with the accompanying texts.

Four participants (Jas, Chelsey, Tanya and Marianna) made collages infused with a few lines or chunks of explanatory text. Satoru made a Power Point collage, where the pictures selected by him were also accompanied by the excerpts from the interview transcripts. Paul and Vivi took a few pictures and explained their meaning, connecting them to the themes of the

interviews and after their pictures and images had been discussed, the meanings that we agreed upon during the second interviews were included into Paul's and Vivi's partly generated, partly found biotext poems.

On top of the above, two participants (Ismail and Dina) complemented their biotexts by sending me musical videos from You Tube. In addition, Ismail and Tanya were the only participants who chose to conduct a reflective journal, starting in June, right after the first interview, till September, when we had the second interview. During that time, they would take down notes and we exchanged emails discussing their journal entries. To specify, when offered to choose between a poem and collage for his biotext, Ismail felt sceptical about both and asked if he could use writing but not in poetic format. I suggested he could write a reflective journal, which would be a good practice for him (he was taking a literature course at that time) as a student at the Faculty of Arts. He agreed. My suggestion for him was to use these entries as notes describing his experiences as a multilingual sojourner who studies in Canada, and reflect on what made him feel a certain way. Ismail said it would be easier for him to send me the entries on the same day that he wrote them, because it could give him a chance to discuss his experiences with me. I agreed. Little by little, our correspondence over Ismail's' journal entries grew towards a set of complementary field notes — reflections on reflections, so to speak, which I thought of as a valuable unforeseen bonus to the data collection. Being attached to the set of correspondence with other participants, these sometimes brief, sometimes long-winded mutual responses and reactions to the themes and situations observed, experienced, or discussed in the interviews or reflective journal entries, surely helped me to reconnect with Ismail and other participants on a deeper level than just have them speak during the interview process and forget about each other.

Besides, by immediately responding to Ismail's journal entries, emails and memos, I was able to make a better sense of his current life dynamics in reference to the topics of our first

interview. It seemed that recording his observations has added for Ismail a new dynamic dimension to the process of making sense of his identity and personal struggles and victories. When we met for the second interview, Ismail mentioned that although taking notes during those months was somewhat of a burden for him, it has definitely helped him to mobilize his determination to improve his English writing language skill, and pass through disturbing or problematic moments more smoothly, given that reflective writing has a healing effect for the writer. Also, my belief was, so nicely put by Roesler, (2010), that “the events that we experience in our lives do not have meaning in and out of themselves, they get meaning in act of interpretation by the experiencing mind.” (p. 57). So, I wanted to give Ismail a chance to interpret his experiences by putting them on paper and reliving them for a second time. And then, in the midst of our exchange of views on his journal entries, Ismail sent me a few musical videos by Julio Iglesias. This musical note had added a touch of sophisticated and nostalgic background for his experiences written in the entries, like a peculiar soundtrack to his notes. No wonder, we could not but include these musical illustrations to Ismail’s feelings in the found poem of his biotext, based on both reflective notes and interview transcripts.

The second participant who sent me her music video was Dina, also a sojourner in Canada who came from Israel. Right before the first interview Dina gave birth to her first son and started her university studies. It was a very busy time for her, indeed. So, I did not blame Dina when instead of a collage that she initially was thinking of composing as her biotext, she sent me just a video — an Israeli song — with a few explanatory comments (the song was in Hebrew). I added the topics from that song to Dina’s biotext poem after she had given me its translation.

Thus, by offering the participants conditions of choosing their most convenient medium of expression or even several of them (that is how some participants ended up with both collages and found poems) and by maintaining the interactive format of ongoing

communication, I wanted to provide for these and other study participants the condition that Roesler (2010, p. 56) called “a communication within a medium, which presented a mediated and non-immediate reality [where] communications are socially real”, because they involve “actual interactions with real others, who react independently by their own actions” or, in my case, words. I think that the open-ended format of data collection process like this — using the personal stories told in the interviews, images, symbols and colors in the collages, journal entries, and reflective notes in correspondence, and even listening to the musical notes in the videos, was most meaningful not only to me in terms of “detailing the field experience and providing a reflective balance” (Clandinin & Connolly cited in Young, 2005, p. 42), but also for the study participants, who could touch upon an “interactive imagination” which is believed to have a strong influence on identity (Roesler, 2010).

**The interviews, visual images, and other field notes collection process:  
transcription and content analysis.**

All in-person semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted on the university campus in rooms booked for this purpose. They lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded with an audio recorder. I usually started by asking the participants to sign the consent form and ask me questions regarding this form, and then asked about their “cultural” story, inviting them to open their memory boxes in regards to their family history, their childhood experiences as individuals with mixed cultural and linguistic backgrounds or their continuous living in multilingual settings. For those who represented minority groups, I offered to share their perceptions of how mainstream culture and education may have influenced their identity. I also asked about any potential conflicts or sites of struggle the participants may have experienced and if their experiences as people of multiple cultural affiliations have been positive and empowering or vice versa, dramatic and challenging. Next, after a question about how the participants viewed their “home” as a real or symbolic place of belonging, came the question

regarding their familiarity with the term “hybrid” or “hyphenated” identity and if they considered themselves as representing a hybrid identity and how they reacted to this term. Further on, I asked the participants about their citizenship views and loyalties, given their often shaky sense of home and belonging. Lastly, I asked the participants if they would like to mention something that we did not speak about, and I explained the task of composing a biotext based on the topics that had been discussed in the interviews with a few options: 1) collecting reflective notes or images related to the experience of feeling hybrid; 2) creating a biotext poem, or 3) making biotext using the interview transcripts, notes, images, all field notes taken together as a mixed media that can be finally represented in a found research poem. The interviews were transcribed by me and sent via email to the participants for a member-check and review of the information recorded (Angen, 2000; Reilly, 2013).

During recording I did not use the participants’ names to keep their confidentiality as some of them came up with their study pseudonyms only after the first interview, somewhere in the process of composing biotexts. The post-task interviews completed by email did not require transcription. If there were unclear points in the response, I returned to the participant for clarification and added the received response to the field notes folders. Each transcript and piece of field notes including diary entries, emails, and copies of images were collected in personalized folders. The data collected in folders was labelled and the emerging themes and connecting threads between them were color coded under the respective headings (Burnard, 1991; Miles, 1994). The coded transcripts and field notes were compared and given the headings listed as follows:

In the pre-task interviews:

1. Cultural affiliation/Languages spoken
2. A perceived sense of “home”
3. Views on cultural identification

4. Awareness of hybridity/of being hybrid
5. Attitude towards hybridity as a label/ one's own hybridity
6. Concerns and conflicts in regards to multiple identification
7. Convenience of being a hybrid
8. Perceptions of Canadian identity/Canadian culture
9. A sense of citizenship loyalty to a certain country/culture
10. Concerns/affirmations regarding family history and continuity

In the post-task interviews:

1. Reflections on the experience
2. Useful/not useful
3. Reactions to the process of biotext composition
4. Challenges/successes
5. Rediscovering oneself
6. Finding something/nothing new about oneself
7. Other comments

The coded headings on the lists were collapsed into thematic clusters with the corresponding highlighted quotations from the transcripts.

**Biotext composing process: visibility of generated and found poems.**

Each participant was offered the opportunity to choose between the three above-mentioned options to compose their biotext. Acknowledging and exemplifying the freedom of creative expression critical to arts-informed research (Butler-Kisber, 2010) and the value of “encouraging alternative readings and multiple interpretations” (Bochner & Ellis, 2003) of the stories in autoethnography, the study design allowed the participants to represent their biotexts both through words and visual images, through the generated and found poems, and a mixture of the two. By this, I wanted to remove the constraints of the “artificial”, syncretic structure of

the found poems for the participants who would like to try their hand at crafting more liberating autobiographical poetry, and at the same time give a chance to the participants with no experience of crafting poetry in a safe and less stressful co-authorship of the found poems. As suggested by Glesne (1997), the found research poems came to surface when the post-modern research became particularly concerned about more authentic representation of the silenced voices in the narrative inquiry. Each of these types of research poems has its value and research validity. In generated poems the writer has more control on the data representation and therefore effect of the poem (Cahnman-Taylor, 2009), while the found poems can reveal more about not only the author but a co-author as well, since the lines are “in the eyes” of the researcher who controls what needs to be preserved in the final version and what is left out. Therefore, the ready-made lines taken from, say interview transcript or email, may attain a totally new emphasis in the way that it is being arranged and connected with other lines in the found poem, and showcase now not only the message made by the participant but also how the researcher sees it. No wonder, as van Manen suggests, writing poetry can be compared to science and its use in qualitative research gives us a chance to fill out the description of a fact by “systematically varying examples” that “convey layers of meaning which are not at first explicit” (Raingruber, 2009, p. 263). To me, the found poems in this sense can be viewed as a continuation of the dialog that the researcher and the participant have started some time earlier, during an interview, in an email, or even first initial contacts that have not been recorded yet but which set the tone of the beginning research partnership.

To summarize, two participants accompanied their reflective notes, Emails, memos or interviews with videos from the Internet; five participants used images and notes to make some mixed representations of their identity where the images are annotated by the text lines in one collage; two participants used only images; and five participants opted for co-

composing of the found research poems. Notably, after rejecting the idea of working on a generated poem, a few participants who brought up their collages and other reflective materials (photo images, notes) had also expressed an interest in viewing their biotext in the poetic format. That's how some of the participants' initial biotexts have been later complemented by found poems (Vivi, Paul). Finally, to keep the framing structure of this work reflecting an inquiry into my own hybridity, I rewrote some of the stories (given below in the section titled *Interleaf*) as if trying to walk in the shoes of someone else's hybridity, and by that means better identify the themes of my own.

The biotext poems and collages crafted and submitted by the participants were read and compared to the themes clustered from the lists. In the following chapters a detailed analysis of the themes emerged through the content analysis and coding of all field materials is presented. However, they are preceded by an interleaf — an additional section that can give the reader a taste of the participants' voices in a series of the selected rewritten biotexts. On the one hand, I thought that without these voices talking about the participants' "songs of experience", this work will be lacking authenticity; on the other, rewriting these stories gave me a chance to better explore how the participants were constructing their sense of identity through told and retold biotexts (Kearney, 2003).

## INTERLEAF

**In Search of a Compromise**

*Science teaches. Art asserts. Science persuades. Art acts.*

Gabo in Diaz (2002, p. 148)

*We think and see in terms of stories because we are stories.*

Feige (1999)

Every time I think about hybridity I experience mixed feelings. Somewhere deep inside I know that it cannot be clearly conceptualized because we are all hybrids. For example, if all of us to a certain extent have mixed bloodlines and at some point in our lives have experienced influence of diverse cultural settings and mindsets, we cannot single out cultural hybridity as a significant variable that differentiates one cultural group from another. Therefore, like in mathematics, there will not be enough variation within a group to speak about *a variation* from the norm. And yet, we can easily imagine what phenomenological aporia hybridity might represent in terms of cultural, linguistic, historical, geographical, spiritual and other types of variation, when we deal with populations often referred to as hyphenated identities. Interestingly, our imagination works better than the foundational or existential truths of these populations talking about themselves. It is often easier to imagine communities than to describe them. Further, it is simpler to invent their vulnerabilities and methods to better defend them from the imagined threats than to realistically explore their needs. Besides, it is often the case that the features of the target populations cannot be seen clearly if approached too closely, with the researcher's magnifying glass pointed at the study participants. Rather, these features appear in gaps and silences, occasional interjections and movements of eyebrows lifted in surprise at one's own accidental joke or comment during the interview. The features of the target groups often become more visible through questions left without answers, awkward pauses and trembling

voices upon the opening of memory boxes. Much less often the real features and themes sought by the researcher are coming through the straightforward answers and black-and-white forceful statements. One of my major discoveries on finishing this project was an observation that we — educators, researchers — often tend to idly ascribe certain features to the communities of practice, including the features of that practice that these communities may truly entertain in their multimode realities. We think that we may know them and their needs well enough to make them target populations of our studies. Regretfully, in truth, we often overestimate the accuracy of our perceptions about their perceptions on the research questions and topic. We tend to treat target study populations as Roald Dahl’s mythical oompa loompas — a knee-high funny people from Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory, wearing their tribal skins while on their native land and in same factory uniforms when working at Wonka’s factory: they all look the same (all played by one actor, Deep Roy, in the movie *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*), “their” faces frozen in the half-sad, half-indifferent grimace hiding the sentiments only these people may (or may not) know and share. To debunk the assumption that since I belong to the same group of hyphenated identities, and thus may better predict the responses of the study group, I will try to do my best to *not* represent hybrid or hyphenated identities of my project’s participants as a mass of lookalike oompa-loompas. To this end, I will not only begin exploring hybridity within myself but will also try to represent the voices of the study participants by switching from the third to the first person in all the research stories that I heard, listened to, recorded, transcribed, reflected on, co-composed, pondered on, struggled, lived and relived through and, finally, *rewrote* by stepping in the shoes of their authors and (auto)biographically hiding under their skin, after reimagining and reinterpreting their stories. Following the path of the *House of Mirrors: Performing Autobiograph(ically) in Language /education* by Renee Norman (2001), that “blurs the boundaries between scholarly writing and poetic, narrative and creative writing” (Kouritzin,

Piquemal & Norman, 2009, p. 121), I also intend to pass and lead the reader through an intricate hall of multiple stories/mirrors, sometimes textual, sometimes visual and even musical, reflecting and complementing each other like mirrors with the images that can be seen only at a certain angle, or being juxtaposed, so that the meanings could be grasped only if being bounced back from a different curve or another puzzling contortion.

In a word, the next part of the thesis, in full conformity to the declared genre, autoethnography, informed by arts-related pursuits reflected in the composed biotexts, presents a story of my hybridity through and along with the stories of the study participants, all the while keeping the “I” of the story as the “I”, not “he/she” or “they”. I choose to do so because in my view, the “auto” part in this ethnographic journey is essential to its progress and the articulation of the main themes and its findings. The representations of hybridity, with its endless variations of the cultural backgrounds, historical and geographical roots, lived experiences and idiosyncratic musings about such experiences are quite subjective and unpredictable. Oddly enough, the stories that follow are both unique and common because they may reflect very specific situations and selected episodes from someone’s life and at the same time the ones that may happen with other people in a similar context. For example, it turns out that three study participants originally came from Ukraine, and although each of their stories differs in terms of how they view and analyze their experiences as Canadians or citizens of another country upon leaving Ukraine, some features and attitudes that they express in their biotexts may have a lot in common due to similar education or ideological influences that they might have shared before their immigration. Surely as researcher, alongside the subjective accounts, I am looking for some general truths that can better inform the inquisitive reader about the target populations. We should not forget though that each narrative presented in the next section is not the whole life story but only a part of it. Yet, its authenticity, even limited and largely fragmented, is still

crucial for making a ground for *knowing* through *showing* (Doloriert & Sambrock, 2013) and comparing the stories in that hall of mirrors, when each story may better reveal certain themes in the multiple angles of the mirrors facing and chain-following each other. It is almost the case when to better recognize one's own features one has to look in the three-piece mirror to notice the unnoticed rather than rely on their one-glass reflection.

I must admit that to include all the stories in the next chapter and give each of them equal space was a real challenge for me. In the beginning of this journey, I was so excited and so engaged in the process of imagining the study design, research procedures, and my research puzzle, that I gave little thought to envisioning how the gap between the formal text and arts-informed materials of my study could be bridged together at a later stage of the process to keep the holistic quality of my work. Rest assured, on finishing data collection and analysis, I found myself in a frustrating situation, a format-related trap that the art-informed research may ensnare its author, a *scholartist* (Knowles, Promislow & Cole, 2008) into because of that notorious “fissure between theory and practice” where the major importance is attributed to the written part of the thesis — the *real* thesis — while the arts part is sanctimoniously left behind to let researchers agonize in their attempts to provide “a marriage of textual and non-textual elements and space between them” (Loi, 2008, p. 92). As explained by Diaz (2002), “The processes of artistic creation and scientific inquiry are in many ways similar, yet at the same time they rest in distinctive discursive worlds maintained as separate and inequitable” (p. 148). To further picture that struggle, Diaz uses Kristeva's idea of the duality of processes signifying meaning, which are actualized through the interplay of *semiotic* (linguistic) and *symbolic* (nonverbal) contexts within an act of production of meaning. In this respect, the collected data, which includes images, reflective notes, interviews, and generated and found poems, can also be represented through narrative (semiotic) and symbolic (interpretive) discourses. The question is then — to what

extent can the layers of meaning found in nonverbal elements of biotexts find their adequate representation in the format of such formal text as a dissertation? In other words, how can non-textual elements — the painted images — of data (Diaz, 2002; Loi, 2008) legitimately signify the real objects and truths behind them?

The next chapter, on top of representing a hall of mirrors, is an attempt to reflect the discursive collage of both opposite formats — the creative and the formal, the scholarly and the artistic. By presenting the selected, separate stories as an eclectic continuation of my story, which [un]covers the emerged themes of hybridity, I tried to construct a textual reality that keeps the main conventions of the academic genre along with the bricolage of the diverse media of the biotexts. Some stories have excerpts from the poems; some allude to the images, drawings, and musical files presented by the study participants as part of mixed media chosen for biotexts. On collecting data — first, the interviews and then the generated or co-composed biotexts, where I often worked together with the study participants — I *rewrote* the stories in the role of the author of each autobiographic piece to better reflect “the mirror-within-a mirror-within a mirror” (Normann, 2001, p. 128). Thus, the narratives and some fragments of biotexts that come below are co-authored. It was not planned exactly that way from the very beginning, but in the course of the study this co-authorship emerged and developed as part of the “spontaneous and improvised” but not purely “random act of shaping” the research data (Kearney, 2003, p. 69).

By using the first person narrative in the pieces to come, I pursued several goals: 1) I treated the story/biotext of each participant as a speech event which included variations of specific personal situation, reflective pattern, and individuality of each voice as an instrument of expressing a certain cultural dimension (Cortazzi, 1993; Kearney, 2003); 2) I wanted to *not* separate “the product from the producer” because often, when separated, the mode of production and the mode of representation in the text interpreted by someone else could eliminate an

important method of “knowing” through the firsthand account of experience (Richardson, 1994); 3) I wanted to celebrate the active perspective and position of each participant that, in my view, offers a more authentic voice to the story, because the stories retold by the second party are always less authentic than stories told by the author; in a word, the reteller’s selective attention may overlook important nuances and colors of the story, which rhythm and tone might be unwillingly lost, while the eloquent gaps and the i’s and the t’s that should not be dotted and crossed might be dotted and crossed by the too diligent hand of the reteller; 4) I intended to search for the emergent themes and meanings not only analytically, by interpreting the recorded data, but also procedurally, through the act of rewriting the research texts, and physically placing myself in the shoes of the story-teller. By doing so I tried to reconstruct the process of “autobiographic” writing that ultimately shaped and added to my story too; 5) and, finally, I wanted to apply a method of *intertextuality* (Kristeva, 1980; Linell, 1998) of the stories collected — constructing the meaning of one [bio]text in concert with and through the presence of the other. This strategy is often used in psychoanalysis to deal with accounts of personal experiences formatted as parallel texts. Again, I *re-wrote*, *re-lived*, and *re-produced* the stories that I heard, recorded, collected, negotiated and co-constructed with and without the study participants. For that reason, and to a great extent, each narrative becomes as much my narrative as it was theirs — *autoethnographic*, that is. As Sbrocchi (2007) suggests, “individually and collectively our lives are fused within the text as we breathe life into the sketchy pencil marks that mean so much to us” (p. xxiii). I do hope that the personal experiences that the study participants had shared with me, and which I sketched as the co-author of their life stories, will also exemplify an intertextual perspective where the individual and the collective complement each other to more saliently bring up the reoccurring themes and shared truths, almost like the pages of a book with many chapters. Moreover, co-authoring the excerpts from the participants’

life stories allowed me to position myself within these texts as researcher whose life experience might or might not be similar to the ones shared. And, in so doing, I am projecting my story to theirs — and theirs to mine. At the same time, their silent presence is so much there in what I wrote, as is my interpretation of what I hear and *read* in what they say. Where they have gaps, I might have a confident stance; where they cry out their truth, I may stand by, quiet, silent, in a deep repose. We may agree and surprise each other, nod in accord, and fail to completely take each other's side.

The “hall of mirrors” coming below starts with my story and those of seven study participants: Ismail, Jaspreet, Tanya, Marianna, Chelsey, Paul and Satoru. Their stories are selected not because they are “better” or more eloquent or more speaking to the purposes of the study. In part, their stories are selected because firstly, these participants represent diverse cultural backgrounds and languages; secondly, of the thirteen participants some were more willing to share their stories with larger audiences while others requested more privacy. Interestingly, a few authors of the selected stories happen to represent the same cultural background with other participants. For example, Marianna can symbolically stand for two other immigrant Ukrainian women, Victoria and Natalya, while Tanya's story in some points echoes with that of Dina's because they both came to Israel from Russia at the early age and then had an experience of living and studying in Canada. At the same time, Chelsey's story extends an insight into cultural hybridity beyond the scope of ethnic or linguistic hybridity only because in her case hybridity relates to dwelling in between the Mennonite and mainstream Canadian tradition. To honor the contribution of the study participants whose stories are not included in this thesis, I attached their biotext materials in the Appendices.

What comes below explores, asserts, grills, and renegotiates both the obvious and the hidden influences that one's hybridity places on self-identification and behavioral patterns in the study participants. These texts echo one another and like parties in one choral performance pick out distinguishable voices and silences in one another. They seek and cultivate the consensus between the traumatic and playful, pragmatic and naïve, the drama and the intriguing power of the *holistic* dualities of hybridity. In a word, the next section of this work is a hybrid in itself, a story with/in other stories grounded in and thriving on multiple, remarkably subjective hyphens.

### **The Murky Shades of My Multiple Self: How do *We* Own Hybridity?**

What do you do when you've just reinvented the world?

*Italo Calvino* by Salman Rushdie (1991)

I am not that much of a fan of Harry Potter. I mean, it's a nice story of how magic made it possible for a lonely orphan boy, funny, awkward and seemingly too shy to stand up for himself when treated wrongly by his stepparents, to get back to his secret powers, inherited from his parents' practicing wizardry. As in many other stories like that it is hard for the readers not to sympathize with the main character's scrapes on the way to self-actualization. Yet there are things in that story that cannot but bother a viewer with a more advanced sense of social ethics. For instance, on crossing the Diagon Alley, Harry encounters the reality when all people are divided into wizards and muggles, the "us" — pure bloods — and "them" — half bloods who are not allowed to be exposed to the art of magic. Giving tribute to Rowling's quite realistic portrayal of how the world is predominantly divided into the privileged and the less so, I still feel ill at ease when Hermione Granger is ridiculed for her non-pure blood, muggle, ancestry or when Siamus Finnigan tells his story — "Me dad's a Muggle; Mum's a witch. Bit of a nasty shock for him when he found out." I mean, there is something that bothers me in the

discourse taken for granted, well, that is how the things are, someone belongs to the selected few, others, just do not. In fact, the Harry Potter series abounds in half-breeds of sorts — all those mixed-species wizards and werewolves, centaurs, merpeople and house elves whose agency is looked down upon or harshly questioned. To illustrate, the discriminatory stance gets especially clear through the orders made by Dolores Umbridge to the centaurs to pull off to the woods as creatures of a near human intelligence whose presence is a disgrace. When the centaurs approached her, she hysterically screamed, “How dare you! Filthy half breed!” And then, adding to this nasty scene even a more unsettling drama, some particularly perceptive readers of the book claim that Rowling deliberately hushed the end of this episode for she covertly related it to a follow-up gang rape of unlikeable Umbridge by the centaurs who dragged her off to the woods (della Quercia, 2011). They say that according to the Greek mythology — what was obviously well-known to Rowling—that is what centaurs do. What else to expect from half-breeds, anyway? But let this fiddly story be. After all, the Hogwarts’ populations are just characters of a purely invented kingdom of Rowling’s oftentimes creepy fantasy.

Back to the topic of this study. Are hybrids half-breeds? Surely so. Do they /we live in the world divided into muggles and wizards? Pure bloods and half-bloods? How does it all work in the real world? Who owns the privilege of being on top of the social hierarchy and what place do they/we occupy in a set of social processes; and whose bloodlines make the world go round? Is it empowering or traumatic to be half-here and half-there? Do the populations who experience half-belonging to a certain cultural context feel any stigma, resulting from an uncomfortable response to their being attributed as “tainted, discounted and reduced from a whole” to fragmented, indistinguishable, dysfunctional agencies (Anderson, Holt & McGady, 2000) who interrupt the

continuity of the cultural contexts started by the previous generations? I wonder, I wonder, I wonder...

I started this work with the introduction of my first encounter with the word *hybrid*. I heard it in my home country in junior high. This word sounded funny at Botany or Physics class. All those hybrid plants and types of engines. The two different sources make one. But what? What comes of the two, being inherently so different? Perhaps the product of the two different things results in something less remarkable because of the blurry features — exposing neither this evident characteristic nor that. Perhaps being applied to fruits or foods, it brings some fascination about newly-created genes. But when it describes people, hybrid somehow loses its attractiveness for me. It brings about confusion and uncertainty. How does it define *me*? Or does it? It was a very disturbing and overwhelming thought, indeed. After some shock, I started exploring my own hybridity and came to conclusion that, oddly enough, I had always been some sort of a hybrid. Born into the family where the bloodlines of Slavic and Romanian origin had been mixed over a few generations, speaking Russian as my first language, understanding Moldavian and Ukrainian, and learning English since I was seven, I did not notice how all of these backgrounds brought *me* to life as a *hybrid being*. The more articles I read on what constitutes identity, the more I realized that I had never been a “pure blood”. Instead I represented an ordinary, non-club “muggle”, a half-breed all the time, to use *Harry Potter*’s discriminatory rhetoric. Largely, it was my immigration to Canada, a country that claims its multiculturalism as part of its constitutional doctrine that has paradoxically pushed my questioning of what I was in that multicolored tapestry of different voices and faces. In my autobiographical Master’s thesis, I had a chance to ponder on my polymorphous personality type that can be best described as *ambivert*. The meanderings of my linguistic and cultural

polyvalence started early because of the multilingual, polarized cultures and backgrounds that I lived in as a citizen of the former USSR. At school I learned English and Russian. Listening to the media I was subjected to the cross-influences of capitalist and communist ideologies; they intersected in my daily life despite their often contradictory meanings and mentalities. Here is what I wrote before on my being split in between the ideologies and languages taught at school:

I adored Russian spirituality, often quite irrational and spontaneous, yet I enjoyed English omnipresent common sense and down to earth practicality. I was here, at home, in the reality of a cold war, iron curtain, and the closed box of the Brezhnev's Soviet Union and yet I was there, walking in the streets of London, listening to classic Beatles and glam rocked Smokie. (Galetcaia, 2009, p. 110)

With all metamorphic and dramatic vicissitudes of the last decades of the Soviet empire, I have to admit that the ideologically forced multiculturalism not only developed but also flourished there in many ways. We, who were born in the USSR, took its multiethnic population for granted; we accepted how this population coexisted in the Procrustean framework of ideology prescribed from above. Of course, it was not a perfectly developing, problem-free multiculturalism, yet despite the omnipresent dominance of Russian language, especially in the urban areas, the representatives of other ethnic groups could preserve their languages and entertain their cultural habits and practices:

The minor ethnicities vastly penetrated into the mentality of the monolingual Russian-speaking population through colorful idiomatic expressions, food, and customs. Over the course of years, components of the shared realia like multi-colored threads of a big tapestry had blended into a mixture of a specific plural

identity which was called by the USSR ideological officials — *the Soviet people*. (Galetcaia, 2009, p. 10)

Most evidently, it is the common ways of approaching the physical and social worlds (Goldfield, 1985) that contributed to the nonviolent coexistence of multicultural populations within this country. Russian was used as lingua franca that helped these groups to communicate and report to Moscow, the political and economic centre of the empire. I was born and lived in the predominantly Russian-speaking part of Moldova, a Soviet Union republic located between Ukraine and Romania. I spoke Russian but in my family we also spoke Moldavian; besides, it was compulsory to study Moldavian in Russian schools and Moldavian/Ukrainian require the compulsory study of Russian. No wonder, these three languages were heard everywhere, oftentimes in the form of some funny interlanguage where Russian words were mixed with Moldavian and Ukrainian ones, and nobody had ever questioned their meaning. At the weddings they would sing Russian, Moldavian, and Ukrainian songs; at the town market you could bargain using whatever language. However, at shops the price tags were written in Russian or Moldavian in Cyrillic. I knew that Moldavian should have been written in Latin as Romanian was, but there was no direct instruction from the Communist party to change it back to the original way of writing, and if it were ever requested, the “Big Russian Brother” would certainly not be happy about it. Despite the undermining currents of resistance that from time to time came to the surface, (for example, when Russian children resisted to study Moldavian at school), a touch of hybridity was present everywhere: at home, at school, in the street, around every single corner of my native town of Tiraspol. Thus, my life as a hybrid began back there — where my family circumstance placed me in between cultures and languages, as it has placed my fellow-townsmen. That’s why I assumed that all people were hybrids. Belonging everywhere and nowhere in particular and oftentimes approaching certain cultural customs in incongruously

overlapping ways did not bother me at all. I did not question my pluralistic background and for the first time I gave it a more scrupulous thought it happened only upon my arrival to Canada.

It still feels somewhat disturbing to me that without my immigrating to Canada, I would probably never have started seeking answers to the questions about who I was, and where I truly belonged. But it is true. The bitter truth is that we seem to need to leave our home country for good to ponder over such topics. Sbrocchi, the author of *Remembering Place: Domicide and a Childhood Home*, one of the most original theses I have ever read, says that to understand herself she needed to touch the earth of her childhood home (2007, p. xxii). In my case, I had to start asking the questions about who I am after leaving my childhood home and on touching the earth of my new home — Canada. It is obviously “the power of place itself that evoked a conversation within me” (Sbrocchi, 2007) and without answering this question I would not be able to present and establish myself in the new land. Firstly, the need to look back at my journey of being a hybrid, to the roots of my being, was provoked by the hosts’ continuous questions regarding the country of my origin, the languages I spoke and such. I even became tired of them:

On the hundredth time of answering what that strange accent you might vocalize and in what part of the world that unknown funny name of your country might happen to be, you become almost physically sick. You are tired. You feel lonely. You sense yourself as a walking museum exhibit. (Galetcaia, 2007, p. 7)

Secondly, an inability to join any “club” of the host population brought about such a disturbing sense of displacement for me, that it evoked a sense of almost physically perceived dis-ability. Before all the re-started reappearing in my life as an immigrant — *revival*, *renewal*, and *regeneration*, I had to pass through all the stages of multiple dis-:

Linguistically, words derived with the prefix *dis-* have the meaning of reverse or opposite action, and of what adheres to the multipurpose semantic aspects of “not” (Bauer, 1983) that is, the semantics of absence... *Dispersed* in space, *disconnected* from homeland, and *disrupted* from an originally presupposed existence, immigrants undertake the strenuous task of building or restoring their living space in the virtual absence of real or imaginary home, home culture, and “home” language, despite all the *discontinuities* of such pursuits. (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4217)

In fact, I just did not know how to restore my social world and kept on asking myself the same question: how does my new *home*, in a more general meaning than just a shelter to hide from rain and cold but the one that describes multiple shades of belonging, shape me in the past and in the present? How does this new placement of my being connect the geographical, reformative and temporal points and lines on my memory map? Or, better to say, the memory map of my hybridity? I must admit that immigration has set off the journey of many ups and downs, false and authentic assumptions, one-minute encounters and long-term, trustful relationships. A more detailed account of that journey can be found on the pages of my Master’s thesis, in its part called *Alice’s Adventures in Wonder/Englishland and Through the Looking Glass* (2011). Therefore, at this time I decided not to repeat the same story but to re-imagine it and re-write its version through the stories and voices of the current study participants. Just like Alice in Carrol’s classical story of reinventing herself in the newly-encountered and oddly constructed world around her, I would take the roles of the people who, also like myself and like Alice, had to come to terms with the reality that added a new shade of belonging to their life map. Thus, the participants’ biotexts became those rabbit holes, tunnels, hillsides and valleys that make the archeological blueprints of “self-references and self-processes”

(MacLaren, 2011) along the way of my/their/our story of hybridity. I want to finish this interlude that precedes the chorus of voices to come by two of my, namely Tatiana's poems, *Who am I?* and *A Bus Ride to Work*, from an unpublished poetic album *The W on White*. The W in this title stands for Winnipeg, a place of my new residence after immigration to Canada, and a city often mockingly called "Winterpeg", since it's almost always white.

### **Who am I?**

Who am I?

half-breed,

mixed blood,

multi-coloured thread,

on the plaid

canvas chart

a cut-in-half slice

from the multigrain

bread

the die that is cast

by the adventurous

hand

what is the air that lets me breathe?

what is the wool that I use to weave into

the half-whispered words

through the cotton sand...

a floating island

broken off from

the strand.

me.

### **A Bus Ride to Work**

Starbucks' coffee's smell

in the tall cups in the hands

of the sleepy riders

is still struggling to erase  
the melting remnants of their dreams...

People somewhere at the back

are laughing loudly,

noticing nobody around

but themselves...

They click their smartphones

and use swear words

just to ask each other

what the chances of rain are

for today or tomorrow

I'm wondering why the four-letter word has become so irreplaceable

in the human culture?

Is it all what it is about?

A woman in a funny hat

talking to herself

is driving her SUV,

getting late for work.

Emotional,

confused,

upset,

yet

on getting there on time

she will be so happy all at once

forgiven by herself

for checking just another item

on the endless

to-do-list

printed

on the back side

of her leather

cheque book.

I'm wondering if she hasn't ever been taught cursive at school?

I'm wondering

what *we*, newcomers, have in common with those guys on the bus

and that lady in the funny hat...

and the cash desk person that asked

what that strange accent I had?

Searching for something we don't know

we neither find these people

nor lose

with their ways to cut the space

with the invisible razor blades,  
 their days, their weeks, their blues  
 into tiny pieces that are designed for nothing else  
 but adding some cash to  
 their accounts  
 and then vanish in the air, or  
 rot on the ground  
 like leaves  
 from the last fall...

What are *we* doing here?

Just seeking for the imagined,

never existed truths?

Like exotic birds

we are still flouncing around

in the cage

of our own illusions

waiting for the easy pet food

to be yet once again

distributed to us

by an indifferently

cold hand...

The poem *Who am I?* appears as a reflective image of the *me*, the author, who is viewing herself as an individual “of a mixed blood”, “a half-breed”, a person whose cultural origin is hard to identify. “A cut-in-half slice from the multigrain bread” and “an island torn off the main

strand” are metaphorical representations of the state of mind of the author that Homi Bhabha (1994) called the condition of being “a migrant” in the contemporary metropolis. The main characteristics of such experience are anxiety and inner discomfort. Entering into the symbolic essence of a certain “washed-out” culture that is mixed from the very beginning (e.g. Afro-American) by birth, can be as dramatic as an experience of becoming “a mixed blood” on moving to a new place of living. It is also the lived experiences of immigration and sojourning that can be accountable for the emergence of such phenomenon as hybridity, most commonly treated in the postcolonial stance and associated with diasporic groups and migrant populations that also applies contextually to the flow of cultures and their interactions (Bhabha, 1994; Canclini, 2005; Hall, 2000). Trapped in between the desire to keep her autonomy yet longing for the equal representation among the host culture, the immigrant turns into an *abject* occupying some liminal place, neither within nor outside the dominant culture, somewhere beyond—beyond the barriers circumscribing her first culture from the host one, in some ambivalent and antagonistic virtual space that “simultaneously marks possibility and impossibility of identity, presence through absence”, a state of being neither here nor there, *au-delà, fort/da* (Bhabha, 1994).

*A Bus Ride to Work* is seemingly different from *Who Am I?* both in the form and in the method of telling a story of the experience described above. However, in a series of these two poems the second one can be viewed as an unfolded illustration of what it is like to observe a new culture through a lens of the bearer of the shifting identity. It comes through the eyes of the stranger, the person from somewhere else who did not lose the sense of her origin yet but who is already part of the new environment that is to an extent still alien to her. It feels through the images of the co-riders on the same bus, loud, rude, swearing, preoccupied with the modern gadgets, appearing to the author of the poem shallow and spiritually deprived. An image of “the

lady in the funny hat” speaks to the same view about the host culture — shallow and funny, funny in their striving to be perfect, to arrive everywhere on time, to go by the book, to be serious about the pursuits that, to the author of the poem, seem unimportant or not deserving the effort. Here we feel the same bitterness and same inadequacy that is rendered in *Who am I?* This time, the sense of inadequacy is coming not from the inside but from the outside. The rhetorical question *Who am I?* posed in the first poem echoes in the second poem with the same emphatic strength of the question “What are we doing here?” and is what brings the two poetic pieces into one extended story of an identity conflict that is bothering the author and is responsible for her feeling of the “never lost but not yet found” land where her true identity belongs. Having sketched poetically the images of the Other that provoked her discomfoting feelings during one of the many bus rides to work, the author gathers the field texts that become the research texts in the poem which can “paint” a self-portrait as a research puzzle that needs to be solved. Thus, the arts-informed inquiry (Bach, 1998; Murphy, 2004) creates a space of the interwoven planes of aesthetic value where the poetic text acquires the eloquence and visibility of the painting or the photographic glimpses of the lived experience.

Although the two poems presented in this work seem to be divergent in almost everything: the length, the graphic spacing of lines, the rhythm, the intonation and the plot, their themes emerging through and — silently in between — come to surface in clusters of similar meanings. One cluster reflects the general mood and tone of the author — uncertainty, a sense of the fuzzy identity, never lost yet not found, a sense of shifted, unidentified belonging. The root cause for such modality is absence of some basic supporting point that normally is built in the language and culture of the “querent’s” birthplace.

**Ismail: writing without exclamation marks.**

It is for the first time that I<sup>2</sup> started writing texts about my feelings. I mean, real texts, not just quick, functional notes. I will try to write in a mosaic way to keep spontaneity of my reflections. No doubt, some of my notes will sound out of place or weird, just like my impressions of these days, me in Canada, me in the past and me, as I imagine myself in the future.

I hate exclamation marks because I think people use them to express some hidden meaning. Canadians use exclamation marks to express that they are “happy” for you, but it seems that they use them because it means that something is bad. My Canadian friend messaged me recently “Where are you?”. I answered: “I am on a trip with my parents”, to which my Canadian friend immediately replied, “I hope you are having fun!” In my mind, this Canadian friend thinks that I am not enjoying the trip with my parents. But I do enjoy it. That exclamation mark made me feel bad about something that was so good to me.

After giving me a mark lower than I expected for my final essay in my last summer course the professor added the following short comment: “Have a good summer!” (Meaning — be happy despite the silly mark I gave you.). Not funny. That is why I hate when someone uses exclamation marks.

By the way, I got C+ for my first literature course. I am happy for this grade because I really deserve it. If the teacher gave me C, I would say it was not fair, if he gave me B, I would say he was just lying to me. So, I am OK...

I came from Morocco.

I speak French,

Arabic

and English.

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<sup>2</sup> The stories below come from the first person, just as they emerged from the study participants in the research texts.

My culture is Moroccan

My home is Morocco.

What else would you like to know

about my story?

I have always enjoyed living in the present.

I used to not think about what the future was hiding.

Yet I started my story of the big world from not always nice things.

Now, I know it's been not a good way to keep me going.

I came from Morocco and my culture is Moroccan. I speak Arabic and Moroccan which is my first language, we speak French as well, and we have some stereotypes. What do I mean by stereotypes? Well, I'm talking about young people of the same age as myself. We like to have a white girlfriend rather than a black girlfriend or of any other ethnicity, so if she is white, then we are happy. Automatically, we are happy. Pretty silly, eh?

I am multilingual. I consider French as my mother tongue, yet in my family sometimes, my mom speaks French and my dad speaks Arabic. So, it goes back and forth naturally for us. My perspective is that somehow we match the European culture. First of all, as a consequence of French colonization, of France, that they leave; then we follow their education system.

It was in high school when I studied English. We studied English at a later age because in North Morocco it was our fourth language, so it was in high school that English culture and the English language popped up in my head. Interestingly, I do feel some connection to English too. Especially when it comes to me through someone who speaks it. It sounds like music. I don't know why but French does not sound like music to me. No. French has that thick accent, it is similar to Arabic and it's not something trendy because we've been talking French...

I don't now why but English opens a new world to me. Maybe because I've been reading some articles and I found that reading them is more interesting than reading the same stuff in French, perhaps because it goes back to business area. I find that most of business researchers speak English and business is all about English.

I also speak Spanish. Just a little. Spain is so close to Morocco. I used to travel to Spain when I was young, with my dad and I am really into that Spanish culture, so that's why I picked some vocabulary from over there.

I love music. It is so nice to listen to Julio Iglesias while it is raining. I remember myself when I was little. In the 90-s, I was traveling with my dad in his car. I remember him listening to Julio Iglesias's records in his old car. It was raining that day and Iglesias's songs were on. I just loved it. Now, every time it is raining, I play Julio Iglesias songs and watch the rain. I feel clean, inspired, relaxed, and thinking positively. Here it is — a quick glimpse of me, a little boy, in my dad's old car, listening to Julio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulqhpM3WZcg...>

Looking back at my multilingual experiences... I feel different while using these languages. Each of them adds some specific "flavor" or "color" to myself. For example, the grammar, or choice of words in Arabic is more complicated than in English. So I am not that much into Arabic right now. Another thing is why I am not into Arabic anymore because of those incidents that happen, the terrorism, and the media's message that Muslims are terrorists, so I want to get rid of this, that I am Arabic and I speak Arabic, just not to feel isolated from other people, it's just better to get rid of it, and follow the majority.

French... it's part of myself, I don't "notice" it too much. It just came out of me. I would say it is romantic; it's a very classy language, a very rich language, so there are a lot of words that you can choose in order to express feelings, especially romantic feelings, while English

looks like more a business and straightforward language but I still enjoy it by reading metaphors; there's that heavy use of figurative speech. Like idioms.

Do all of these languages make me a “hybrid”? I'd say, yes. They represent so different cultures and modes of thinking and ways of doing things and that will really reflect what I am. I like to be multilingual and have different experiences. Moving from one city to another while in Canada and being with the Moroccan community just going party, wearing fancy clothes, and having your car was something that I stopped being interested in recently. Looking back at myself, when I just came to Canada – I tried to compete with other Moroccans like “... look what I have, every night you go to night clubs, you want to show off but then I said to myself, “that's it! I got enough of that. Now I have to focus more on my studies. I'm gonna do this in order to travel and change the city”. So I moved from Montreal to Winnipeg.

My parents didn't force me to change the city or force me to do anything. I had a total freedom to choose everything that I wanted. But at the end of the day, I have to find out what my bad choices have lead me to, so I see that their message was like that — use your freedom to get sick of bad things yourself.

My parents always foot the steps in my life and they always ask about me and they support me financially as well as spiritually. So when you ask me where my home is, I would say this: I wasn't forced to integrate into Moroccan community, but at the age of 18 coming from one country to another, obviously I needed my background again, I needed my tradition, I needed to be with people who were the same to feel safe and comfortable and not discriminated by Canadians who could say “Oh, you are from Morocco, you don't fit in. That's not right...this is not right how you do it...that is the way...we will show you the way...”

But in the long run, I feel very powerful because of my experiences of being multicultural, hybrid. It gives some extra strength to my personality but not in a negative sense

that I would say I am just showing off. I feel happy about myself but I do speak three languages and a little of Spanish, yet I don't compare myself to people who speak only one language.

On the first day of Ramadan

I love to cook meals

exactly how my mother

would do.

It makes me think of home

Isn't it funny —

I just caught myself on the thought:

Am I becoming more Moroccan

here in Canada?

Je n'ai pas change...

Je n'ai pas change

je suis toujours ce jeune homme étranger

qui te chantait des romances

qui t'inventait des dimanches

qui te faisait voyager...

Je n'ai pas change

je suis toujours ce garçon un peu fou

qui te parlait d'Amérique

mais n'était pas assez riche

pour t'emmener à Corfou...

<http://lyricstranslate.com/en/Julio-Iglesias-Je-nai-pas-change-lyrics.html>

**Jas: my big Indian wedding or know who I am because it is what I know.**

I am Jaspreet. You can call me Jas. Where is my home? Now my home is Winnipeg because I lived here for so long but I was born in India, in New Delhi and we moved here when I was 11 years old. So I can read and write and speak Hindi, however when we moved here, most of our family here spoke Panjabi, so then I learned Panjabi but I cannot read and write, just speak it only. And then I was in China for two years, so I know a little bit of Mandarin, just speaking. Now I use English mostly because when I get really upset and I want to express myself, the first language that I go to is English. I feel like I express myself better in English. Panjabi and Hindi are not that great when I really want to quickly express my feelings. Yet I'd say I feel more Canadian now because things back in India have changed and I haven't been there for a while, so my home would be Winnipeg. I am more familiar with things here.

No doubt, there's more and more English coming into my life. I often miss watching Bollywood movies. When I was living with my mom and my dad and my sister, I had people to watch them with because they were interested in watching and now, when I moved out and live with my husband, Bollywood culture is not around me anymore. I think I have to work hard to have my first languages and culture back to my life. If I am running somewhere I can put "them" — the movies — in my phone and listen to Hindi music or when I am at home and just cooking and I want something in the background, I always go for Hindi things, Hindi movies, and Hindi music. It feels good.

Yeah, I can identify myself as "hyphenated". Half here, half there. I feel OK with that. I'm just concerned about the future when I have kids. How am I gonna raise them, because I really want them to know Hindi or Panjabi? But with my husband I am communicating only English. My worry is "I don't want to lose my culture when I have kids but somehow pass it along". That's my concern right now. I'm not saying that I am struggling with who I am. It is

fine because when I go and see my parents I am able to communicate and be with them in the Indian environment, so when I am at work or at home it's the English environment, but everybody knows that I'm Indian, so they don't try to ignore that. I am OK with that when they identify me with someone from the Indian culture, because that's who I am. I still like Indian movies and I still like Indian spicy food...I have lots of spices, Indian spices that I use in my cooking, for example, I made a lasagna yesterday, it was a lasagna with tikka masala in it. Or if I'm making sushi, I add some kind of a spice in it, I just have to...Sushi with these spices, now it is not a Japanese food only, it is a hybrid food, isn't it? Ha-ha.

If I think about a place of belonging, it is where my family is. Right now my parents and my husband are in Winnipeg, so, to me that's home. I don't know any other place that can be closer than that. There are no any hard feelings attached to my becoming a Winnipegger, more Canadian, No. Everybody knows, all my friends know that I'm Indian that's what I know. I know how to cook food with spices and I love clothes and shoes and at home I have two closets, one is an Indian outfit closet and one for my Western clothes. Everybody accepted that fact and I'm happy with that. Just how I am.

It may happen though that the strangers would think that I'm an immigrant and my English isn't very good, they'll have judgments already. They put me in some kind of box immediately, and I was asking myself why would it bother me? I shouldn't care, really. Canada is a country of immigrants, so why would be people so stuck with the concept that you should be *some* way. But for me it would be backwards. They saw me and they put me already down. And when I start talking they think "Oh, her English is so good", so they place me a little but higher, and then "Oh, she is married to a white guy!" I guess, that proves that their judgment is wrong, but it doesn't bother me. Because I know they are wrong.

But I cannot even imagine that I cannot speak Panjabi and Hindi! I grew up with the Indian movies and culture, at that time I just didn't know what western culture truly was. OK, there's Christmas. For Christmas my husband goes to mass then we get together and then there's time when we play with fireworks, and it feels good. But I also feel that without that *main* part, without my Indian culture, my life would be just plain, too ordinary. Thereto, I had an Indian wedding, I said "no" for planning Christian wedding. It's not just that, all our friends participated in the Indian wedding. They were given invitations, with two pages of instructions on how to attend temple service, because there are certain rules.... everybody took part, you know, everybody followed, they were nervous, they didn't want to offend anyone, so all my friends and family were showing that they will be at the wedding, taking part in the wedding, and I feel accepted with who I am.

Our wedding was in the temple here in Winnipeg, when somebody is doing a service, or a prayer at the temple, the family would invite people, they would invite you so if we get an invitation we will go and my mom can't drive so she'll ask me if I can take her. If I pray I'd go with her. I go to the temple more than I go to the church.

I was raised in Sikh, Panjabi religion. When I was in India, I lived with my grandparents, because my parents were busy with work, so they couldn't help me with school, and my grandpa was very religious, he would take me to the temple, we would go every night, for prayers and all that, so that's what I know. If I had a grandpa who would take me to church that's what I would know, right? I'd say it's what I am most comfortable with, and I understand it more than I understand Christianity. The fact that my husband is Christian would not push me to change my religion. I'm just so comfortable with Sikh culture, why would I change it?

Oftentimes I feel that my husband doesn't really have a culture. Maybe his culture is something like watching a football game... it's totally different. I am not into sports, so I don't

see his side as a stronger culture, but the Indian culture is a way stronger than that ...it way more influences everything in the house, and that's what I know.

He has a culture but it's not over the top, it does not take over, it's laid back, you wanna join, you can join, whereas ...my mom is still very religious, for example, she has a CD player and she has a CD with prayers. She puts a roll of thread for making jewellery over her wrist, and she believes that this thread is going to protect her, and she says "Whenever you put it on yourself, it could protect you". So she made us these bracelets and I'm not kidding you, so I had this bracelet on and one day it came off and I saw it fall on the floor, and my husband was like "Ah! It was just a...whatever, don't believe in it". And I was like "OK, I 'm not going to pick it up, whatever, right", and then, when I got home, I was coming out of my car and slipped and dislocated my elbow. I started thinking, "you know what, my mom's right. Now I have my bracelet and it broke but I'm scared to take it off, 'cause I think something gonna happen if I get it off, because of experience.

When I was in the university, I had more Indian friends but it turns out I really didn't get along with Indian girls because they gossip too much. Somehow we drifted apart, then when I went to China, I met all of these Caucasian Winnipeg people and I became really close with them because we were all from Winnipeg, we lived in China, we were all teachers, traveling, so I became really close with them and when I came back there was only one friend with whom I still stayed in touch. My parents actually like that I have Canadian friends, and they say that Indian families create a lot of drama, so it's better just to stay away from them. They gonna to gossip about you...

...While I was thinking over my collage, I thought that I was wanting to have a shrine in the house and I just didn't have the time to put it together and I wanted something in the house that I can use when I need to pray, when I just need to meditate. And I did finally get around to

it! I had a little picture of one of my gurus on my nightstand so that was what was before this and then I finally had time to make one place in the house where I can use it to meditate or to pray. I was thinking about it but I don't know if I should do it and we talked and I thought about it, yes I will use it and I need it so I put it up.

Somehow, I became more aware of my culture. Before it was just there, I didn't really care much about it, and I didn't really think much about it but I'm starting to recognize the cultural things in me. Before I was just like "This is just how I am, what do mean?" Then I started realizing that I am more cultural then I thought I was.

I was thinking about different things that make me, *me*. I started with religion, if you look at my collage you can see the temple where we got married and that's my shrine, just upstairs. When we got married, I had henna on my hand and I really liked it, I miss it. That's why I added this picture to my biotext. There's this little dance you do with candles on this so I still like these kinds of things but they're special, they're only happening when there's a big event so my sister's wedding we will probably.

Yeah... I felt like I'm losing my religion and I don't have any other religion. I feel I need that in my life, so culturally I still don't think I will talk in Punjabi, I will still choose to have more western friends but religion-wise I feel it's getting away from me. I have left my mom's house for over two years now and she was the one teaching and promoting religion and I feel I need to do that on my own now, to take charge. It feels good to be back to this.

**Tanya: I am complete and yet I am all just pieces.**

I don't want *to belong* to a group.

...I have never thought that it could be so complicated,

To define who I am.

There are things that you just do

and you don't ask

why you do this or that

it's just happening.

It's only when you encounter something different

— it's how you know that you are NOT

a part of something...

I was born in Russia in 1983. I lived there till I was thirteen and then we moved with my family to Israel. There I lived from thirteen till I became 26, it's another thirteen years and then I moved to Canada. And now I am thirty-two. I never ask myself what culture I belong to. The only time when I encountered this definitional attempt to identify myself was during the English course that I took in Canada. Because the part of Reading class and speaking class we were given that text about culture and tradition. And how it is impossible to define what culture is?

Funny though, only when I came to Israel, I realized how Russian I am and when I came to Canada, I'm still Russian. But I also feel that presence of the Middle Eastern culture. And it's not that I totally belong to the western culture. I am more spiritual because in the Middle East it is more spiritual and the western is like more capitalist but not exactly, it's quite hard to explain.

But I will try...

I think Israel it's a Holy land with a lot of religion. Religion makes you wonder about certain stuff, it's not necessarily believing in God or following certain religion it is just being open and be aware that it exists, and it's a huge [influence], especially in Jerusalem. Even if you don't believe and you are not wondering but you see people. It does something to you ... you choose not to believe but you see that it's there and you are so close and then. Especially with that Middle East conflict... it forces you to wonder and I think this is what sparks your

spirituality. You are exposed to it, not necessarily that you feel the same but you see people and they influence your way of looking at things...

I think that this spirituality comes because of other problems –the peace problem the economic problem, people became more spiritual as a mechanism of coping and Canada in the western world also had some economic problems but they are not existential; people are living in comfort most of the time, so it does not push them wonder about something deeper because everything is fine. They are just happy. When you enjoy the comfort you don't wonder... you wonder about more intellectual issues, not like a search for some deeper meaning.

Living in the comfort of our homes does not  
push Us here to think about life and death,

war and peace,

crime and punishment.

Incidentally — the core themes of the Russian classical literature taught at school. I think that language is what defines my culture. Although, if I go back to Russia, I probably will not be able to live there because it's a different culture. It's not about the "behavioral" culture but still I feel that because I am speaking Russian, I have the accent — my roots are Russian but I cannot live in that culture; I cannot live in Israel, I can only live in Canada. Because here there is that mix... it does not require me to *be* a certain way. I think it's the opposite side of any more or less distinctive culture — they want you to be a certain way, *that* way. If you want to be *your* way, you have to put yourself against the group. And here there are lots of groups and you kind of get lost as nobody really is looking at you and you don't need to copy no one. You have more freedom to be different because you may even look different. And Russia is a big country, of course there are different nationalities, but many of them look Slavic.

Living in Canada took my attention from those  
 issues I don't have to struggle saying who I really  
 am. I'm like "I just *AM*".

I speak Russian and it feels that the more connection is to Russian but I think Israel also  
 has a huge part in me. The way I think, for example, the way I communicate is based on Russian  
 language but the way I think is stronger Middle East. I think it is because of my tools, because of  
 my language and Russian words. I lived in Israel since I was 13 – it's the most important age,  
 and I was raised in different cultures, so I think I am more a Middle Eastern person. But I use  
 Russian roots to communicate, oh, it is getting so complicated again...Me, born in Russia,  
 feeling like a Russian and Middle Eastern person, living in Canada. Such a mixture...

Is Canada my home then?

Not really.

Home is not a place.

It's not about geography at all.

It's all about *the* people.

Home is *my parents* who are living in Israel.

Home is also the things that I accept.

In Israel there were a lot of things that I was exposed

to in that culture that I didn't accept.

I felt awkward and almost left there without a personal

space,

Being constantly a part of a group,

who stole my time.

...It's a mix of something, *a two* of something. It's not something completed, it's partial. Yet I don't feel incomplete, I feel complete but not like one big whole I am just pieces. Of course, there is this core comes from being Russian.

It *was* a big deal in Israel — that mixture of bloods... there is lots of discrimination like you've been a Russian and a Jew. It was so tough, it wasn't a laughing matter, so when I came to Canada, here it's a different attitude, I was still carrying that cultural thing, "Oh, no my accent is the bad thing because it was how I was discriminated". Thank God, here they say it's adorable.

When I was in Israel they say the accent was bad — like, "Go back to Russia!". In Canada it's OK, but I am still *living* in this mindset. So sometimes culture puts you to things that you don't agree with. It puts you down, so I am lucky, you know, to distinguish between me and my education and culture.

At first I struggled a lot. It was during the Israel immigration because of the huge language barrier, because I could not speak Hebrew, and I think it's only when I started getting to language when I listened to Hebrew music but it's only when I kind of felt closer to the language. It felt like being in prison for a while.

I could not speak Hebrew *for years!*

I would be just *mute*.

I wrote and read, though.

But I could not speak.

They yelled at me. Speak up!

But I was silent.

It was much thinking,

thinking,

thinking,  
 and talking in my head  
 not to anybody.

Then it opened up for me.

I barely could stop talking.

I call it a *verbal diarrhea*.

It felt so good.

All that I had absorbed by thinking only

Came pouring out of me

Like rain in the desert.

So I could speak my mind.

It's not that I am trying to forget this experience, but I think it was just *very* painful. It was very difficult, so I took it that way... and I went through this like rejecting it and not denying a special place that Hebrew occupies in me. Sometimes I felt upset because of all those mixing cultures, languages and modes of thinking bowling in my mind! I felt lost between Russian and English, when I was taking the English courses. I was stressed and upset, when while taking the English course I was speaking Russian. So when I got home, to get rid of those two — English and Russian counterparts that were battling in side me during the day, I would put Hebrew music, and it just saved me from those two and I felt like there was another place. A very special place. A comforting place of another — third — culture and another — third — language that was not competing with those two.

...I have friends and they are different, maybe just because I am hybrid, I don't feel like I need this group of people and share the same things with them, that's the beauty of being a hybrid. I can enter any group, but I don't have this need — to be with somebody. For example, I

have that Russian community, like my friends, they not really a group, sometimes I think the only thing that we share it's the language. But it's not enough. I do have very close friends who are Russians. But the rest is not like that language is the only thing that I need to have in common in order to be friends. For example, I have Canadian friends, I don't share their language, but I can happen easily that I can share more with Canadians than I share with Russians, perhaps because we went through the same experience in Israel. It is those unspoken things that make us understand each other. Home for me is so many things, it is family, languages, places and freedom of being who you feel comfortable to be.

I love to have that freedom

of choosing what place to hide and when.

Perhaps, I guess, hybridity is nothing but a shelter

From our *other* selves or languages that are in conflict.

**Marianna: my job makes who I am.**

I was born in Ukraine. Currently, I am working and living in Germany for six years so far. It's not actually a very long period of time but enough to make some conclusions. My mother tongues are Ukrainian and Russian, I am bilingual, in the family I speak Ukrainian; everyone in my family speaks Ukrainian. I can talk Russian because of my school background as I was born in the former Soviet Union, and it was obligatory to learn two languages, the Russian language in particular. That's why I learned it in school and I was also raised in this bilingual environment because I was surrounded by both languages to the same extent Ukrainian and Russian. I feel very free to speak, to write, to communicate in both languages.

I also spent one year in Russia as a child, at the age of 13 and that's why I got from there a very interesting experience and a language experience, and I don't have any problems to

switch for Ukrainian to Russian. Due to my professional activities I am very often in Russia, I participate in different conferences. Of course, switching from one language to the other-- it takes time, but three-four hours is enough for me in order to completely switch and submerge into this--three-four hours of academic language, while for the informal language — immediately, immediately.

I am not only bilingual, but also multilingual. I am equally fluent in German, English and Polish. Polish, first of all, because of closeness to the western Ukrainian parts to Poland but I've been working in the Polish University for five years, and that's why I had to improve my language to level to teach in Polish. Well, I can say that I can speak this language very well. I can speak and I can use it on the academic level. But now I have been not using this language very actively for five years because of my stay in Germany and currently I am using two languages very actively: I mean two foreign languages, German and English.

Where is my home? A good question... Everything gets so mixed up these days...

I immigrated to Germany as a mature person, at the age of 37. I was born in Ukraine, I lived there for many years, I went to school, I studied there, I also completed my PhD in cooperation with my German partners, and my PhD defence took place in Ukraine, and later on I had been working for ten years there. I have there a network of friends, and acquaintances, and also many family members and not this nuclear family but extended family. They are still there. Because of the relatively short period of my stay in Germany, I still consider *Ukraine* as my home. Ironically, I am calling home the country I moved away from. I do still have this feeling of home when I think about Ukraine. Yet I am aware that perhaps coming back will not take place at all or maybe in ten-twenty years because I have quite a stable position in Germany and I'm not afraid of my future there, of my professional future and if it could be only my decision, but not a decision of my employer. Because of some difficulties of integration, specifically in

first two years I mistrusted myself with a thought that at some point I could come back. But the fact is, the longer I live in Germany, the less I think about coming back to Ukraine...It is kinda sad...and not... it is hard to explain.

I travel quite often there though. It's two to three times a year. I know that I don't lose this connection that much but I'm also realistic and I'm aware of these issues and I know that the longer I stay away from the environment I lived previously, the more I will be losing these connections, even though I am able to talk via Skype with people but I am not in *every day* contact with people. This contact contains of every day meeting, discussing current problems, and so on, so that's why I am still in contact, considering these ties are very deep and close but ...how to say that.. In the course of the time, these ties, they will continue but they will be not as intensive as they are now or they were in the past. Some part of it will be lost.

Do I belong in Germany? I guess. I do believe that I belong but not in terms of nationality, no--I'm not German and I will never be. But I do believe that I belong to this country because I think I have already contributed much to life of this country, to the activities of my university, and because of my performance there and my activities I think I have the right to say that I belong to this country. Most likely, because I have a very positive experience living and working there. I feel wanted, respected and welcome. In terms feelings, well, I can say that I love Ukraine and I respect Germany. Do I love Germany like I love Ukraine? Not really. Yes and no.

I don't have that German identity, nothing clicks in my heart when I hear the German music but I already feel as part of this society, because there are so many aspects, still I think because of the importance of my job there, because, due to the fact that this job takes much time of my whole life, I cannot isolate my identity from that job. My identity is strongly related to my job I perform there. I will not be now willing to say that.... Specifically, I can say that my job

creates my identity and this job helps me to create my social contacts there and integrate into this life.

I am teaching in three areas. One area is business development in Eastern Europe, the second area is tourism management, and the third area is intercultural management. In the area of intercultural management, I teach our international Master students general courses, but I also teach intercultural management in Eastern Europe, and it is very connected to my country, to my cultural roots, that's why due to this particular orientation of the area I am teaching in, I learn to perceive German and other cultures with my Eastern European eyes and vice versa-- to perceive other cultures, specifically Eastern European culture with German eyes. I have to jump in two situations — as a person of the Eastern European identity and also in a position of someone who represents a German identity. That's why I would say I will not isolate my job from my identity. My job to a very high extent determines how I feel and what I feel.

I know that because there are so many Russian Germans who struggle upon immigration and I am in contact with them. I know their views about this situation, not only through my private contacts with them, but it is also about the issues we discuss at our classes, because we incorporate this topic too—the integration of Russian Germans in the German society, as we say. I know how they feel and what challenges they come across. That's why I consider myself very lucky, because of the situation within the area that I am teaching in.

I think it's not only their private issue; it is an issue of integration policy--how Germany understands integration. I think Germany took a good step while taking back all these people from the former Soviet Union. Germany provided a social safety net for them, with a possibility to learn the German language but that's it regarding integration. But integration is much more than social safety net and language. And actually, Germany is expecting from all these people total assimilation and that's a not right understanding of the issues of integration. Integration is a

high extent of preserving all cultures with a high extent of preserving of the country [where] I live and coexist with. Now Germany started changing its policy they take first steps to change a paradigm of integrational processes.

...I would not call myself a hybrid. No. I'm not a hybrid. I have definitely a Ukrainian identity with many-many experiences at the moment, but it's not yet hybrid. Maybe my daughter will have this hybrid identity, and maybe even she will not. I'm not observing this development. But I think that hybrid identity is now a very current topic. Because of globalization and migration process, because of mixed families, for example Ukrainian-German families, like German-Canadian mixed families are in place, I think it's a very current issue, it's worth further exploring.

The word hybrid ...h-mm. It is not insulting yet it is not enriching for me. It doesn't sound very well. Maybe I'd choose another notion, another word because hybrid is something you know, that is not natural, everything what is not natural does not sound very well. It's not organic, something with some deviations in its development, maybe hybrid is something that is imagined in an artificial way. Usually, I know many more cases when there are negative results because of artificial ... less examples of very positive sound of this word. We cannot avoid now hybrid identities, because of our life style, I mean now the global world, but I would choose for this maybe another word, a word that can bring more enrichment, more respect to this. Maybe a bridging identity? A dual identity? I don't know.

My daughter and I, we keep our family traditions. We have a Ukrainian diaspora in Germany and it is very important for us. We have a possibility, we are very close to Stuttgart, it's 40 kilometres, we have a possibility to go there every Sunday to a church there. Or once in month the priest comes to us from Stuttgart. We can meet with Ukrainian diaspora. After that we cook together, we are sitting together, bring food, discussing current, political, historical issues,

news. However, the Ukrainian food is too time consuming, so we try to combine it and usually cook it on weekends when we have more time, every Sunday, so of course we cook what is quick and easy. And what is healthy. She is observing it, and this church plus Ukrainian diaspora, plus cooking Ukrainian food, plus...

Funny though... Many of my Ukrainian friends say that I am already like German ...first of all it's the issue of punctuality, perceiving importance of time. I am very committed to what I promise and I will try not to delay any meeting. If we agree to meet at 8 o'clock, I will not try to delay it, this could be the case with my Eastern European fellow-citizens. Second, I am also quite direct now. Eastern European culture, they are more high context—they hide the message in the context and so on, but I became a bit more direct, but I think I am more like a chameleon: in Germany I am direct, and in Ukraine I am more like them—less punctual, evasive but still I can switch from one mode to another...

Does it make me *becoming* a hybrid? I don't know... but I feel convenient. And I have to do it because, if I work in this environment, if I would like to be successful there, I have to, you know, not 100% but somehow to acquire some cultural features in order to conform and to feel harmonious, you know. Does it sound I am acting like a chameleon? No, no. I disagree. It's a kind of cultural adjustment. I somehow adjust to their culture and they have also to adjust to me, because I am a typical Eastern European: I am emotional; so, it's kind of making concessions to each other, it's a mutual process, and that's why this attempt to somehow not totally to adjust and use some German features become a necessity, a professional necessity and it allows me to better integrate to this society. I think you cannot ignore the different types of behavior [while] coexisting with other cultures. It could be a contrast behavior — for example — in Germany to wear an Ukrainian shirt. Or it could be also taken as assimilation, but I think it's not one *or* another but both.

So, for me, it's a part of cultural awareness or intercultural skills, because we teach our students specifically those who have these multicultural roots, for example, Russian-Germans, they identify themselves as having different cultural roots or of mixed cultural roots, or just as people who were born in one country and having working for several years in another, and they have acquired some cultural features or knowledge about this culture, and that's why they are able to behave in different way because of their awareness and not because they start losing their identity.

I didn't have any problems with this. First of all, because the German mentality is also aligned to *some* extent with my personal characteristics. In all cultures people are different. I also prefer that direct style, maybe low context sometimes — I can be very diplomatic, but not too diplomatic, and also I can hurt some people, I can be both.

No, no, I am not hybrid... not really... I am a Ukrainian living in Germany. That's where I stand.

**Chelsey: a story of the denied identity.**

My cultural story...I am born in Canada. This has always been my home. I was born in Steinbach, Manitoba, but culturally I've always identified myself as a Mennonite. I am a Mennonite heritage. And this is where the confusing part gets in because most people will see Mennonite as a religion *only*, and really it's much more to it, there's culture, there's tradition, there's definite history, very *strong* history. Even today when I think of myself, I am Canadian born, but I still identify as a Mennonite, and I think that with Mennonites, there are certain things that we do *differently*, culturally, and traditionally.

For one thing there a sense of humor, we have a very sarcastic type of humor. Mennonites tend to be fairly critical, and normally people are very detail-oriented, as of yet I have not met a Mennonite, who is laid back and just says *Oh, I don't care, no problem...* We are

also very hard working. Stereotypically, very hard working. Our past tends to be pioneer-based and the people who worked the land. The philosophy behind that is all about that code of rules, a code of ethics...it started long ago with Menno Simons. It is about a certain way of living, along with a very strong religious background and faith.

But because of persecution, which would actually create our identity because historically the Mennonites had to move, so a lot of them moved into a new area, and they farmed the land, and they'd been given some land only on one condition: they could not convert anyone. They had to be in their own communities. As a result, they were isolated. Always isolated—never with the general populace. Or if they worked their traditions they had to hold on to themselves. Especially in Prussia. The government said “yes, you can come in, you can farm this land, but if you convert anybody, it's on the account of imprisonment, so their land could be taken away, they can be cast out, and if any of their members wanted to marry someone outside their community, they had to live the Mennonite tradition. And that's how it's transformed from a religious group into actual community. Because they couldn't integrate into social groups...

That's a background of my cultural story...

When I am thinking about my culture, for me it's *the journey*. Mennonite journey. And what they came through and how they changed. There's a language that is associated with it — it's Low German, which is the first language I learnt. But I lost it very early. Partly it's because of my father; he was the rebellious sort. Even though he grew up in the Mennonite tradition, he faulted and he really rebelled, and it caused a real identity crisis for me too, because even if it's my heritage, he was rejecting it. He rejected it so violently to the point that my parents actually got divorced. And THAT for me was absolutely catastrophic in terms of identity.

I guess, it was at that moment that my perception of myself has split. Yes, I can consider myself a hybrid because it sounds as a combination of two different cultures, as a syncretism of sorts. It's actually neither negative nor positive to me. It's neutral. Because this is the way I grew up. It does cause conflict. For younger people it's probably a very negative thing. As a grown-up, I can think of it, like, yeah, but as a teenager or preteen---very negative. Definitely, negative because you don't know where you stand. Your family is telling you this, the outside world is telling you that, and you feel so TORN and pulled apart. But as an adult, I think it may make you stronger. But I still *can* do the best of both worlds, I need to be in the Mennonite, to be in that community — I can assume that, and I can still come out and be Canadian as well.

But it took a lot many years of searching. I really didn't come to terms with that until I was in my thirties. I felt displaced. I felt lost. Frustrated. Confused. Till I actually went there and said "you know what, I had to figure this out". And I started researching. I started a quest into who I was.

It came as a sense that the community that you were brought up in and the culture that you were brought up in – you cannot relate to it. When you are in school and you are learning the history of Canada and it's all about the French immigrants and the English, I asked my mom so many times, "well, mom, what are we? — "Well, we're kind of this". She wouldn't put any stock into teaching me, she was far too busy or she didn't think it mattered; she was quite secure in the thought that she was born and that she was *a Mennonite*. Because it's how she grew up. And it didn't change until she was an adult, and then she took that change on herself. It was not forced onto her. She never really struggled as a kid in that way. She would always say "we are Canadian". I would say "Are we French or are we English?" Well...and then she finally said, "We are not really Canadian, we are Canadian by birth, but our culture is .... and she couldn't

answer. And that's when I really started thinking about this because in school nobody had a Mennonite history. I kept asking her about our history but she never really researched it; she just gave me stories that I wrote down and mostly they were quite correct when I did my research.

But I had to nail it down, I wanted to know who I was.

Ironically, that is a big question even in the Mennonite communities — what is it all about? It's a big discussion about whether or not Mennonite people are actually a culture or religion. I had that discussion with one of my professors in the college because he is a Mennonite and he has travelled a lot. He's lived in all those places but he's always been a Mennonite. And by that time, (I went to college late) — in my thirties, and I just said to myself, "I have to say, absolutely this is a community. When you can pick yourself up find a Mennonite and whose been raised like that and find an instant connection by that background, I think — what is that if not culture?"

Yes, there is definitely a sense of self- righteousness. Definitely. In our particular family there is not such way, for example, my grandmother specifically says you need to help people. Period. It does not matter who they are. My grandmother, she was a harsh woman, because she had to go through a LOT of suffering, but she'd say "If they need it, you give it".

Interestingly, there are lot of parallels with the Jewish community. The language of Yiddish is very close to Low German. Manitoba was settled mainly by the Mennonites, and the Jewish communities come through. There is an instant connection between Jews and Mennonites, and the instant relationship between them because they can see that they can understand each other. They do follow the same moral code and they are strict and yes there is a stance that there is a certain standard of living and although the other world lives like they do, we *cannot* live like that. Why? Because we can't come to live like this. I was never raised with

the fact that we were better than other people, but this is the way we are supposed to be living, and this is the example we are supposed to be setting. But I have that experience from other people, where they had this sense of “we are better”. I never identified with that.

Because my mother was sort of rejected when my parents got divorced we came through a lot of condemnation, and shaming from the Mennonite community, and our family basically didn't know what to do with this, so instead of helping the kids, they withdrew. My grandmother thought that all of us, children, we are going to be ruined. My relationship with my grandmother changed when my parents got divorced, to the point that I refused to be around her for long. Because she just could not ...she was hard, she couldn't say anything nice about me, never, everything I was doing was wrong, wrong, Wrong. Because she was so afraid that I'd be turning into somebody living on the street. Like the bottom of the bottle. That I felt. That's a very much part of Mennonite. Pressure...

Honestly, that's the part where I think I struggled the most because it was my home where I've been raised in and all of a sudden they are telling me “I'm not measuring up”. It wasn't my fault that my parents got divorced. I didn't have anything to do with it. But for some reason, because of that I was tainted. I was stained, as far as they were concerned. Many of them — they still would talk to me and stuff like that but it was not the same.

And here's one of the things that I found, there's a lot of hypocrisy in the Mennonite community. The foundation in which it was started was not the foundation on which it continued. When people point to me, I'd tell them straight and I am not afraid to tell them off within the Mennonite tradition that I used to be. Your outside life is supposed to reflect what is going on in your consciousness, basically in your mind and it got to the point when people who still want it to carry on and live outside what they are supposed to do, drink, carouse, they'd do it secretly. Steinbach used to be a dry town. What people do, they'd drive into — it's surrounded

by French community—so they'd just drive a few miles and buy their bottle, and they get their booze and take it home. In the dead of the night. So divorce is not accepted in the community because it's not accepted by the church, and it's not allowed when it happened. Therefore there is no compassion there.

My father was an abusive man. My mom tried to report it to the church, because in those days the church had right to do something about it, and help. That's how they structured their communities. But no one wanted to hear it. In fact, they said he wouldn't do that and they turned it back. It wasn't until my parents got divorced that the church actually looked and said, "This is wrong". They couldn't care less. No one tried to help them, when he was doing that behind the closed doors. And that's something that I pointed out to many people when they were trying to put that old shame on me. I say "no". And I just put it right back on them. And I know how to do that now! And I know what effect it has. But as a child you didn't, and you felt that *shame*. You carry it and you wear it and it is humiliating...

...I actually let it go. I said this is the way they wanna treat me until the point in my life where I said "You know what, *I don't deserve this.*" That was long in coming, it took many years. I don't deserve this and this is the way they treat me in my community.

...We didn't move away, cause my mother felt it too, right? She's the one with that scarlet letter on her chest, cause she's divorced! That's what it feels like. And so she decided too we had some friends they moved up to Dauphin and I was still under age at that time, so I had to be with her, and I found a new community, and new friends, whose parents were also divorcees who'd been treated similarly by their own families. Even at the time like now, it's more common. Before I was the only person in my entire school whose parents got divorced. It wasn't just a Mennonite case. It was nearly the 1980s. It was thirty years ago. It was quite new. Through that I strengthened and I established my own person you know, and then I went back.

And I said, “Who am I? Where did I come from?”

And that’s how I started to write my story. My *new* story.

What gave me strength? Friends who’d say “Yeah I understand what you are going through”. And my faith, really. Growing up the Mennonite, faith and tradition were sort of integrated and actually separate and I found out that I can spate my faith. It really helped me to sort things out and back to my twenties, I started asking these questions again. I can’t just throw it on the baby through the bath’s water. That’s what happened, I can’t throw it away. It’s part of me and I have to find out who that is.

For quite some time I was neither here nor there. Partly because I didn’t have the language. It was a big key for me and then we would have people at dinner, across the street or something that came from the Mennonite paragon like my parents, and the mother couldn’t speak English, the father couldn’t speak English, and so I’d go and play with their kids and they would talk to me and I could say only “yes” or “no”, or just a few words, and they looked at me as I was very Canadian-looking to them, but I *understood* them. And so I was acceptable. They *accepted* me. I was OK.

It was a good feeling but it was also good to see that look of theirs like, “Oh, she is not really Canadian, she is one of us”. That put me back into thinking, well, then maybe I *am* Mennonite because I can identify with it. Even though I don’t fully speak the language, I can understand enough, I can understand what they were saying and what they were trying to achieve.

Needless to say, it’s been hard to be back. I was only back after three years. It was a hard decision to me because of this. However, many changes have been happening for the last three years. It started when my aunt died when I was in college. As I said I went to college late. I got to come back to say goodbye to her...and she was the only one of the family who actually came to

help us as kids; she knew what my father was like, so she on her own time would take take us out to the park, buy us an ice-cream...and I was able to say goodbye to her, to thank her for that...and my uncle was there – my dad’s brother — and he read that ...that we thank her for what she did, and he called me a few weeks later after the funeral and he apologized. He said, “You know what, we never knew what happened because we didn’t want to know. *It was our shame. And we didn’t want to deal with it.*” And he says, “I am sorry for that. You needed help and we were not there”. That’s really when it all began. Two years after that I graduated and I said to myself, “You know what, I cannot run from this, I have to find that Mennonite thing and figure this out. After searching this I realized that I’m still living a life, of a culture of Mennonite, and it’s *them* who are in the wrong. Being able to back that up and stand that up I have none as yet who can stand against me. Because I have not done anything wrong in my tradition. I kept to my faith, kept to my tradition, and philosophy. And nowhere there can they find any fault with that. It’s not me who’s in the wrong.

I can *stand* on that because I have enough knowledge and I have enough background.

I’m not ignorant anymore.

I did have an identity crisis as a teenager, as all teenagers do, but in my young twenties I just floundered, I did feel lost in who I was and that took a long time before I knew. I think it can crush people. I think people could be completely ruined by not knowing their identity. It depends on the character of the person. I always had a strong character. It came out through the trial of fire. In the end it came up stronger. But for those who didn’t have a strong character, a strong personality, they either have to succumb or they will be destroyed.

The mainstream Canadian culture? I feel detached from it. When people invite me, and we are going up to a party, I don’t feel like I fit in. These are not my people. There is nothing wrong with the people, but I just find there is nothing to talk. We can talk about work and a lot

of time it's the language that's used. I do use foul language, but usually when I am very-very upset. And usually in a family situation with people who I realize they not gonna care. I don't use it generally in public. Talking with people professionally — no problem, but when I am in a group setting when nobody there is Mennonite. Somewhere at a party after a few drinks, it can be getting a little interesting, but I can't identify with that. And usually quite soon I just get up and leave. Because of the attitude, the way they treat each other seems to be at a point of disrespect.

Finally, I can say that my home is Manitoba. Definitely. Because I travelled. I traveled to South America, Asia, Europe, wherever I come back and see those fields of wheat and those checkerboards—the checkerboard pattern—*that's* my home. I just see that and I just feel at home. I like the wheat fields. They are so different. They are all like in order...and evenly harvested. It all goes in one direction. That's order. I hate chaos in my personal life, if people are coming and flounder, I hate that.

In my spirit, in myself, I just get all lined up, so when I see those neatly laid out fields in a checkerboard pattern every section, I LOVE that. And I think — yes! Peace. And no matter where I go in this world, I will always consider Steinbach area, or even Winnipeg, my home. Even though I lived in Dauphin for 18 years, which seems to be the best time in my life, I still think it's my home.

Just seeing those fields of wheat...it gives me peace.

**Paul: home is a process that makes a space, which lets me grow.**

I am pretty much linear, so I'll begin with this... I am from Iran, I come from Zagros Mountains, a mountainous area, and I specifically mentioned that because it's different. I think it's a different living environment, culture, everything, and my first language is Persian. Farsi, with a dialect that I spoke and I speak Bakhtiari, which is another, some people say it's a

dialect of Persian, but it's incomprehensible, so many people say it's a different language. And I speak English and I speak French at an intermediate level.

My culture? What is my culture? It is so complicated that I cannot define it. Even as a personal thing not as I am sitting here like an academic or a student. I don't know, but probably culture would be something that I grew up with and that builds up my understanding of the world, or at least how I perceive it and construct it. But that is my culture, not my ethnicity or history of people who live in the mountainous area where I was born. Because my life, my experiences are different from those people and their culture, yet we share the same language. There is a stereotype and we use language to get our heads at something but it's not necessary. I come from that mountainous city but after the age of eighteen I rarely lived there for a long time and now I'm thirty-six, so how much am I from that area, really?

I have thought about *home*. Thinking about home, I see that as *a process* of creating a space where there is "a welcome" to you. It is what lets me leave peacefully in the context of ...in the limitations that this context poses on me. At the same time, I see it as something that I can do — like the things I love to do; it is *the* place and *the* things. A place where I can take care of my passions.

I'd say home is a place that lets me live and flourish within that system.

I don't care much about ethnicity in general, as I think it's pretty much something that we build. Like, OK, what is Persian ethnicity? If you just walk in that area and look at people, look at their appearance, you could probably assume that yes they are Persian, Arab, Mongolian, Greek, Caucasian. And even African. Yes, they are Persian. Am I Persian? Yes. And not really...Where do I come from then? That's the thing. I'm from there where I was born and lived up to this age but I also lived in these, these, and those and those places, so I *am* from all of those places. Each of these places make my cultural story.

Languages are not separate from people who speak them. I don't believe that language is something that exists in vacuum. It is not separate from people, so that includes people who spoke this language in history. I cannot separate them, so each one of them when I want to express I see them as different ways of expression of myself and none of them would say one hundred per cent of what I want to say. But each of them has a different way of expressing what I want to say. If you say in Persian "Orientalism" in eastern worldview I mean differently. If I use "Orientalism" in a western worldview, it will be even something else.

Is there an idea of Canadian identity? To be honest, I don't believe that there is such a thing as Canadian identity or Canadian culture for, either of the two does not seem to be a unitary construct; it's absolutely different, in different process as I experience. Of course language influences my cognition and my thinking and it's not that I am in control. It's not like that.

I say language is not different from people or rather it is different from people but it's not separated from people who speak the language ...I have really nice, good friends in Iran or here who speak Persian and I have really good friends who speak English as their only language, first language. So, I am connected with these people and, at the same time, and I have nice and great friends in France, so that's makes it difficult when I want to prioritize because language is not just a thing that exists in the vacuum, it is connected to people.

**Satoru: home is the place you want to die.**

...you are not like one of us,

but more like — 外国人 — *a gaikoku djin*. A

foreigner...a stranger.

Me, tied to the land,

my tiny little island,

a spot on the world map  
you hardly can locate.

You know, it still controls me.  
from over there,  
from the distance,  
it marks the place  
from where I can't escape.

What is culture? Home? Home is tied to the land — the land you are forced to live on, especially my island, my tiny little island. We can't escape from the island. That's my identity. That's what controls me — who I am. That's what controls what culture means to me. My identity is about who I grew up to, to be, and who I am to the next generation. When the culture established itself — there was no imported food, so you had to eat whatever land gave you. If you are harvesting everything, there is no food for tomorrow or for the day after, for my children—no food. So you have to eat what the land gives you and you can't take too much. If I take too much, then I will be full, but the next generation will not be full. If you have access to food, you must make sure that the next generation will have access to food. In order to do that you have some code to live with. And to me *that* is culture.

It's also all about who you are talking to.

If I am talking to a person from my island, home would be where my parents are, where my kids are, my wife is, the building that I live in. But if I'm talking to somebody from Brazil, and they say "*Where is your home?*" I will immediately say "*My home is in Japan*". And they'd say *what part of Japan?* and I'd say "*the little tiny island called Tokunoshima*", and they'd say "*Oh! Really? I don't know that place*". If someone from Canada asks the same, then

they are expecting me to say “Canada” ...and they think “you don’t talk like a Canadian, you don’t look like a Canadian.” The other day my rowing team asked me if I wanted to go to the Jets game. I said yes. I sat on the front row, the best place for the guy who owns the seats –there were four seats and I was in one of them. The time he asked me even to this moment, I’m thinking if he is just being nice to me? Or he is accepting me as one of them because I don’t feel I’m worth it. I am grateful. I don’t know how I got into this position. Because I am just a “nobody” from the place from where I am. Then I say to myself –am I allowed to be here? I’m constantly thinking— how do I behave here? I put my feet up like others do? No I can’t do that. I have to sit straight because that’s my respect. But my friends are sitting the way they want. They think I am friendly. But I don’t think I am worthy of it.

I don’t know about hybridity... I maybe the same as everybody else or maybe I am a little bit different. I have my core belief system. The expression of core ideas may differ from culture to culture and language to language. If I am in Japanese culture my system is the same. But the expression of how I behave within a society — it probably will be different. When I go to Japan, I’d like to be more authoritative because I am allowed to be and I can be. All the education that I have in North America--that will allow me to be an authoritative being in Japan. In Canada, with my background I know I’m not allowed to be authoritative. So I have to play. But I’m not fond of the game. If I have a suggestion to make and I *think I have* some value to add, I have to say “What do you think?” This is a game I have to play. It’s the same game. Different expressions. At the end of the day I am saying the same thing. What do you call it — passive-aggressive? That’s what I do here. I would be probably not behaving this way in Japan, especially on my island. Oh, I act like a God on my island.

I live here in Canada. But I don’t think I want to be buried here. I haven’t committed the rest of my life in Canada. I’m there. I am not homesick for my island. But the bottom of my core

hasn't accepted that I want to die here [in Canada]. I don't want to die here. Do I want to die in Japan? No. I don't feel at home living in mainland Japan. I feel only at home on my island where I have power to exercise. I'm still subordinated by Japanese people. I could never be same as the mainland people because we have been always slaves of Japan, traditionally, historically. That idea has not changed. And it continues. When I decide to die on this land, that's the time when I think I'll become emotionally Canadian. Because I am committed to that.

To my family, my children, maybe this is a country to die for. It's a horrible thing to say, but I hope they will not think like that. My son Tyrone says he wants to go to Japan, to my island. Hanika, my daughter, relates more to the island than Japan. They are happy here though. I feel bad for my wife because she is overruled sometimes and not only that, she is with us, and she is the one who says she will go to the island after retirement — she wants to go back to my island. I feel bad. She does not have a hometown with a home to go back to because her life *is* hybridity. One Russian parent, one perhaps Scottish but from a child who was found on the prairies. She was born in Vancouver, never grew up in Vancouver, moved around BC; she has no place to go back to. She has her father's house, but it's not where she grew up; it's not where her friends are, so to me — *that* is hybridity. Me living in Canada, it looks hybrid, but I know where I am from.

“Really? do you think I am a hybrid?” — that'll be my reaction to people who call me hybrid. “Do you really think I am hybrid?” So it will sound to me as an *achievement*. If somebody calls me “*Oh you are hybrid*” that proves me that I have achieved something, I have something to prove. It's similar to when you start learning a second language and someone says “*Oh, you are bilingual!*”.

I don't think that I can describe myself as Japanese-Canadian. I'm Japanese who is living in Canada. Immigrated but not hyphenated — I don't think I can be using this term even after

living here for over twenty years. I do not feel I can call myself Canadian at all. Because my parents are in Japan and I want to go back. The Japanese government does not allow me to have dual citizenship so if I get my Canadian citizenship then I can be disqualified by the Japanese government. That's the reason I am not a dual citizen and a citizen of Canada, and maybe that's why I feel that way. Maybe you could say that I don't feel like a Canadian only because of that. But even if I became Canadian I don't think I would be able to say I am Canadian. I'd hold Canadian citizenship but I'm from Japan. I think I am talking about my assigned identity — I can't escape from my assigned identity. I think Canadians are those who grew up in Canada... if I say "I'm Canadian" they would argue with me and say "yes, you are, but you are from Japan, right?" And I have to say "Yes." And that will put me into a spot where I am not allowed to say that I am Canadian. I feel like for me, no matter what I will do and where I will live, there is no way back nor there is a way only forward. It will be all the time in between. Because I know my truth: I will feel *gaikokujin* all my life.

CHAPTER V  
LOOKING FOR THE MEANINGS OF STORIES

**Wandering in the Mirror Reflections: Looking Far and Beyond**

On rereading the stories presented above, I started feeling the collective “I” of these stories in a different way. It’s almost that the story-tellers become actors of the same play, which has a number of episodes, and each time the voice over connects these episodes into one big piece. My co-authorial presence throughout these stories allowed me to listen and compare my experience as a hybrid identity with the experiences of the storytellers. Such pattern of back and forth comparison of our stories helped me to make sense of my story too.

In her thesis on South African women’s testimonies and representations of collective memory, Tiktin (2001) emphasizes that it is the intensity of the participants’ *telling* and the researcher’s *listening* that reveals a deeper meaning of the lived experiences of both parties. It may well happen that at some point during that process it is not the similarity but the intensity of the memories told that can trespass the borderland between personal and collective. Tiktin writes that her concentrated listening to the stories of her colleagues let her better understand her family story which was not necessarily similar to the stories she compared it with. But the exemplification of the experiences, the glimpses of individual truths coming through her colleagues’ memoirs, helped her make a generalized, collective view of the group and herself. She wrote, “I needed to know what I had invested, what I was bringing into this work, how my past shaped my present, and now, how their present was shaping me” (p. 101).

The chatter of voices coming through the study interview transcripts, reflective notes, and rewritten biotext stories made me feel that it was not Tanya who speaks about her *self* being best understood through oftentimes opposite bits and pieces, and it is not Marianna who builds her career as a successful scholar at the German university and not Chelsey who was rejected by her community due to her parents’ divorce back in her childhood. It is me. Me. It was me all the

time who tried to articulate her identity through bits and pieces of her life before and after immigration to Canada, shifting back and forth in between languages and cultural modalities, and it is my parents' divorce that split my life into before and after when I just started school...And even though I cannot surf like Ismail on the waves of the Igzira bay in the Atlantic ocean, and I have not had a big nice Winnipeg Indian wedding like Jas, with jaggo candle holders and Indian spicy food, and have never been to the island of Tokunohima as Satoru's family, after rewriting and rereading their biotext stories, I feel as if I had witnessed the same events and could add those glimpses of their lives to my personal memory box — the box of universal collective memory of *us* as species of multiple roots, places, perceptions, and happenstances. That is how their stories make my story too. It *is* how life stories explore “the personal, social, temporal and contextual” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 10): the individual through the collective in the cross-reflected streams of many journeys that powerfully flow into one.

In this part of the thesis I am going to reflect on the themes that emerged out of the rewritten, slightly fictionalized biotexts, and other research materials. Drawing on theoretical frameworks outlined in the introductory chapters, I will be searching for traces of how the study participants' experiences related to their living in certain cultural *backgrounds* ground their habitus through the symbolic and real spaces of belonging.

As mentioned above, the individual perceptions of belonging range from a literal meaning of “home” as a house, place of residence and country of birth to “home” as lifestyle and tradition, language and family, religion and spirituality, a sense of community and sense of self (Card, 2009; Lipis, 2011). When I asked the participants to reflect on the topics of our interview before composing biotexts, what sense they make of their “cultural” story, I meant quite a definite thing — the story of how they perceive “home” as a symbolic locus of belonging, as the habitus of their social capital, constructed and experienced socially, yet felt in the private sphere and as an

assemblage of heterogeneous elements that expresses a locus of belonging (Bourdieu, 1977; Deleuze et al., 1987). Interestingly, for some of the participants a notion of “home” emerged both as a source and a product of what they meant by “culture”. In this respect, a metaphorical house of being which represents a complex sense of place, and a site of cultural production, mentioned by Hillier and Rooksby (2002) emerged as a true connection between “the individual and the collective in a sensory way”, which is also consistent with a notion of *habitus*.

**Resisting, balancing in between and shifting back and forth from home to host spaces.**

*Our experience of place, and especially of home, is a dialectal one — balancing a need to stay with a desire to escape.*

Relph (1976, p. 42)

The stories told above are abundant with multiple meanings of what home is, as well as what home is not. Some of them reflect the categories of home as a series of tangible objects or kinship-related sentimental connections, like places, physical dwellings, and people; others coincide with a perception of home as a more evasive, almost surreal area of thought that can describe dozens of meanings related to what make one feel at ease. In other words, home in that context comes to surface as something that allows us not to put on a [social?] mask in the presence of it. Because of the multifunctional modality of expression, the concept of home lacks a unified definition; nor can it be reduced to a series of repeatable definable categories. In it, spatial and temporal meanings may stay separate and may go intricately intertwined, or some of its elements may be completely absent while others prevail. To illustrate, memory can be viewed as a symbolic home or depository of culture where temporal meaning is inseparable from spatial meaning; for example, childhood memory can emerge as a smell of a favorite dish

cooked with the use of spices bought at the local farm market and served in someone's parents' house a few decades ago.

Memory can also transgress spatial meaning from one's village, region, nation towards the language used only in this village, or to the way of celebrating local traditions typical of that region. These examples demonstrate that it is hard to make a strict divide between spatial and temporal, sensory and logical, objects and places while theorizing on a sense of belonging, because all of them are symbolic representations of home, culture and identity. Unlike Bourdieu's habitus which relates mostly to the means of cultural production that help to acquire social capital in a more ideological sense, home in the stories above emerges as a multimode, intimate, and often unexplainable domain of personal feelings related to an experience of deeply felt sense of comfort. The bottom line here is that to survive we need to reproduce that feeling of comfort through finding ourselves again and again in that time-space continuum of comfort. This need is so vital that it can almost reach the value of some biological meaning for us. Yes, we acquire a sense of home socially but nonetheless biologically too. O'Sullivan (1999) explains it as follows, "The depth of our need for a sense of place is akin to what other members of the natural world experience as a stable habitat" (p. 245). Therefore, home is a social construct inasmuch as it is a biological one, where the social, habitus, and biological, habitat, come as one.

In this capacity home is akin to Nation-Thing, introduced by Žižek as a feeling of the evasive yet distinctly shared something that is "connected to a community's way of life, their traditions and social practices, their rituals and myths. Nonetheless, besides being a way of life, the "Nation-Thing" is also something in which members of the community have a propensity to believe. This belief, and the belief that others share it, sanctions the "Nation-Thing" (Žižek, 1993). However, this belief is different from a belief in the meaning of a dogmatic principle that is forced on the believers. A Nation-Thing informed belief is rather an awareness that there

is something common that a certain group of people share as their life experience and it is different from what other might experience.

I started with my story presented in two poems, *Who am I?* and *A bus ride to work* that framed some reflective notes about my personal journey as a hybrid. The poem *Who am I?* appears as a contemplative image of the *me*, the author, who is viewing herself as an individual “of a mixed blood”, “a half-breed”, a person whose cultural origin is hard to identify. “A cut-in-half slice from the multigrain bread” and “an island torn off the main strand” are metaphorical representations of the state of mind of the author that Homi Bhabha (1994) called the condition of being “a migrant” in the contemporary metropolis. The main characteristics of such experience are anxiety and inner discomfort. Entering into the symbolic essence of a certain “washed-out” culture that is mixed from the very beginning (e.g. Afro-American) by birth, can be as dramatic as an experience of becoming “a mixed blood” or moving to a new place of living. It is also the lived experiences of immigration and sojourning that can be accountable for the emergence of such phenomenon as hybridity, most commonly treated in the postcolonial stance and associated with diasporic groups and migrant populations what also applies contextually to the flow of cultures and their interactions (Bhabha, 1994; Canclini, 2005; Hall, 2000). Trapped in between the desire to keep her autonomy yet longing for the equal representation among the host culture, the immigrant turns into an *abject* occupying some liminal place, neither within nor outside the dominant culture, somewhere beyond—beyond the barriers circumscribing her first culture from the host one, in some ambivalent and antagonistic virtual space that “simultaneously marks possibility and impossibility of identity, presence through absence”, a state of being neither here nor there, *au-dela*, *fort/da* (Bhabha, 1994).

The second poem, *A bus ride to work*, is seemingly different both in the form and in the method of telling a story of the experience described above. However, in a series of these two

poems the second one can be viewed as an unfolded illustration of what it is like to observe a new culture through a lens of the bearer of the shifting identity. It comes through the eyes of the stranger, the person from somewhere else who did not lose the sense of her origin yet who is already part of the new environment, to a much extent still alien to her. It feels through the images of the co-riders on the same bus, loud, rude, swearing, preoccupied with the modern gadgets, appearing to the author of the poem shallow and spiritually deprived. An image of “the lady in the funny hat” speaks to the same view about the host culture—shallow and funny, funny in their striving to be perfect, to arrive everywhere on time, to go by the book, to be serious about the pursuits that to the author of the poem seem unimportant or not deserving the effort. Here we feel the same bitterness and same inadequacy that is being rendered in *Who am I?* This time, the sense of inadequacy is coming not from the inside but from the outside. The rhetorical question *Who am I?* posed in the first poem echoes in the second poem with the same emphatic strength of the question “What are we doing here?” what brings the two poetic pieces into one extended story of an identity conflict that is bothering the author and is responsible for her feeling of the “never lost but not yet found” land where her true identity belongs. Having sketched poetically the images of the Other that provoked her discomforting feelings during one of the many bus rides to work, the author gathers the field texts that become the research texts in the poem which can “paint” a self-portrait as a research puzzle that needs to be solved. Thus, the arts-informed inquiry (Bach, 1998; Murphy, 2004) creates a space of the interwoven planes of aesthetic value where the poetic text acquires the eloquence and visibility of the painting or the photographic glimpses of the lived experience.

Although the two poems presented in this work seem to be divergent in almost everything: the length, the graphic spacing of lines, the rhythm, the intonation and the plot, their themes emerging through and—silently in between—come to surface in clusters of similar

meanings. One cluster reflects the general mood and tone of the author — uncertainty, a sense of the fuzzy identity, never lost yet not found, a sense of shifted, unidentified belonging. The root cause for such modality is absence of some basic supporting point that normally is built in the language and culture of the “querent’s” birthplace. Logically, this stance directs us to the next thematic cluster — that of *abjection* or “the state of being cast off” (Kristeva, 1982). As noted above, hybridity does not respect borders and rules, because its essence is that of tension across boundaries. Feeling oneself of mixed, indefinite background leads the poem with the major dramatic note of the author’s voice, my voice. Notwithstanding the stance of how disturbing the experience of being “caught in between the two doors” Rao, the last accord of the poem sounds as a song of contemplation and resistance to uncertainty and doubt. It strikes a stern, solemn cord of self-awareness as a complete agency of *being* despite the ambiguities of the constituents that make this agency expressed in the words showing incompleteness, such as “half”, “cut-in-half”, “a slice”, “an island”, “half-whispered”, “a thread”. All of these words stand for the elements of the whole, but in the position of the whole. This paradigm of the “half-life” experience suggests a deep-seated sense of missing something important that is expected to come from the outside to make the inside, the selfhood, more complete. However, the reality of such “hyphenated” existence prevents the self from accomplishing its eternal task — to identify its “individuality, autonomy and solitariness” (Bhabha, 1994). Not surprisingly, the reader cannot but feel the bitterness of the author’s awareness that the task can never be accomplished. There is evidence of a complex of the inferiority and inadequacy of having a shifting sense of identity. Therefore, the only supporting point of the poem is the closing “me”. Like the last hope, it gives a sense of the firm ground to the rest of the rhythmical, a tide-like fluidity of the “halves” that reflect the author’s contemplations over her shifting in-between identity. The question is then *what* constitutes the culture of such a shifting identity? By all accounts, the weaknesses,

vulnerabilities and anxieties that hybridity brings to an individual paradoxically turn into the strengths that stimulate her to further proceed with her difficult quest. No matter how rhetorical the questions posed in the poems-stories are, the fact that these questions are being asked signals that some constructive process of self-identification is under way. It means that despite all the odds, “me” exists.

In his story, Ismail emphasizes that “home” is not a subject about politics or beliefs, nor is it a religion or ideology. It is a symbolic place where his roots are: his family, his country, his culture. When asked about his “cultural” story, despite diverse linguistic, religious and ethnic influences on his life, Ismail says that it will be always a *Moroccan* story, a story of his geographical and spiritual home. But, he asserts, it won’t be a story about religion, or politics. Notably, Ismail feels ill at ease when they speak about extremist attacks in Brussels or Paris because being a Muslim, he feels bad that his religion has suddenly got such a bad name worldwide. He even feels uncomfortable to speak Arabic because of that and seems to even deny the Arabic part of his identity. When asked about his preferences for choosing his linguistic repertoire in Canada, Ismail says that he prefers to speak English, then — French and not Arabic:

Another thing is why I am not into Arabic anymore because of those incidents that happen, the terrorism, and the media’s message that Muslims are terrorists, so I want to get rid of this, that I am Arabic and I speak Arabic, just not to feel isolated from other people, it’s just better to get rid of it, and follow the majority. (Ismail-I, p. 3, lines 73-76).

Of all the participants who acknowledge their multilingualism and desire to experience living in a cultural setting other than their home, Ismail appears to be the one who is mostly

balancing between enjoying his staying at home, and yet striving for getting new cultural experiences; enjoying to be Moroccan, and yet having an experience as a Canadian [student]. Inspired (and slightly pushed by his mother to study in Canada), Ismail experiences mixed feelings upon arrival to the host country. His wish to stay Moroccan as he challenges his own wish to walk in the shoes of an *Other*, perhaps unconsciously. He wants to study abroad and yet often feels in the host country as an outsider. He wants to be part of the Moroccan community in Canada to feel more at ease and yet he escapes from it because this membership does not help him to get what he wants from the new environment — a condition that will allow him to be independent from the powerful influence of his original identity — Moroccan. Thus, the influence of his “home” becomes twofold: on the one hand, it feeds the process of his identity formation, and on the other, it appears to be an obstacle that does not allow him to appropriate the elements of the host culture. Metaphorically speaking, at times the influence of home as land, and monolithic nation state can bear the features of a kind mother and a controlling mother; an inspiring travel guide towards the new and a vigilante who is always watching over you and testing your citizenship loyalty.

By the time of our first interview, Ismail has gotten a few friends from diverse cultural backgrounds, (thereto, his girlfriend was Canadian which proves he did not limit his circle of close friendships to a Moroccan community only), yet in his story he defiantly resists to admit that his stay in Canada started adding a new dimension to his Moroccan self. And yet he admits that he is a hybrid. When I asked Ismail whether he would feel discriminated or insulted if someone called him a hybrid, he says:

I won't see it as discrimination. I will be fine, yes. Because that will really reflect what I am. I would see it as a compliment. (Ismail-I, p. 3, lines 91-95)

A representation of home as locus of self-identification can also be experienced as a sense of spiritual tradition connected to land. So it happens for Canadian-born Chelsey, who does not identify herself purely as Canadian but rather as Mennonite. For Chelsey home is Manitoba, its land. At the same time, her spirituality rooted in the Mennonite tradition adds a very strong dimension to her perception of home. Oftentimes, it is difficult to separate one from another — land from beliefs. In some sense, they make a whole that *is* home for Chelsey. When Chelsey describes Manitoba's wheat fields, we see a more complex image, almost a 3-D configuration that portrays "home". In it the physical and nonmaterial are combined: a land of order, a mental harmony and a harbor of reconciled spirit, which in fact are the most salient characteristics of the Mennonite tradition. Remarkably, Chelsey's collage (see Appendix J) and the image of the checkerboards of wheat fields that make her feel good look and sound both solid and tranquil, monotonous in their repetitive simplicity and, at the same time, poetic. This multisensory perception of home as a colorful land of ancestors who farmed it since time immemorial, across countries and continents, as the Mennonite community would do, resonates well not only with Chelsey's idea of culture but also with Satoru's stance on home. He sees home as the place that reconnects generations occupied in producing, keeping and passing the land resources from one generation to another. He says that if there is access to food, the current generation has to make sure that the next one will have access to food. To this end, they have some code to live with. For Satoru, *that* is culture.

Moreover, home for Satoru is the place he wants to die. Traditionally, the Japanese perception of death, rooted in Shinto religion, is constructed over "the continued requirement to reflect a logic of social exchange between the living and dead — and among the living themselves. In Japan ... a funeral is a means to accumulate and spend social capital" (Richie, 2006, para. 8). Satoru mentions that in the past, during the bushido and samurai time — the

feudal tradition in Japan urged its population to reproduce only one justice: to serve the lord. Most commonly, one's life in those times belonged to somebody else. *The* justice was about serving the master. If a master says "you die for it", you die. In return, the master promises to look after your offspring, and they will all be happy for the rest of their lives, and generations after. Satoru says, when they see that, they — the obedient servants — want to die. It was all about who takes care of the next generation. And who or what provides the resources: the land, the ancestors, and the masters. In such culture, which may seem too patriarchal to the modern sensibilities of the west, the most honorable value was to live with the knowledge of the meaning of why and whom you can die for. I find this construct of social capital very impressive because it reflects the meaning of the true belonging for populations brought up in this frame of mind. The most important cultural values are the land where you live to make others plentiful in their resources, and where you want to die. That was the most honorable justice.

So, after talking to Satoru, even though he identifies himself as Shiman-chu and not Japanese, I thought that if someone asked me what are the main premises the Japanese identity draws on, I'd say resources and service. Respect for ancestors. Thinking about the times to come, while enjoying the fruits of the current labors. On the negative side though, it also holds a sense of superiority as a monolithic nation — one that looks down upon strangers, including the islanders of the same nation state. All those who do not belong to mainland Japan are islanders. They are strangers in their own land.

It is because of that contradiction that Satoru speaks of a twofold influence of his native island on his identity. Honoring its resources for making him who he is, on the one hand, and acknowledging the omnipresent control of the land over him, on the other, he seems to be caught in a trap of being a Japanese and being an outsider. Therefore, home for Satoru represents a formative and controlling power. It is the "place" he cannot escape. As a result, Satoru's identity

has been influenced by the island culture that withstands the Japanese mainland culture, a culture of self-generated and highly perceived superiority over the Other. From a perspective of a Japanese national identity, Satoru is “one of us”, and yet the Other. Thus, Satoru’s hybridity is rooted in his experience as an islander, a *gaikokujin*. Due to this circumstance, Satoru’s perception of home and belonging has been already developed and ideologically caught in between the two domains — being a Japanese and not exactly Japanese, being an islander and yet speaking Japanese as his first language because his parents did not want him to learn “the island’s mouth”, Shimaguchi. The hegemony of the dominant culture, in this case, the Japanese culture, has marked the self-identification process for Satoru with dramatic feeling of being cast off from the very beginning. Thus, home for Satoru has never been a place of harmony and rest. It was a site of politics and struggle — a struggle for making sense of belonging and justice.

The cultural story of the next participant, Marianna, also starts with land and language as the most definitive markers of her Ukrainian identity. Her “heavily” multilingual background (she is fluent in English, German, Polish and Russian besides her native Ukrainian) makes her feel quite comfortable not only in Ukraine and Russia, but also in Poland where she worked for some time and in Germany where she immigrated after receiving an offer of employment from one of the universities. For Marianna, home is where she is wanted as a professional, and where her expertise and talents are appreciated and honoured: “My job makes who I am.” These words come out through both of her interviews, and she seems quite happy living and working in Germany — a country she deeply respects for giving her a chance to successfully continue her career:

I do still have this feeling [towards Ukraine], no, coming back will *not* take place or maybe in ten-twenty years because I have quite a stable position in Germany and I’m not afraid of my future there, of my professional future and if

it could be only my decision, but not a decision of my employer, and because of some difficulties of integration, specifically in first two years I mistrusted myself with a thought I can come back every single day I would like.

That's why the longer I live there the less I think about it. (Marianna-I, p. 2, lines 61-66).

All is well, and yet... I expected to hear and see more of Marianna's new identity dimension related to her new place of residence and its cultural environment, but to my surprise, the collage that Marianna composed did not mention Germany at all. It was all about Ukraine. It clearly states that despite she living in Germany for many years she identifies herself as Ukrainian. Ukraine is her home. Not the land only though, nor the new political turn that was taken a few years ago, but its past that Marianna left behind and still holds close to her heart:

I was born in Ukraine, I lived there for many years, I went to school, I studied there, I also completed my PhD in cooperation with my German partners, and my PhD defence took place in Ukraine, and later on I had been working for ten years there. I have there a network of friends, and acquaintances, and also many family members and not this nuclear family but extended family. They are still there. Because of the relatively short period of my stay in Germany, I still consider Ukraine as my home. (Marianna-I, p. 2, lines 47-52).

Even though Marianna has lived in Germany for years and succeeded there professionally, her heart belongs to Ukraine — not *land* as a territory, a nation state, but land as a memory box where her sense of kinship is still preserved; where her relatives still are; where her experience of being Ukrainian is left as it was — like a family treasure that we place in a box when we leave home for a long travel and on coming back we like to open, and by touching each item within it we can again experience the sweet moments these items silently whisper of. When I was rewriting Marianna's story based on our interview conversations and her biotext, I felt as if

the most important part of its protagonist and the author's identity — Marianna's and mine in that role — was developed in the past. It is that past which is still drawn on as the source of the solid, substantial self, while the present circumstance — the successful career in the German university, life in Germany, raising her daughter in the new cultural setting was something that catalyzes part of Marianna's new culturally shaped self — no, not a German identity as yet, but that of a Ukrainian immigrant who feels still Ukrainian but who manifested newly-developed qualities and seeks for the markers of her sense of belonging other than in land, family and language. Marianna's sense of home is located in her job. Thus, it is not *the* place, a country or a city she lives in. It is her *job*. When asked about what Germany means to her, Marianna says:

I'd say it's more than just a place now, and it becomes more and more... it's like in-between position. I don't have that German identity, nothing clicks in my heart when I hear the German music but I already feel as part of this society, because there are so many aspects.

Still I think because of the importance of my job there and due to the fact that this job takes so much time of my whole life, I cannot isolate my identity from that job. My identity is strongly related to my job I perform there. Specifically, I can say that my job creates me and my identity here and this job helps me to create my social contacts there and integrate into this life. (Marianna-I, p. 4, lines 112-119)

While Marianna seeks for her renewed sense of home, speaking mostly about her present situation, Jaspreet's sense of home and belonging takes us back to her childhood, to her Punjabi family, to the languages she spoke as a child — Hindi and Punjabi. But then that reality becomes only a memory. After her moving to Canada, and living here since thirteen, she calls Winnipeg her home. Yet I feel that somewhere deep inside she is still confused, because she

does not look like a Canadian but she is not a young girl who came from India either. She is aware of the change. Her Indian family is here, with Jas, and yet the sense of belonging to the Indian culture has transformed. Jas feels as Indian and does not feel as Indian anymore. She is from India but now Winnipeg is her physical home.

Jas feels bad that she does not go to the temple that often anymore as it was before, back in India, with her grandfather who was very religious and who would take little Jas to the temple every night. She finds it odd that her Canadian husband goes to “his temple”, to the church, once a year — for the Christmas service. Feeling her affinity to the Sikh culture, she lacks the presence of its spirituality in her daily life and talks about Bollywood movies nostalgically. Although she does not say it literally but as a rewriter of her cultural story, if I take on her role to myself I’d say this for her: “Winnipeg is my home. But the more I am living here, the more I feel separated from a core sense of my belonging.” Thus, in Jas’s story, “home” locates the experiences of profound, culturally-informed spiritual truths that run deeper than hasty streams of busy, often nonsensical, city life, that feeds on its self-generated importance; it hides nothing but ordinary routine. Its religion is a race around the same old circles: morning coffee, bus, car, work, lunch, getting back home, dinner, going to bed. Is it something that Jas would like to pass on to her children as cultural heritage? Or rather, is it only that she would like to pass on? I doubt this. I was pleasantly surprised and touched by Jas’s confession that while she was thinking over her biotext images, she decided to bring about her long time wish to make a Sikh shrine in her house. After our second interview, Jas showed me the shrine she made. Her eyes gleamed with joy as it would gleam in a person who brought to fruition one of her long-time cherished wishes after many delays. I know that with or without her participation in my study, Jas would eventually make that shrine in her house anyway. I was happy to have become part of

it in a sense. On leaving Jas on that day I felt as if with the appearance of shrine, she felt more at home in her house.

Even a more abstract sense of home was expressed in Paul's story. In contrast to other stories, his reflects a characteristic of nostalgic and at the same time an unrestricted space defying clear-cut markers of belonging. Paul's experiences of living in different countries and cultural settings and speaking several languages make him assert that there is no such thing as ethnicity or culture and no such thing as a describable notion of "home" since there are many. He seems to feel comfortable in that absence of positivist markers of identity. He seems to slide nicely with the flow of his thoughts that may or may not lead to certain definite answers to my questions. Paul's description of how place may influence his identity reminds me of Sbrocchi's argument when she speaks about the significance of how experience in-place helps understand the meaning of context. She says that, "I embrace the moment when my lived experience grounds the theory: when the interrelatedness of the inner and outer world seeps into my skin and fuses with the process this inquiry itself. I no longer follow someone else's theory and adhere to someone else's worldview but live within my own" (2005, p. 19). Notably, in this case understanding or explaining the context does not necessarily mean giving it a name. Paul juggles with sociological labels, such as identity, culture, and ethnicity, calling them voids for they do not express anything real for him. At the same time, he does not provide his own notions while describing his sense of home. I had an impression that for Paul his everyday activities and ordinary objects that make his world — a watch, a notebook, a desk, the ones that he drew as part of his biotext collage, *are* his culture, and his home, because they most truly represent his comfort and captivation with life. Obviously, life for Paul is a process of ongoing inquiry into the matter of things, unlabelled and unlimited in the multitude of their meanings, rather than an attempt to apply the previously established norms, beliefs and modes of thinking.

He compares himself to a tool, a tool for looking into things in the ongoing process of life's change. Trying to explain his views on what identity is, Paul says:

I'm over that stage. ...maybe for categorization purposes it is easier to find this person or *be* (stresses) this person, belonging to these things and limiting ...but I don't know if I have chosen that path in life then I wouldn't yearn for this way, oh it's so unified, it is just one thing that means nothing, then I'm just a tool and I like it... I can do one thing and do nothing, so I don't know if that way of thinking is helping me, I say oh, yeah, that's kind of tool. (Paul-I, p. 9, lines 276-279)

As a student of the social sciences, Paul's sensibility does not allow him to be deterministic in his explanatory remarks regarding his biotext. His comments can be rather volatile, sometimes too direct and univocal — when there can be an array of nuances or, quite oppositely, too much of a manifold when the listener or the viewer (of his collage) would expect a more direct message. I wondered if this effect comes as a result of his multicultural experiences or whether it was just a mere habit of avoiding a direct answer or, conversely, of sounding straightforward and maximalist. His judgments become particularly poignant when Paul describes his experience of living in Winnipeg:

...am I missing something?

What's welcoming in that image, full of void?

How did it happen — that I am still myself

while living long enough

in those frozen palms of never-ending winter

and when it's still darn cold

despite the summer time marked on the calendar

Paul bitterly repeats that despite his eagerness to integrate into the new place and academic community it was the latent racism observed in Winnipeg that made him feel positioned as a visible minority and immigrant whose expertise and enthusiasm were of less value and therefore not called for representation. As a result, Winnipeg did not become Paul's home, a site of his success. Rather, it embodies all that was *not* home to him — a place where his dreams lost their meaning. No wonder, Paul's collage presents a series of images of lonely places and objects: a bench with a broken leg near the river; a tree with the yellow leaves, a tiny seagull, barely seen in the picture, isolated from its flock. (See Fig. 1)

Similarly, yet in different colors and images, Tanya's story depicts home as a site of confusing cultural spaces that intersect and puzzle her with their ambiguous urges. In the whirlpool of her multilingual and multicultural experiences, she cannot clearly define her cultural affiliation. She is Russian, and yet she is Jewish and Israeli. She feels the influence of that identity mixture, and when she becomes a Canadian, she likes it even not knowing how to define what Canadian identity means. No wonder, oftentimes she feels that her identity comes in bits and pieces. Interestingly, her milestone age number is thirteen — she was thirteen when she moved to Israel from Russia with her parents, and she was twenty-six when she moved to Canada. Each of these periods of thirteen years marks an influential shift in her sense of home. Tanya feels that each of these periods brings more fluidity into her sense of being, with a lot of geographically- and socially-informed meanings. As a result, her sense of home is shifty and shaky. Everything in it — places, languages, people — is changing, the encounters with the new are coming and going; and each of these experiences urge her to conform, to change, to rethink and to reinvent herself.

Curiously enough, in Tanya's story, the topic of traditional food (and she started this theme when talking about Russian food) gets so naturally intertwined with ...the Israeli music,

that it made me think again about how closely connected the different markers of cultural or ethnic affiliation come to the surface in response to symbolic cues in multicultural and multilingual minds. These clues often become enmeshed and undivided across the objectified symbols of cultural production. In this case the topic regarding the traditional food of one culture leads to thinking about the food of another culture, and then — immediately, to traditional music as a memory cue that all of a sudden connects all these markers of cultural representations in one referential frame.

In the literature, this phenomenon is called “switching between culture A and culture B, which is conveniently employed in and by bicultural minds (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney & Devich Navarro, 1997). According to this pattern, “many bicultural individuals report that the two internalized cultures take turns in guiding their thoughts and feelings. This ...suggests that (a) internalized cultures are not necessarily blended and (b) absorbing a second culture does not always involve replacing the original culture with the new one” (Hong, Morris, Chiu & Benet-Martinez, 2000, p. 710).

Further on, the switching of cultural cues in a multilingual mind is reflected in part of Tanya’s story about her struggle to learn Hebrew. She describes herself at that time of challenge as a mute, isolated person who is totally cast off from the social context because she could not speak Hebrew while serving in the army. The metaphors in her biotext poem describe this disturbing experience very eloquently. They show that speaking Hebrew for Tanya in that dramatic circumstance of her life was an act of a truly heroic effort. The “verbal diarrhea”, as she puts it, that followed an awkward and humiliating period of her total linguistic silence, strikes me as a powerful and desperate metaphor she uses to describe her response to insecurity, isolation and humiliation that marked her first experiences living in Israel. Truly, it is hard to speak up when you are being yelled at.

It is noteworthy though that the same language, Hebrew, that caused Tanya's complete disorientation and built a barrier between her and the new country, suddenly becomes a space of incidentally appropriated comfort for her when she encountered a new linguistic attack on her identity. This time it came from English. At times of despair, when it was so hard to express herself in English on coming to Canada, Tanya uses Hebrew music to disconnect herself from the "aggressive" influence of English. One could assume that Tanya most likely would use Russian, her first language for this linguistic escape but, no, she uses Hebrew — the same language that not so long ago "tortured" her in a similar fashion.

When I asked Tanya why Hebrew, she says that this habit of listening to Hebrew music came to her during the immigration to Israel. Not being able to speak this language, Tanya took a habit of listening to Hebrew music as the only way to come a bit closer to that monster of hers — the new language.

Listening to the music of the language that makes you feel miserable in times of despair reminds me of Stockholm syndrome (Westcott, 2013). It seems like Tanya feels empathy and finds comfort within the presence of her recent captor — the Hebrew language that kept her in a prison of her own tongue-tied attempt to use it without actually knowing it. Such a traumatic bonding conveys a deep message that our sense of self may be felt at its best through a personal struggle. Remarkably, it appears that music can acquire value as a symbolic bridge that can connect a newcomer to the land, its language and its culture. This reflects a view that cultural production is "a dynamic process in which agents create meaning by drawing on cultural forms as they act in social and material contexts" (O'Connor, 2003, p. 61).

Just as we can create and constantly reproduce the material artifacts of culture, for example by cooking ethnic foods or wearing folk costumes, we can also craft self-made artifacts in the form of personal myths that can help us heal anxieties and conflicts by revisiting sites of

the drama we lived through. Obviously, the complex interplay of how different languages of her multilingual repertoire influenced Tanya's cultural story, testifies to the fact that a sense of belonging cannot emerge or sustain its status in separation from various cultural artifacts that are being produced by the collectively forced and individually perceived cultural practices, including the use of languages. I wondered if Canada felt like home for Tanya. She says:

I don't think [home] is a geographical term for me. At all. Because I usually thought home is a place. Now I think it's only the people. Just because my family is in Israel, I feel that this where it is. Where my family is. Now it is Israel because my parents are living there. (Tanya-I, p. 2, lines 69-71)

Tanya's thoughts race one after another. By looking at this confusing message that "home is not a geography, it is people, yet Israel is home", I got an impression that at the end of the day, Tanya is still confused about how all of these — home, culture, identity, languages, etc., signify spaces where she truly resides. These markers of belonging are fused in her mind so strongly that in this fusion family can represent a place that feels like home (though she does not live in Israel any more) while language stands for special space that brings her not only painful memories but also a peculiar feeling of comfort.

The contemplations about "home" and "culture" coming from the stories bring in a philosophical perspective to the data corpus across the board. Notwithstanding that the meaning of home "as a sense of belonging to a stable community" (Sbrocchi, 2005) that directly connects us to in-place experiences and childhood memories of living in a certain community prevails across the board, "home" emerges in the stories more as a multidimensional locus of being rather than an easily definable concept that provides a feeling of security through diverse and often idiosyncratic markers of belonging. By representing habitus of identity as place of and

participation in certain practices or entertaining spiritual beliefs shared among community, this perspective echoes with a psychoanalytic notion of selfhood as an intersection of the “open” and “closed system” of perception. This approach states that the multiple encounters with the external stimuli informs our “closed” mind, which can remain “closed” and could not “open” if not for engagement with the outside, supplying us with “food” for self-construction, including objects, ideas, and relationships in psychoanalytic sense. In fact, the “closed” system opens up for the informative exchange and “devours what it takes in” (Frosh, 2010, p. 110). By all appearances, the process of interaction between the “closed” system and its projections towards outside with the intent of appropriating what it likes, and making it part of itself, is not always predictable. The self may not necessarily absorb the properties of other objects of the external world and, paradoxically, sometimes, what the self *does* want to absorb could not find an adequate and expected response from the other party. For Paul, for example, “home” denotes a locus of struggle when despite one’s intention to interact with the outer world, the self may be denied equal participation and “the closed” system remains isolated in its own agency.

Home, therefore, can be viewed as a transcendent space without clearly-cut borders and precise characteristics: its meaning arises from the satisfactory feeling of being allowed *where* you want to be, and having freedom of doing *what* you want to do, in much broader sense than just a physical place or community where one’s basic needs are met. Paul argues that it is not the material aspects of some objectified home that makes [his] identity; quite the opposite, it is what identity does and how it acts in that given context that makes its actor feel at home. This view reflects the principles of virtual unrepresentability and performativity of home consistent with the modern psychoanalytic views on identity mentioned above (Butler, 2006; Irigaray, 2008).

Interestingly, Paul's allusions to the impossibility of defining "home" exactly match the concept of knowledge described in literature as "mediated perception". Introduced in 1965 by James Gibson, mediated or indirect perception explains the process of appropriation and transmission of new information through the iconic or symbolic media. For example, an iconic representation of home might be an image of the house, while symbolic representations may include a language, a family, and even the smell of the fireplace on a certain traditional celebration. When speaking about ethos — the embodiment of values, beliefs and ideals that characterize community, Prasad (cited in Blackman, 2015) states that "in order "to see" ethos one has to assemble an archive of intersecting, shifting, mediated and material expressions", which are hardly possible to convey or narrate, especially on the individual level (p. 41). The same view not only literally shadows the Deleuzian concept of assemblage introduced in the previous chapters of this thesis, but it also correlates with Derrida's (1994) notion of a human existence as the "experience of the impossible" and Zizek's (2013) favourite method of dealing with the complex phenomena, such as the Other — when the "impossible" or "not knowing" may appear to be more contemplative and, paradoxically, informative than limited, conventionalized and therefore often inaccurate "knowing".

To recapitulate, "home" is perceived by the study participants as a multivalent environment of being that is abound with characteristics of virtual and objective welcoming reality, based on a diversity of culturally produced artefacts. Home in this sense can be clearly explained or not being explained at all due to the subjectivity of its perception. It is certainly originated in the semantics of physical space and sensual comfort and transcends "inward toward facets of self, [and] outward toward aspect[s] of external world, alternatively both together — [which] cannot be known in advance. When places are actively sensed the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the mind

lead is anybody's guess" (Basso cited in Young, 2005, p. 152). The participants also describe their perceptions of "home" in terms of affiliation to a group with shared (for example, family) or not shared privileges of membership (a minority group in the mainstream society), or to a home community, which is not necessarily marked by a shared ethnic or linguistic affiliation or historic collective memory experience. In line with psychoanalytic perspective of knowing through absence more than presence, home is also described by some participants as a category of not necessarily shared value, as a salient yet silent space of a nostalgic, meaningful "not-knowing".

### **Reinventing the self or the world? How do we perceive our own hybridity?**

The next themes that emerge from the context of the stories, namely confusion, a sense of cultural disorientation, chameleonic behavior, and at the same time a feeling of privilege and personal empowerment demonstrate how manifold the terms that the story-tellers perceive their own hybridity can be. This section could well be prefaced with the following title: How do I feel about being hybrid? Confused. Puzzlingly, many participants admit that they *do* belong to shared cultural affiliations, but at the same time they may deny their divided cultural affiliations. Some think they *are* hybrids and yet they find that this term does not clearly reflect their perceptions of their culturally split identities.

The first thing that comes to the surface in the stories, is that, surprisingly, almost all participants did not consider themselves "hyphenated", although they feel connected to both of their cultural backgrounds or environments they had lived in at some point. They all prefer to connect their dual or multiple belonging to certain languages or cultures not by a hyphen but with the conjunction "and" as if willing to avoid the diminutive sense of hyphenation, which normally signifies "an intermediate step before a compound form becomes a single word" (English Language and Usage, 2016). If applied to the concept of hybridity, the semantics of

“and” is most reflective of the independence while keeping the unity of both parts that “and” coordinates. By using “and” the participants emphasize the equal value of influential constituents of their selfhood, related to diverse cultural experiences. They prefer to connect both parts of their fluid identity without understating one or another. They prefer to avoid fusion of the equal parts of their identity through a hyphen that is used not only to join words but also to separate syllables of a single word. I find this approach towards choices of using “and” instead of a hyphen quite persuasive and powerful because it shows that for the participants both parts of their identity are equally distinguished and valued. They seem to celebrate their equally shared affiliation to both of cultural spaces involved.

Thus, the participants may introduce themselves as “Ukrainian and Canadian” or “French and Canadian” depending on the way they have been filled (not Ukrainian-Canadian or French-Canadian, for example. Personally, when I see a hyphenated word, I look at it as a semantic entity where one part is attached to another in a syncretic, “half-sized” fashion, which gives me a sense of some instability, a space being split, as an invariance of sorts where the two parts of the whole are uncomfortably jumping one to another — as if each half is fighting for a spot in a limited space. In contrast, with the use of “and” the two halves of one whole immediately acquire strength of complementing each other in a balanced swaying between the two important elements. In addition, such connection with “and” informs about which part comes first time-wise, before the emergence of the second.

At the same time, there is a lot of confusion in perceptions of hybridity manifested by the participants. The research materials are abundant with examples testifying to how disoriented and confused the participants feel about cultural influences on their identity. If put in one sentence, this collective confusion can be articulated as follows: “Yes, I know that I am a hybrid; but, no, I

don't think I *am*." In line with the Lacanian stance on that paradox, I would add, "I know what I am not, but do I really know what exactly I am?"

To illustrate, Ismail's place of origin, Morocco, geographically and historically generates hybridity of its population and he is well aware of that. He feels connection to both the European, French-informed culture, and North African culture. However, despite such historically shaped hybridity embedded in the Moroccan culture, Ismail does not view himself as a hybrid identity. He admits a transformative influence on his life experience in an English-speaking environment in Canada, but at the same time, turns it down. A student of arts, Ismail has isolated himself from the Moroccan community while taking university courses in Montreal. Wishing to focus more on his English studies without distractions that usually take place when there is an easy access to the fellow-country men who speak the same first language, he moves to Winnipeg. Here he plunges into the English-speaking environment. However, despite feeling comfortable with getting more and more into the English-speaking culture, he never feels as Canadian or French while living in Canada:

I still feel as Moroccan in Canada. But the difference is that I am not living with my community. But I'm still Moroccan. I still feel for my country. Still gonna go back to my country one day when I finish my life here. The only difference is — I don't live with my community. I don't get involved with them. I'm rational about Canadian values and I don't accept anything that I think it's not right. For example, they don't care about their parents. They just throw them in the home care, nursing homes. (Ismail-II, p. 2, lines 41-44)

The hallmark of Ismail's accounts of his hybridity is confusion. On the one hand, he confirms and asserts his total loyalty to the Moroccan culture and Morocco as a citizen; besides,

he criticizes Canadian culture. He thinks that when Canadians are using exclamation marks, they certainly mean quite the opposite meaning from to what they literally utter. He sees them selfish and insensitive to other people's feelings. On the other, Ismail confirms that he cannot be part of the Moroccan community for long here in Canada. He literally runs away from their presence to Winnipeg to continue his studies. I was quite confused while working on Ismail's story and biotexts and particularly during the interviews. His responses to questions related to self-identification and hybridity are often ambiguous or, I would say, ambivalent. This ambivalence refers to how easily he can switch from "yes" to "no" while answering the same question. For example, he would say — "no, I am not influenced by the Canadian culture", and in the next line he would say, "Yes, I feel how my experience in the Canadian cultural environment changed me". When I asked him what was that change about, he would say, no there was no change. And then we would go in circles.

At first, I was puzzled by these yes/no ambivalent answers to the same question, but then I thought that such ambivalence *was* actually the finding. Most likely, his puzzling answers and no less puzzled looks mean nothing but the same confusion and even struggle on identifying himself clearly that was going on inside. Or he might well, or even not, be fully aware that the struggle was there. He knows he is Moroccan. That is what he knows. But at the same time he admits that he *is* a hybrid. Moreover, he says that multilingual experience has made a hybrid out of him, and this side of himself is empowering not discriminatory for him. He is also aware of how being a hybrid in a sense, gives him an advantage over monolingual or monocultural people, and he says, "I am not showing off." But throughout his story, Ismail repeats again and again, that he is Moroccan, and while in Canada he starts feeling even more Moroccan than he was before, and that is all that he identifies himself with.

In almost same fashion, Jas does not consider herself Hindi-Panjabi-Canadian. But there is still the same confusion. Although in her story she asserts that Winnipeg is her home, and she comfortably identifies herself as Canadian, in her interview she says:

I am Panjabi. But I am not that good in Panjabi, because I grew up in the capital city of India, so it was mostly Hindi, Hindu. So my friends were Hindu, books were all in Hindi, so I'm not a true Panjabi either. So I would say I am just Indian and Canadian. (Jas-I, p. 2, lines 65-67)

Yet, right after that Jas calls herself “hyphenated”, and admits that she often feels more Indian than Canadian, because it is visible and she is OK with who she is. She says:

I'm fine because when I go and see my parents I am able to communicate and kind of be with them in the Indian environment, so when I am at work or at home it's the English environment, but everybody knows that I'm Indian, so they don't try to ignore that. (Jas-I, p. lines 83-85)

It is easy to notice in Jas's story that she is getting more interested in her Indian part of her hyphen than in her English-speaking/Canadian part with the passing of time as if she feels nostalgia of that part of herself that connected her to her childhood, her parents' home back in India, her visits to the temple, with her grandfather. Her decision to undertake an Indian wedding when she gets married to a Canadian man of a Mennonite background speaks volumes. In addition, Jas repeats several times that she is comfortable with her Indian part of the hyphen and that is very meaningful to her:

Everybody knows that I'm Indian; that's what I know. I know how to cook food with spices even at my house I love clothes I love shoes and at home I have two closets, one is Indian outfit closet and one for my Western clothes.

Everybody accepted that fact and I'm happy with that. Just how I am. (Jas-I, p. 3, lines 126-129)

More echoing with Ismail's confusion whether he can call himself a hyphenated identity or a hybrid, Satoru makes the point that he does not think that he can describe himself as Japanese-Canadian. The fact that his parents are left behind in Japan and he has to move back and forth between Japan and Canada enhances his belief that he is still a Japanese citizen:

I'm Japanese who is living in Canada. Immigrated but not hyphenated. I don't think I can be using this term even after living here for over twenty years I do not feel I can call myself Canadian. Because my parents are in Japan and I want to go back and the Japanese government does not allow me to have a dual citizenship so if I get my Canadian citizenship then can be disqualified by the Japanese government. That's the reason I am not a dual citizen and a citizen of Canada, maybe that's why I feel that way. (Satoru-I, p. 8, lines 254-279)

In Satoru's story hybridity comes as an implication of him being a hybrid rather than a confirmed belief that he can be called a hybrid. He does not deny though that at times he is viewed differently compared to the mainstream population in Canada. For him, an islander, this feeling is not new. He felt as an outsider before in regards to mainland Japan. He thinks he has a right "to act like somebody else" because of the complexity of his experiences. Satoru calls his shifting back and forth between several cultural frameworks a game that one is very well aware of due to the very known purpose of that game — to impress the group and achieve and, of course, to enjoy a certain level in the social hierarchy:

This is a game I have to play. It's the same game. Different expressions. At the end of the day I am saying the same thing. What do you call it? Passive-aggressive? That's what I do here and I am just aggressive. Language-wise,

when you asked me that question, don't think I am different in what I buy and what I think. But how I convey my information and how I react to other people is definitely different. I would be probably not behaving this way in Japan. Especially on my island. Oh, I act like a God on my island!! (Satoru, p. 7, line 217)

**Move in, move out: instrumental and circumstantial identity shifting.**

How much of a “chameleon” can one be? The study shows that the majority of participants use their dual or multiple cultural affiliations quite conveniently and pragmatically. They find that their capacity to switch the frame of the cultural context is an asset of hybridity. Similar to how they would switch from one language to another depending on the circumstance, they employ their hybrid selves to either represent themselves in the respective communities or in any other situation when they need to actualize only one side of their multiple self. Just like the different languages are used as tools to secure the membership in the same linguistic group, so are the multiple selves used in any culture-specific context.

Aside from suggesting that the primary trigger for identity shifts in between the several culture-specific frameworks is the participants' affective reactions to the external events, the above quotes demonstrate the consistency of Satoru's account with the experience of multicultural populations known in cross-cultural psychology as *frame switching* (La Fromboise, Colman & Gerton, 1993). This experience reflects the mechanism of how “particular pieces of cultural knowledge become operative in particular interpretive tasks” (Hong et al., 2000, p. 710). By “moving” the pieces of cultural knowledge, which may include stereotypes, symbols, schemas, and other domain-specific categories “in and out of operation”, as the same authors pose, the study participants manifest the same capacity — of utilizing pieces of cultural knowledge, depending on the required task or the role they need to

take not only at the moment of speech but whenever they feel the need of doing so. A case in point, Tanya describes her capacity of appropriating and employing the pieces of cultural knowledge as an asset, a fascinating ability to switch from one of her languages to another, or from one of her selves to another depending on the demand of the day. In acting so she is becoming “a bit somebody else”, as she puts it:

It is a fact that I belong to all that makes me  
 dwell in those many pieces.  
 and many modes  
 and ways of multiple expression.

Look, I can be hiding in Hebrew, being undeniably Russian,  
 and now, so comfortably — Canadian,

I think it makes the beauty of this word,  
 Of being a hybrid...

It should be noted that the convenient frame-switching is not always recognized by the multicultural minds as a characteristic of being hybrid. In many cases frame-switching becomes so engrained in the identity of its users that they do not recognize how much of their newly-internalized cultural habits may influence their cognitive, affective and behavioral patterns and repertoires. For example, throughout her engagement in the study, Marianna has been very assertive about her *not* being hybrid but just Ukrainian. Yet she feels puzzled when an idea of herself exposing “a chameleon behavior” has been brought to her attention. She admits in her story that many of her Ukrainian friends say that she is already German because she becomes very punctual, and perceives time differently. She confirms that unlike the majority of her Ukrainian and Eastern European fellow-citizens, she likes to keep her promise

to be somewhere on time, and she is never late for any meeting. She also mentions that in the Eastern European high context culture, they hide the message in the context and do not take punctuality seriously; but living in Germany, she becomes more direct. More so, the acquisition of such different features belonging to high context culture vs. low-context culture, makes her think that she is more like a chameleon, because in Germany she is direct, while in Ukraine she acts like the majority of population; notably, she can easily switch these codes if needed. I remember how surprised Marianna was when on hearing her “chameleon” story, I asked her, “Doesn’t it mean that you *are* becoming hybrid?” Marianna was very puzzled and after a long pause she said:

Maybe... (still puzzled). But I don’t know if this is an issue of how I identify myself...

I can behave in different ways depending on situation, but still remaining Ukrainian. Yes, I feel convenient. And I have to do it because, if I work in this environment, if I would like to be successful there, I have to, you know, not 100% but somehow to acquire some cultural features in order to conform and to feel harmonious, you know. (Marianna-I, p. 8, lines 271-279)

Marianna calls episodes of her “chameleon” behavior “a kind of cultural adjustment”. She thinks that because she is a typical Eastern European, she is emotional and it does not fit in the professional codes of behavior in the German professional environment she works in. Therefore, she feels an urge to adjust to the expected norms of behavior in the new place, and therefore she conveniently “uses” some features of the perceived German identity. She calls it a professional necessity that allows her to better integrate into the new society:

We cannot not [ignore] the different types of behavior [while] coexisting with other cultures. It could be a contrast behavior — for example — in Germany to wear an Ukrainian shirt. Or it could be also assimilation, but I think it's not one or another but both. (Marianna-I, p. 8, lines 282-284)

Calling her capacity to conveniently shift her culture-specific modes nothing else but a “cultural adjustment”, Marianna does not think this makes her become a “chameleon”. She asserts that such behavior has nothing to do with her becoming a hybrid, but it is a mere reflection of a phenomenon known as *boundary spanning* (Tushman, 1977), introduced in the social sciences since 1958 in regards to operational modes in innovative systems researched in administrative science. Tushman says, “Special boundary roles evolve in the organization's communication network to fulfill the essential function of linking organization's internal network to external sources of information” (p. 587). If this statement is transferred to the context of hybrid identity and the particularities of how the frame-switching takes place in multicultural settings, we can immediately see the analogy of the same mechanism when the user finds her place in the new system of operation mentioned in the theory of boundary spanning. In order to adequately function in such a situation, the user has to link her internal work, based on cultural knowledge, with the external demands of the community of practice where the operation takes place. Citing further from Tushman, it is noteworthy that the approach to innovation applied in administrative sciences “suggests a range of problem solving differences in the various phases; one important difference of this process is the locus of critical information and feedback” (p. 588). If we translate this to the context of the present study, we can better understand Marianna's point of view. What is being called “a chameleon behavior” in Marianna's view, is nothing else but an example of a problem solving behavior, an organizational skill that needs to be applied in situations when the user has to find the locus of

critical information that should activate her internal experiences and repertoires into a receptive mode of the interlocutor. For instance, if Marianna speaks to a German-speaking person, she would be punctual, less emotional and more verbally-oriented; if her interlocutor is an Eastern European, she may act accordingly — and be more flexible, relaxed and context-oriented like these populations do. That’s why Marianna does not see herself as a hybrid. For her hybridity and convenient code-switching are not one and the same thing because she thinks that the first shifts the deep-seated core values while the second applies only to a set of acquired behavioral habits. In other words, “What can you tell about someone’s soul from the fact that she drinks Coca-Cola?” (2006, p. 102). For Marianna hybridity refers to “the software of the soul” while the conveniently used manners of the host population do not.

What appears even more intriguing, this phenomenon, whether we call it frame-switching of cultural repertoire or boundary spanning, as Marianna suggests, resonates well with the Lacanian view of process of identity formation which asserts that identity has to incorporate each object as part of itself, and by that lose oneself in the other (Frosh, 2010). The formative process of self-identification described by Lacan is imaginary by nature, because we need to take an *image* of the object and utilizing the symbolic representation (the language) create the *real* of that object which we never can attain because it lies beyond our fragmented and therefore often misrepresented image of the Other. What we create in truth is “a radical misperception”, in which the ego is taken to be the truth of the person when it is actually just “bric-a-brac”, a visible ornament, a trinket. Why then to do so? Because, Lacan says, “...there is a sense in which identification *falsifies*, with a subject using the object to sustain a fantasy or integrity of the self” (Lacan cited in Frosh, 2010, p. 112).

In Marianna’s experience of acting German at her workplace, while she truly feels herself Ukrainian deep inside all the time, we see a reflection of all three phenomena mentioned

above: frame switching, boundary spanning and operational mimicry of the Other based on the purpose to survive, understand better the new operational context and being able to act in conformity of the created image of the Other whose contextual meaning needs to be adopted.

Finally, Marianna's approach to her chameleonic behavior testifies to performativity of identity construction, when "hybrid is what hybrid does". It is similar to how Irigaray compares gender to a performance of the actor in the theatre, or how Butler suggests that if gender is framed as a set of fixed simplified characteristics, it will be inevitably reduced to a certain prescribed code, like a dress code. As a result, socially constructed sets of fixed characteristics of identity will be imagined (misperceived?) in the stipulations of regulative discourses. In this respect, one cannot but think of the phenomenon of *mimicry* derived from Freud, French postmodernism, and colonial and postcolonial discourse (Bhabha, 1994; Derrida, 1995; Mimica, 2007). By partly imitating the behavior of a mainstream host country's population, immigrants (Marianna, Satoru) and sojourners (Tanya, Ismail) feel more adequately responsive to the demands of their academic or professional circumstance. Their stories confirm that adoption of the new patterns of socialization cannot disregard copying the patterns of mainstream behaviour in the host country, yet not all the participants regard this process as pragmatic imitation, let alone mimicry.

Truly, an experience of cultural hybridity as a mix of confusing practices and heritage traditions may not come easy. From Chelsey's "Story of Denied Identity", we see that Chelsey feels different and not belonging to what is called a Canadian identity. She explains that despite not being singled out from the mainstream Canadian population, she feels detached from that culture. "Nothing is wrong," she says about it, but she admits all the way through her story that mainstream Canadians are not "her kind of people". She holds that talking with

people professionally is not a problem for her, but when she is in a group setting where nobody comes from the Mennonite tradition, she feels bored and not engaged in the conversation.

Nonetheless, Chelsey's path to realization of her true identity as a Mennonite is too dramatic. She suffered a lot as a child when her parents got divorced, which in the Mennonite tradition is considered unacceptable. Notwithstanding such a dramatic separation from her own community as a child, after living for a while in an isolation from the Mennonite community, Chelsey tries to come to terms with who she really is, not being able to find much attachment to the mainstream Canadian population while at school. To make sense of her experience and reasons behind it, she decides to look into the history of the Mennonite tradition. She tries to get the answers for why she has been rejected by her community, when, in fact, she did not do anything wrong.

I was very impressed by Chelsey's story and her sincere desire to make sense of her identity that was shifting back and forth between the Canadian culture and Mennonite tradition for a long time, and how the fact that she has been rejected by her tradition, did not let her give up on identifying who she truly was. Notably, Chelsey calls herself a hybrid after living on the edge of the two communities, and she does not deny her identity's being split between the two cultural domains. She admits that she would call herself a hybrid:

But it took a lot many years of searching. I really didn't come to terms with that until I was in my thirties. I felt displaced. I felt lost. Frustrated. Confused. Till I actually went there and said you know what, I had to figure this out. And started researching. But I still *can* do the best of both worlds, I need to be in the Mennonite, to be in that community, etc. — I can assume that, and come out and be Canadian as well. (Chelsey-I, p. 3, lines 91-96)

**Does the word “Hybrid” bother you?**

One of the questions that I was particularly curious about was how the participants would react to the word “hybrid”. In the introductory chapters of this thesis I mentioned that for me “hybridity” referred mostly to science: genetics or bioengineering at best, when something new is being artificially created in a Petri dish by people in white lab robes. I had my doubts about whether this term would evoke any positive connotations when applied to people. I was hugely surprised. Of the twelve study participants ten people said they find this term “positive” and “very positive”; two people call it “neutral”; and only one participant calls it “pejorative” with a strongly pronounced negative connotation.

I will begin with the positive reactions to this term.

Satoru views hybridity as a compliment. He says that he will be surprised to know that someone can relate to him as a hybrid:

Really? do you think I am a hybrid?” — that’ll be my reaction to them. Do you really think I am hybrid?” it will sound to me as *achievement*. (Satoru-II, p. 7, lines 236-237)

Satoru says that he cannot escape his being split between the cultural frameworks of his different homes, back in his island, in Japan and now, here, in Canada. He confesses that he is trying his best to see another world and of becoming another person but he thinks he is incapable of doing that. Yet, Satoru says, if somebody calls him a hybrid, it will prove to him that he has achieved something that he can be proud of:

It is similar to when you start learning the second language and somebody said *Oh you are bilingual!* But it’s more like you had another language and now you have another one. It’s not that that other language is perfect, but it it’s different. Because I know what I want. To me it is empowering. Yes! At the

same time you have to think, so when I get there — what did I lose? But the initial reaction is — yes. (Satoru-I, p. lines)

Satoru's comment on how empowering it is to be called a "hybrid" for him resonates with Ismail's and Tanya's take on their hybridity as an asset and a privilege. Tanya mentions that, although she feels Russian, she cannot say that she is "only Russian" due to her experiences when she has been singled out as Jewish in Russia. Distressingly, when her family immigrated to Israel, they were immediately singled out as Russians. Hybrid identity for Tanya is "a mix of something, *a two* of something". It is not something completed, it is partial. Notwithstanding that sense of being in bits and pieces Tanya says the word "hybrid" does not bother her.

In contrast, Marianna does not think that the word "hybrid" applied to people but sounds truly empowering or related to achievement. Though she acknowledges the existence of hybrid identities, Marianna tries to find an alternative way to describe the immigrant populations, like her, with a distinct affiliation to more than one culture and language. Marianna takes time to think of another word with the similar meaning. She wants the word to have some kind of representation of a "double", like a "double" identity or something.

Looking at the view of the term hybrid in the reflective angle of Chelsey's story, despite so much trauma of her experience of carrying the Mennonite and mainstream Canadian values, Chelsey thinks that hybridity and the word "hybrid" have *only* negative connotation. She admits that there is a lot of struggle and drama hidden behind the notion of "hybrid" but she also thinks that hybridity simply reflects what it is without any sugary coat of sorts. She says:

It ["hybrid"] sounds as a combination of two different cultures as a syncretism of sorts. It's actually neutral. Because this is the way I grew up. It does cause conflict. For younger people it's probably a very negative thing. As a grown-up, I can think of it, like, yeah, as a teenager or preteen — negative. Definitely

negative, because you don't know where you stand. Your family is telling you this, the outside world is telling you this, and you feel so *torn* and pulled apart. But as an adult, I think it may be [something that makes you] stronger.

(Chelsey, p. 3, lines 84-92)

It is apparent that for Chelsey “hybrid” echoes with her personal journey back and forth between the two cultural domains of her identity yet she feels more Mennonite than she does Canadian. One of the participants, whose story is not included in the body of this thesis, Zola, goes even further with identifying how negative the word “hybrid” sounds to her. She is the only participant who says that hybrid sounds more “pejorative” rather than informative to her. Zola explained it as follows:

I don't like the word at all. I prefer something along the lines of “mixed”. I don't know what I think of when I hear “hybrid”. For that I prefer the word “trans”. (Zola-I, p. 3 lines 102; 112)

Zola's suggestion to speak about hybridity in terms of a “trans-identity” of sorts, surely falls along the lines with the concept of *transdifference* (Kalscheuer, 2009) introduced on the edge of postcolonial theories of intercultural communication in late 1990s. Although this concept touches upon the analogous experience of hybrid identities who are “confronted with at least two divergent systems of belongings that cannot be reconciled” (p. 42), we cannot agree that these two systems can *never* be reconciled for the simple reason that they can, as this study shows. However, because postcolonial theory conceives cultural hybridity solely in dichotomist aspects of power, exclusion and inclusion, the postcolonial hybrids, thanks to Bhabha (1991), will always be seen nothing but marginal, unprivileged and oppressed communities whose power is “pitilessly” compromised. Therefore, *transdifference*, in my view, does not explain all of the peculiarities of this phenomenon; this term obviously excludes the moments of reconciliation

between the two or more systems of belonging, and it leaves behind the cases when the populations of mixed backgrounds and cultural experiences do not feel marginalized while still identifying themselves as hybrids even if they had experienced episodes of being labeled in host communities in somewhat unwelcoming way.

Summarizing these comments, they indicate that 1) the participants acknowledge that the phenomenon of hybridity relates to a blend of multiple contexts, including ethnicities, languages, and ideologies; 2) some of the participants are not ready to view or call themselves hybrids; 3) the majority of the participants attach positive connotation to this term; some are neutral but say that a better term should be used instead and one participant feels that the term hybrid is inaccurate because it sounds pejorative or discriminatory.

### **Giving up on the Old on Finding the New: The Unsettling Facets of Abjection**

The most commonly expressed views on being hybrid are those of confusion, disorientation, uncertainty, and rejection on the negative end; at the same time the participants recognize that the phenomenon of hybridity embraces feelings of being empowered, privileged and better prepared for the challenges of multicultural environments.

Such an array of views signals the presence of a serious internal debate that is overtly or covertly transpiring in the study participants. Specifically, Satoru mentions that, along with the positive feeling of accomplishment on acquiring something new — a new language, a new cultural environment, and a new “home community”, his immigration to Canada contributed to his experience of hybridity and made him ask himself about what he is ready to lose and to give up. This “Good-bye to the old and welcome to the new” pattern often comes for Satoru with a sense of sacrifice on giving up not only the site of his previous residence, or the family members who are left behind, but also a part of his life that belongs to the past, in other words, a part of himself. Obviously, this process does not come easy. It brings pain, confusion and a feeling of remorse.

This view is illustrative of the psychoanalytic notion of abjection or "the state of being cast off" (Kristeva, 1982) that has been introduced in the chapters above. If the human mind creates self-identification only because of a trauma of letting go of something that inherently belongs to the body yet something an individual still likes to keep, we can clearly see that Satoru speaks about the same feeling: along with the appropriating something new and seeing it as an accomplishment, he cannot but think about what he has to lose.

In the same vein, those participants who are puzzled about their sense of belonging or who prefer to avoid using the word “hybrid” when describing their experiences, may be afraid of that very sense of losing something important and monolithic about their identity, something that

gives them a sense of security; therefore, despite their experiences that directly position them as hybrids, they insist on the opposite, repeating a self-securing mantra — “I am Moroccan”, “I am Japanese”, “I am Ukrainian”, when, in truth, they already suspect that they are only partly so because part of their identity signifies a change in their status. Willingly or unwillingly, they cannot but recognize that they are becoming somebody or “something” else. But not everyone is ready to admit such an inner struggle. The abjected part of the self may not challenge the uniqueness of the personal experience but it definitely threatens the sense of unity of experience. Using Daniel Stern’s (1975) typology of self-concept, hybridity in this sense threatens *self-agency* — “the sense of causing one’s own actions, and... not causing the actions of others”, as well as *self-coherence* — “which is the experience of being whole, and in possession of palpable, and “locatable” physical boundaries” (Socor, 1997, p. 148).

Secondly, besides evoking a discomfoting feeling of something that is being abjected as part of self that may or may not suit you any more in the new conditions of your life or patterns of socialization, hybridity brings in an ability of looking at things “differently and otherwise” (Gaillard, 2010) or what is worse, a sense of being looked at differently or perceived “otherwise” by the very communities that you start associating with in your new home community.

Further on, speculating on how artwork can inform our knowledge about the world and ourselves, Jung says, “the center of gravity has [to be] changed”, which means that in order to see the significant in the unknown and appropriate, its informative essence for our purposes, we need to yield to the new frame of reference and shift our gaze from a habitual point of attention towards a more watchful or critical gaze. Jung calls this approach *emergentism*. This approach to the appropriation of a new meaning “sees the future simply as the passage from one level of complexity to another, each with its own qualities” (Gaillard, 2010, p. 111). I also noticed that,

quite surprisingly, the semantics of hybridity throws on the speaker some reference to the scenarios of the future. It appeared that the study participants when talking about hybridity, unwillingly (or unconsciously?) project their answers to the future events more than they would do to the present. Phenomenally, the participants express concerns about the future of their present or only planned children as “hybrids” more often than they would express concerns about their own future. They wonder about what culture their future or living children will associate themselves with and what culture will be passed on to the generations to come; the younger participants who are single create hypothetical scenarios of their potential marriages with the representatives of the host country or having children in mixed families. Looking at her newborn son in his stroller during our interview, one of the participants, Dina asks herself what languages her husband and she should teach him in the first place — Hebrew? English? Russian? — or all taken together and — simultaneously? After a year since her wedding, Jas says:

I’m just concerned about the future when we have kids. How am I gonna raise them, because I really want them to know Hindi or Panjabi. But communicating with my husband it’s only English. So my worry is I don’t want to lose my culture when I have kids but somehow pass it along. That’s my concern right now. (Jas-II, p. 2, lines 75-79)

In all likelihood, this concern about the future is rooted in the semantics of hybridity as a mixture of something that is hard to explain or predict, namely its unrepresentability and inherent uncertainty. This semantics also bears a trace of a potential loss of some traditionally perceived continuity when we think about culture. Furthermore, for some participants hybridity is associated with a threat to the security of their future self that cannot yet be properly visualized. In fact, our worry is always about something that we cannot predict or control. In this respect,

hybridity seems to resound with the Lacanian concept of the Real — something that is beyond our grip, something “im-possible”, unpredictable and therefore so alarming to imagine. A future of a hybrid can resonate in our mind with an indistinct reality that can be everything that we *cannot* even think of. If viewed from this perceptive, hybridity and its hardly predictable projections onto the future, may also scare us with their “antagonisms, gaps, lacks, and splits” that in effect exist only in our minds due to the harsh constructs of the Symbolic order of things: through the representations constructed and labeled through language. Isn’t this exactly what Paul was trying to explain by saying that he did not know what culture or home is, or where his sense of belonging might be placed, because once being said, labelled or located by the very nature of language, our labels will be always missing the meaning left behind the bigger concept that we ourselves do not know how to truly express? Isn’t it what Lacan called “the responsibility of Symbolic” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016) — to attach the eclipsed or lopsided meanings to something we do not really know and cannot imagine but surely use nevertheless: “Portrayed thusly, the Symbolic is primarily responsible for injecting such negativities into the Real. For instance, only through the powers of language can material being in itself be said to be “missing” things, since, on its own, this dimension of being always is simply whatever it is in its dumb, idiotic presence as never more and never less than sheer, indifferent plenitude” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016, para. 22). Simply put, by acquiring the new we will be always losing something significant that was there before, and through that abjection and disavowal of significant parts of ourselves we grow and become somebody else — who we are also scared of because this new identity is not yet appropriated within our limited world of symbols (language) or imagination (culture). Thus, the emergent self

is “known only as a fluid state of coming into being”; it is a “happening”, a process (Socor, 1997, p. 147). As Galliard (2010) explains, “We can clearly see [this approach of seeking and finding meaning] as a matter of a combat, an intimate, interior debate that is forever renewed that at once ties us to the most archaic of ourselves and separates us from ourselves” (p. 111). That is why Chelsey was so lost in her struggle for her “denied” identity — because in her swaying between the Mennonite culture and the mainstream Canadian culture she could not find the point of reference for and meaning of her future, emerging self; that is why almost all the participants wished to project their hybridity to the future — emerging — scenarios of who they might happen to be because notwithstanding the strong sense of an empowering circumstantial convenience, hybridity may deprive us of control over our own forthcoming, unrepresentable selves. It is these new parts of ourselves that can be viewed as products of acquiring the new at the expense of partly losing the old meanings that our sameness and self-coherence are built on.

### **Gaps and Sounds of Silence: Resisting or Welcoming Hybridity?**

*Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in  
the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.*

Jung (1936)

This theme is a tribute to the stance expressed both in narrative inquiry and psychoanalysis that meaning arises from silence better than from words. It appears that the absence of the object speaks for its presence more than the other way around. Maiello (1995) describes how the silence of the mother’s voice creates more meaning about her image and what the child is lacking compared to when the child hears the mother’s voice. No doubt, the absence of the object often helps us better formulate the essence of that object than its presence. On a mundane level, we often identify what we want by realizing what exactly we do *not* want.

Paraphrasing Bakhtin (1986), the depths of the meaning can be better revealed in contact with another object whose presence makes the absence of the seeking qualities most salient.

It happens that I felt “guilty” as a researcher whose study’s themes emerged from the prompts of the interview questions more than they emerged from the spontaneous answers and insights coming from the participants. Perhaps the reason for this is that I used my own experiences of hybridity as a spring-board for the research topics. To balance the influence of the predicted touches of the themes and spontaneity of their emergences from the field materials, in this section I’d like to pay attention to those silences, unpredictable gaps and “hiccups” along the way that also bring significant meaning. In the context of methodological orientation, Blackman (2015) calls these occasions the “liveliness” of “the embodied hauntology” employed in studies of affect. She says that “the researcher in ethnography might encounter not just texts, statements, or practices, but specters, displacements, disjointed times, submerged events, and multiple temporalities in [the] Derridean sense” (p. 28). This approach seems to call for the researcher to attend not only to what has been told but also to “fragments of narratives that have not yet been told” (Rheinberger cited in Blackman, 2015). When, in attempting to follow this strategy, I tried to [re]read the biotexts “intra-actively”, one through another, I could not but notice some blank spaces that in a complimentary fashion rendered informative “atmospheres and ambiances” (Blackman, 2015) which appeared to be sometimes stronger than the firmly uttered and emphasized words and statements.

**The shadowed identity: The “unnoticed” shifts in the sense of monolithic self.**

One of Bhabha’s controversial views on hybridity affirms that since culture is a structuralist void due to its socially constructed “everything” and “nothing in particular” sense, there can be *no* hybrids per se but a discursive process of hybridization when the ethnocentric narratives of the nation state are imposed on the “colonized” populations. This idea came to my mind every time some of the participants resisted or overtly

rejected their presumed hybridity but whose experiences manifested the transformative influence of the manifold cultural encounters on their behavior or speech. At first, on hearing the participants' stories I felt that there was a certain semantic gap that haunted me. There was definitely something missing in their description of being a "chameleon" and yet always "same old" "I" (Ukrainian, Japanese, Moroccan, etc.). Then I came to conclusion that, if Bhabha's assumption about the nature of culture as a conceptual void was accurate, the study population could not possibly consider themselves hybrids because they simply could not feel as *products* of the *ongoing* process of which they are a dynamic part. Otherwise, it would feel almost like when skiing downhill, you can already state that you have reached the end of the track because, well, obviously you can see or at least imagine it.

Talking about their multiple experiences in the host countries, Ismail, Satoru, Paul, and Marianna claimed that they could not see how their perceptions of themselves might be possibly changing. They would also insist that if they had to change their behavior, it would not be caused by their changing identities, but because of their need to adjust to the demands of the situation or professional duties. Yet the silences and the prolonged pauses before answering the question of whether they had noticed any changes or influences on their patterns of thinking or behaviors in regards to their living in the host countries, spoke of a hidden accompanying meaning that can be imagined as a "shadowed" presence of the second (additional) half of their hybrid identity.

In effect, the semantics of "shadow" embodies a full range of very eloquent meanings, beginning from the casting of the physical shadow when "the light is blocked by an opaque object" as per its dictionary meaning — to the unexpected or "uncalled for" haunting, silent following, obscure presence of which we too (by standing between the source of light and the other object, for instance) are responsible for. Phenomenally, the

concept of shadow is central in psychoanalytic theory. It began with the Freudian understanding of shadow as a dark side of personality, described as a set of “characteristics which have not been approved by ourselves or by other people, characteristics which we do not like, characteristics which we do not acknowledge (and which are thus "repressed"), characteristics which do not fit our image of ourselves” (Personal Development Resources and Training, 2015, para. 1). Further on, the Jungian understanding of shadow speaks of it as a number of things that “a person has no wish to be”. Other common descriptions of a shadow in the psychoanalytic sense include: all that is hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our [animal] ancestors...” (Jung cited in Perry, 2016, para.3-4). On hearing the pauses in the interviews after the questions regarding the acknowledging of one’s hybridity were asked and remembering the confusion these questions would bring for some of the participants, I came to another conclusion. The participants must have been so confused because of the presence of that shadow identity in their mind, the one that they knew had already emerged from the depths of their conscious effort to look, act, speak and *become* like the target Other. It looked as if their unconscious were calling for something regarding that circumstantial behavior as a convenient temporary mask, nothing else. Then it may seem that the whole idea about identity is just about accommodation of different social roles, and that is why there are no fixed identities because “people not only shift their identities over time, but also adopt different identities in different settings” (Frosh, 2010, p. 101). Yet, even under the pressure of the evidence that in the globalized world we cannot any more stick to the idea of identity as a given but as a process, we cannot completely deny the validity of Erikson’s idea about

existence of a monolithic identity (1974), which formats and formulates the principles that attach to our “I” the qualities of sameness. These qualities or rather feelings include the ability to accumulate and maintain unity and continuity that differs us from others (Roesler, 2010). So, when asked what identity they associated themselves with, the study participants firmly claimed their “monolithic”, their first ethnicity-related identity — “I’m Ukrainian,” “I’m Moroccan”, “I’m Israeli”, “I’m Japanese” — because this is what they felt as a fundamental base of their culture-bound selfhood. However, as soon as they found themselves in the situations where they needed to apply their secondly acquired identity that referred to the cultural and linguistic behaviors of the host country, they were not ready to acknowledge the emergence of the new identity as an “unwanted shadow”. That shadow identity offered them a convenient bonding with another culture, and with daily practice, it is from there that a one-time used temporary mask would gradually turn into a part of themselves. Being trapped in the tenets of that cultural mimicry, between the original identity and the identity-to become, the participants preferred to reject the idea of a new identity because it most likely felt as a “fake”, not “pure” thing, which could surely threaten their sense of autonomy and integrity. In a word, what we lack we need to get, otherwise we will feel insecure and inferior. Satoru mentions that he feels that way all the time because he belongs to the minority group of the island Tokunoshima. When in mainland Japan, he would bear that belonging as a shadow that will always be part of himself — a shadowed, “unwanted” identity that is immediately singled out by the mainstream Japanese population:

But even now if I speak perfect Japanese nobody says to me “you are Japanese,” you know. They look at me and they say “you are from Okinawa aren’t you?” Immediately. (Satoru-I, p. 3, lines 102-104)

While in Canada, Satoru feels he has an obligation to repay the Canadians who treat him as a friend despite his being the Other. More saliently this aspect comes forward in the episode when he is invited by his rowing team to the Jets game. Satoru says that he feels good about being a part of the group and at the same time he feels that he is not “worthy of being considered part of that group”. Tense all the way through the game, he cannot put his feet up in a relaxed manner like the rest of his group. Obviously, sitting beside his team Satoru feels the niggling shadow of him being an island boy, who is “nobody” in Canada same as he is “nobody” in mainland Japan. I asked him why he felt that way.

Satoru said:

Because my island said — you are not worth it, so you have to behave well when you go to Japan. Or to Canada where you represent all my island. I don’t think I can ever escape from that. But again if I do that, then I am not me anymore. I cannot go to my island and sit with feet put up. (Satoru-I, p. 11, lines 376-378)

This sensation of shifting in between different cultural frameworks is observed by other participants too although it may be perceived less univocally. To specify, Zola says she does not like the term “hybrid” identity and that she prefers to be called a “shifting” identity; however, later her view changes and she becomes less comfortable describing her identity that way. When asked if shifting identity means that she doesn’t have principles because every new situation might “shift” her sense of unity in certain ways, she says: “it feels almost like you never really fit completely in one place.” My comment, that such behavior of merely matching the occasion can be viewed by some as groundless and lacking values, traditions and principles, leaves Zola upset:

But I don't feel I'm shifting... Maybe I reinvent myself but I think people do that whether they are immigrants or not, they try to reinvent themselves based on mistakes or experiences they've made in the past and sometimes to me, when I reinvent myself it has to do with cultural differences between here and there and other times it's just a different stage in life. (Zola-I, p. 5, lines 158-159)

Notably, Zola's view on "reinventing" herself, resonates well with the idea of conceiving a methodology of the self, or a dynamic concept of self that has to reflect numerous cultural imperatives with a strong survival value (Greenwald, 1980). This methodology includes egocentricity aimed at structuring and organizing the self in accordance with these experiences. Along with a few other characteristics, egocentricity "functions to produce not a veridical but a fictive self, constructed in the interests of maximum survivability" (Socor, 1997, p. 168).

To summarize, the uncertainties expressed by the participants as pauses, and puzzled looks in the research conversations, and silences in stories and biotexts are reflections of the shadowed, "unnoticed" states of mind and patterns of pragmatic behavior caused in the participants by their shifting between the social contexts of different normative values. These gaps and silences saliently communicate the feelings of inferiority or fears of being judged by the controlling, dominating, mainstream Other.

### **Who Would You Cheer For? Conflicting and/or Agreeing Citizenship Loyalties**

The answers on this topic in interviews, biotexts and stories indicated that the participants seldom ask themselves about such a politicized aspect of their residence in Canada or another host country where they study or work, (or even to where they have immigrated), as citizenship loyalty. This can be explained by little or lack of "interest in and knowledge of

political processes, low levels of trust in politicians and growing cynicism of democratic institutions are often seen as indicators of the [younger] generations' weakened sense of citizenship and political engagement" (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012, p. 2). However, for many the question of citizenship fidelity is activated if it goes about either obtaining a Canadian passport or another country's citizenship status, or about sensitive issues occurring within or across the borders of nation-states.

Zola mentioned that she was very hurt by the Paris shootings in 2015. When asked if she felt that way because it happened in her home country, she said:

It was in my home country, with the shootings I felt something because it's my place and someone's hurting my place... I find it offensive even though I've been here [in Canada] for twenty years. (Zola-I, p. 3, lines 93-96)

However, later she adds that she feels upset not only because the shootings happened in France, the country of her origin, but because she would get upset in case such an act happened in any country.

For Jas, her sentiment around citizenship loyalty is divided between the home country — India — and the host country — Canada. Interestingly though, Jas felt more "serious" in terms of citizenship towards India because there are more "serious" topics or events happening in India compared to Canada. She said:

Whenever I hear the things about bus rape or things like that I feel attached. I'm like ...why is it happening in India? Why? It hurts, yeah... But in Canada there are a few serious things but not as serious and somehow they are not ..if they are talking about these Aboriginal girls missing, I don't feel the same way as I would feel about somebody in India. (Jas-I, p. 8, lines 360-368)

When asked if she feels loyal to Canada despite the absence of any serious issues, Jas said that when she was younger, girls and females were aware of being very oppressed and she wasn't allowed to walk in the park or play on a swing because it was considered as a kind of flirting behavior. Apparently, for Jas her concern about girls in India makes her feel attached to that country "politically" more than to Canada because of the feeling that something must be done to change that unfortunate situation in India towards women and girls for the better. In essence, this stance demonstrates how Jas assigns the meaning and value towards what she understands by citizenship commitment and loyalty. In her mind, citizenship is closely connected to the interpretation of human rights observed in the country of her origin and of practices aimed at obtaining social justice. Jas's concern for the assaulted Indian girls is more pronounced than her concern for, say the missing Aboriginal girls in Canada, which signals her stronger solidarity with the female population of her home country. This contradicts the constructivist view that "the people with whom we happen to share formal nation-state membership and territory should be the objects of our identification and solidarity more than others with whom we are joined through other affiliative ties" (Bosniak, 2001, p. 248). Quite the opposite, Jas's sentiment towards Indian girls, despite living in Canada since her teens, testifies to the fact that immigrants most likely would "maintain their multiple identities, and ... their engagement in multiple polities and communities is a normal feature of immigrant life" (Leitner & Erkamp, 2006, p. 1618).

Answering the question about his citizenship loyalty, Satoru is doubtful whether he can call himself Canadian. Because his parents are in Japan and at some point, he wants to go back but because the Japanese government does not allow him to have a dual citizenship, he cannot easily give up his Japanese citizenship. Put simply, he is afraid to be disqualified by the Japanese government in case he obtains a Canadian passport. However, speaking about what country Satoru is loyal to in his heart, he gives a surprising answer:

When I decided I'm willing to die on this land, I mean that'll be...Canada. Yes. I decided to die on this land but that's the time when I think I'd become emotionally Canadian. Because I am acquitted to that. (Satoru-I, p. 9, lines 307-310).

To me these quotes demonstrate a case of shifting citizenship loyalty, as much as it can be said, regarding the shifting sense of home or locus of identity for populations with more than one cultural backgrounds or experiences. I asked Satoru, as well as other participants, who he would cheer for if, say there's an Olympics and there's Japanese and Canadian athletes competing. I asked about Olympics because usually it is that kind of a major sport event that may stir the best patriotic feelings in us. Satoru said:

I'm not really fond of Japanese people because of how they treat me. I'd rather the Canadians win. But sometimes, judo is originally from Japan, I'd cheer for Japan. Because they need that to be their own identity which supports me. Let's say rowing — I'm doing rowing — I'll definitely go for Canada. (Satoru-I, p. 10, lines 323-326)

This quote once again justifies the view that the political identity in target populations may be shifting from one pole to another, depending on the situation and context of practice. In fact, a political identity is not necessarily equal to national identity. As Kolocharova (2011), poses, "When nation is interpreted as a political community, the concepts of national and political identity intersect only partially because not every national (ethnic) community can be called political, and not every political entity assumes a commonality of an organic and cultural character" (p. 5). The immigrants, as a rule, identify with multiple communities, so they may become members "in more than one national community", and by that challenge "conceptions of bounded national citizenship" (Leitner et al., 2006, p. 1615).

Natalya's perception of her citizenship affiliation echoes the same statement. She admits that she has a dual citizenship because technically she does not give up her Ukrainian passport and citizenship status, but it seems as if this circumstance pushes her to feel more affiliated with Canada, not Ukraine; at the same time, she says that if someone asks her about her nationality, she will definitely say "Ukrainian" not "Canadian".

Paul expresses similar confusion about his citizenship loyalties. He feels confused about his loyalty to a home country and even more so towards the host country:

I feel connected [to home country] but, it's a totally different story compared to when I lived there. yeah I am connected but it's more spiritual and sometimes I don't know what they [fellow-country men] are talking about and I think why people keep saying these things? And they tell me, Oh, you know, there was this sequel on TV and there's that guy or that catch phrase and all these jokes but I cannot [relate] to that. So... It's blurry. Probably, because I am not sure what citizenship loyalty is. (Paul-II, p.5, lines 183-187; 189-192)

To clarify this point, I asked Paul whether he would feel bad if something wrong might happen with Canada, and, likewise, if it would hurt him if something bad happened with the area he was originally from. He agreed that in both cases he would feel bad, but perhaps with an unequal share. He said that at this point, he did not want to be associated with Canada as a citizen due to the politics of division conducted by Harper's government.

Victoria's and Vivi's affiliation to Canada is revealed through their sentiment towards the actual or planned citizenship. But even prepared for taking on a new role of becoming a Canadian citizen, Vivi does not want her prospective children to lose their ancestral memory. In her biotext she poses:

I think in some time

I can call myself Chinese — Canadian

Why not now?

Because I am still Chinese.

If my children are born here in Canada,

They still will be Chinese

Because of their parents.

They can choose what they like

To call themselves as they please

But they will certainly know

One, very important thing:

Their parents come here from China.

As for Victoria, curiously enough, despite encouraging her daughter to learn Ukrainian and cook traditional Ukrainian foods, at the end of her first interview she states firmly: “I’m Canadian now, and that’s all that matters for me” (Victoria-II, p. 1, line 52). At the same time, it is Victoria who, similarly to Ismail, prefers to act cautiously with her fellow-Canadian citizens:

...you should not be very trustworthy with Canadian people because on the surface they are not what they look like. Canadians are more self-centered, more self-absorbed, they only come concerned about themselves, they are more disconnected, although they smile. I don’t know how to describe that, but it’s like you have to be careful who you say [things]to, because you don’t know exactly how it’s going to affect you later. It’s not like in Ukraine, where people are straightforward and more-open-minded. (Victoria-I, p. 7, lines 219-227)

### **Post-task Interviews: Reflections on Study Participation Experience**

By introducing a second round of interviews in the study, I intended to: 1) encourage the participants to reflect on their engagement in the study, particularly during the task period, in between the interviews; 2) give the participants a chance to have a retake on their answers given in the interviews, and those expressed in biotexts, as well as to retell their story with comments on the research poems; and 3) ensure that my interpretation of the data received from the participants was accurately understood. I must say that the topics discussed in the second interviews were so entangled (including those in the first ones) that it was hard to distinguish where one theme was finished and the new one started. For example, perception of the importance of the topics discussed was viewed from the perspective on how meaningful the engagement with the study was. Or the theme of rediscovering or reclaiming one's identity was directly influencing the overall attitude to the study. So, I tried to cluster the themes below, though it should be noted that this clustering is not clear-cut and mutually exclusive. The themes that were discussed in the second round of interviews can be considered as: 1) participants' reflections on their engagement in the study and perception of importance of the topics discussed and expressed in biotexts, and 2) the participants' attitudes to discovering or reclaiming their identity in terms of cultural affiliations.

#### **No, it was not a waste of time: participants' reflections on importance to talk about hybridity.**

All participants found the topics discussed in this study "interesting", "thought-provoking", "something that they never thought about", "intriguing", "helpful"; also "tense yet important to talk about". The participants pointed out that the process of composing their biotexts, including picking up images, words, and arranging them in poems or collages to express and represent their cultural stories was very gratifying. To exemplify, commenting on her making

a collage, Jas said that she had fun making it because it made her think about things that she would not normally think about. She says:

...going back in my pictures and remembering doing everything it was a fun activity and it kind of gave me more time to think about myself, who I want you to include in your study. (Jas-II, p. 4, lines 122-125).

Paul pointed to challenging reflective moments in his experience in taking pictures for his collage. He says that if not for the study task, he wouldn't probably see himself picking the right moment to click the shot and take the picture and finding the right spot that could exactly mirror his state of mind. It was not easy, he says, but the reflective effect that it had on himself was significant.

Victoria was curious about how the found research poems might work as part of the research data because she did not hear about research poems before:

It was interesting to participate; it wasn't challenging but more unusual and fun to see how sentences can be transformed into a poem. It was helpful because it helped me clarify my current identity. (Victoria-II, p. 2, lines 56-59)

Unlike other participants, who enjoyed sharing their stories and who even refused to hide behind the study pseudonyms, Zola said that although she found her participation engaging, she would not be ready to discuss this topic with everybody. She confessed that only because she knew that I, a researcher, who asked her these questions, was also referring to myself as one of the hybrid population, she became curious to exchange some shared experiences with me. I asked if she considered the topics too sensitive, and she replied:

I wouldn't like to talk about this topic with all. It's because for me it is more like talking about shared experiences, because I do not like labels and if I talk about this with whoever, they could immediately label me. I don't want that. I

don't want to be judged by people who lived in one place all the time and know only one way of doing things. (Zola-II, p. 1, lines 47-51)

Natalya mentioned that her participation in the study was beneficial for her in terms of clarifying her "choices, attitudes and beliefs". When asked if the study raised legitimate questions that are worth considering, she said:

Yes, absolutely. Especially for immigrants, both newcomers and children of immigrants, partners and children in mixed marriages, people who experience some kind of a turning point in their lives or some milestones (e.g. becoming a new parent in my case). (Natalya-II, p. 4, lines 122-126)

At the same time, the younger generation of study participants were seemingly less curious about exploring phenomenon of being hybrid compared to those who were more advanced in age. Of the latter, those who have children or planning to have children in the nearest future were more curious about this phenomenon than those who were single or without children. This fact justifies the view of cultural identity in terms of a continuous group membership across time and space and exchange of cultural practices and mentality between generations. Young adults are still in the process of identifying the value of such continuous exchange and feel too much a part of their parental families yet to project themselves as linking elements of one big cultural space shared by larger groups than families. Nevertheless, pushed by my somewhat provocative questions and scenarios about his future, what if... he could marry a Canadian girl, Ismail said:

Now that's a struggle. And that's why I'm not sure about if I marry a Canadian girl. Not for now but when it comes to marriage and official documents and when it comes to children, she may say that these are her children and I am not

getting the right to give them education then she could say... then it would be a struggle. (Ismail-II, p. 7, lines 227-235)

Ismail does not talk directly about the cultural affiliation of his hypothetical children in this scenario yet he mentions “education”. When asked to clarify what this means to him, he said that his girlfriend spoke only English and that would be the language of their hypothetical family. Ismail said: “But if we have children I will teach them French-Arabic, Moroccan dialect. That’s another struggle.” Yet Ismail mentioned that his participation in the study, although annoying sometimes because of his own commitment to write a reflective diary for several months, was meaningful for him.

When asked if it is important to think about cultural roots and if it matters to the modern mind, Ismail answered:

*It does matter. I’d never feel as Canadian even if I live here. I’d always feel as Moroccan. My image of me living in Canada may be different of me living in Morocco. It does not match. If I become a Canadian citizen, I’d keep my Moroccan passport. I can live in the Canadian way, but I will always go to my root. I’ll always belong to me Moroccan roots.* (Ismail-II, p. 4, lines 99-100)

When asked if he would become “less Moroccan after living in Canada for five years, quite seriously he said: “You never know. It could be. But now I am still what I am” (Ismail-II, p. 4, line 104)

For Lumen, another young man among the participants, who is nineteen, the topic of cultural hybridity is such an indispensable part of his everyday reality that he takes it for granted without further inquiries. When asked if he had ever heard the term “hybrid”, Lumen gave me a silent “yes” by nodding, but when I asked about what it meant for him, Lumen indifferently shrugged his shoulders:

Hybrids? It's people like us — half Venezuelan, half Chinese. We are not 100% perfect in Spanish, and not 100% Chinese. It's a mixture. (Lumen-I, p.2, lines 47-48)

I asked him how it felt. Silence. A puzzled look. “Did you think about it?” I asked. “No”, was the answer.

In contrast, the more advanced in age and, naturally, more experienced participants felt differently about whether one should reflect on their journey as immigrants or people of dual or multiple cultural backgrounds or not. Marianna said that her participation helped her claim her Ukrainian identity and citizenship loyalty one more time despite living and working in Germany for years:

The topic is very interesting for me. I felt very engaged in the process and I felt that my contribution could be important for the research. No, my feeling about my cultural belonging did not change. No new features of my identity during this process were identified, [but] I learned how proud I am of my cultural identity. I realized one more time my citizenship loyalty. (Marianna-II, p. 3, lines 34-39)

Victoria admitted that she learned that she could be called a hybrid when it comes to cultural identity. Besides, she said, it's important to remember her roots. She says: “I'm proud of myself to be able to speak in a foreign language about my culture.” (Victoria-II, p. 4, line 123)

Paul concluded that after this experience he had a clear picture in terms of his identity, his personality (or position) in this town and in what direction he should be heading towards.

In my view, it is one of the main goals that has been achieved.

### **Did you discover anything about yourself?**

The participants gave controversial answers to this question. On the one hand, the most of them said clearly that there was no change in the way that they viewed themselves before and after the study participation; on the other, their answers indicate certain discoveries or new levels of awareness of their identity. Marianna mentioned, “No, my feeling about my cultural belonging did not change.” Yet our conversations about boundary spanning and a need for cultural adjustment along with the value of integration into the German culture, let alone, a topic of chameleon behavior, spoke of her growing awareness that there is a certain transformative process going on within. Victoria did not give a direct answer to this question, but then mentioned that her participation in the study was helpful because it let her clarify her current identity. She said that she discovered that her experience of immigrating to Canada and getting attached more to the host culture is an example of cultural hybridization. Ismail insisted on his certainty that he would never be able to change his Moroccan identity, yet at the same time he said that the Canadian experience made him more reflective, responsible and better organized which perhaps he did not recognize before.

When asked if something changed in his perception of himself after the study, Paul said that he observed changes in how he related to others:

With respect to positionality, I had these ideas of myself and my own identity — I find my relationship with other people is not the same kind of relationship that it used to be before this research that for me translates into a reflective practice as a person. Yes, it changed my attitude by (redefining the criteria I had?), so I decided to take these steps — for example, this group of people are not going to waste my time because there wouldn't be a strong relationship, it would stay shallow so, to hell with that! I'm going to invest in people that I can build a deep social relationship with. (Paul-II, p. 1, lines 31-33)

Natalya paid attention to how the topics of the study helped her to once again reflect on and reclaim her fused cultural affiliations. She says it was helpful for her to ascertain some points related to her hybridity and once again feel the intangible borderline between two cultures and languages that had always been a part of her — Ukrainian and Russian, but still not equally balanced in some way.

But perhaps the most vivid evidence of how the study has helped the participants to discover something very important about themselves is Jaspreet's decision to make a shrine in her new home. During our second interview, commenting on her collage, she said:

Every day I use English and every day I talk in English but that's just how it is because I'm in Canada. [But] what I know is how to be a Sikh. This is from our wedding, this is the shrine that I made in the house and this is our temple. I wouldn't know how to be in a different culture otherwise. This is how I am.

(Jas-II, p. 1, lines 17-18; 21-23)

Jas felt that her long-term goal to have a shrine in her house somehow got the state of physical shape and realization after our first interview and while she was composing her biotext:

When asked if she had observed any changes in her perceptions about her cultural duality, Jas said:

I'm just more aware of my culture. Before it was just there, I didn't really care much about I didn't really think much about it but I'm starting to kind of recognize the cultural things in me. Before I was just like "This is just how I am, what do mean?" Then I started realizing that I am more cultural than I thought I was. (Jas-II, p. 2, lines 43-46)

Overall, the responses about study participation are very positive. The participants acknowledge the opportunity to speak up about the topics related to their self-identification regarding cultural background and linguistic repertoire. For many it was one more chance to confirm their cultural heritage or citizenship loyalty towards one or both of their cultural backgrounds; for others, it was a chance to return to one of these backgrounds and feel more connection to it, and for others an opportunity to tell the story of their struggle:

I think I felt kind of privileged that I got to tell my side of the story. Very often I feel people assume things about me because of the way that I look and how I talk, without considering that I have a cultural background apart from typical Canadian culture. Also, I do have the advantage of working through many of my issues already, so it was quite easy for me to talk about this. (Chelsey-II, p. 1, lines 4-9)

### **Mixed Spaces of Belonging: Summary of “Mirror” Reflections**

Stories, collages and research poems revealed that it was difficult to separate many themes that emerged in the study. The polysemy of the target concepts and constructs, such as identity, “home”, hybridity, cultural and hybrid identity may be the key to this phenomenon. To minimize the effects of that polysemy, poetic and visual contexts of the autoethnographic evidence had been employed. Using a parallel data collection method, such as composition and co-authoring of the biotexts, I tried to reach out for the unspoken meanings and hidden nuances that might have been overheard or remained unnoticed during the interviews or research conversations. By offering the participants to co-construct their stories in addition to the answers they provided during the interviews, I also wanted to enhance their personal creativity in focusing on “the core attitudes and dispositions” (Piirto, 2009) towards their perceived (or not) hybrid selves.

To summarize, the analysis of the themes and subthemes shows the following:

1. The participants' demonstrated an awareness of the phenomenon of cultural hybridity, and admit that the term "hybrid" can be applied to the process of appropriation of certain cultural markers related to two (or more) cultures of their origin or sojourn; they perceive themselves as hybrid identities or conversely not identify themselves as such;
2. The participants were not familiar with or were less aware of the term "hyphenated" identity and preferred to describe themselves as "hybrid identities" or "hybrids" rather than "hyphenated" identities. Twelve participants attach a positive connotation to the term "hybrid" applied to people of mixed cultural backgrounds; two participants consider this term not appropriate to describe their experiences and one perceives it as a pejorative or derogatory label that compromises the feeling of a valued self in populations of dual or multiple cultural backgrounds; these participants prefer to describe their experiences in other terms, such as "populations of dual identity" or "trans" — identity.
3. All study participants, including those who do not associate any positive connotation with the term "hybrid", consider their cultural and linguistic hybridity to be a privilege that they enjoy and own as part of their social capital. They find themselves more conveniently equipped in terms of means of socialization compared to populations representing monolingual and monocultural identities; the participants also indicate that the experience of shifting from one cultural mode to another or switching from one language to another was a valuable asset and an empowering experience for them. This is consistent with the views described in literature as *network mobilization* which refers to the utilization of one's outside networks to benefit one's group (Lin, 2001), and also referred to in the social capital literature as *bridging* (Burt, 1997; Elfring & Hulsink, 2003); at the same time, these experiences suggest strong relevance to the concept of *mimicry*, derived from Freud, French postmodernism, and

colonial and postcolonial discourse (Bhabha, 1994; Derrida, 1995; Mimica, 2007; Singh, 2009). Although in this study we do not deal with the processes of how “the colonized” are imitating “the colonists” behavior to attain more power, and by that suppress their own ethnic or cultural identities, as these theories pose, there is a certain parallel to the conscious or unconscious mimicry observed in the incoming population of immigrants and sojourners (who consider themselves “hybrid identities”) towards a host population. This theme emerged in several interviews and was called by one participant “a chameleon behaviour”. Mimicry or chameleon behaviour relates to copying of the “western” or host country’s concepts of norm versus “subversive” norms prescribed by the “home” country’s code of ethics and beliefs of the sojourner. On the one hand, mimicry is partly a factor of learning, and acting as the Romans do when in Rome, on the other — this imitation may certainly lead to the shifts in the pre-existing hierarchy of values, especially when it refers to the critical evaluation of the meaning of the pre-existing identity which can be suppressed. No wonder, some participants expressed their concern that by acquiring the new patterns of socialization they had to give up on the previously acquired patterns and cultural traditions, which resonates with the concept of abjection (Kristeva, 1982) contributing to the inner conflict;

4. Five participants do not view themselves as hybrids despite their prolonged sojourn or residence in the country other than the country of their origin and despite their biotext and field notes strongly indicate that they do perceive a certain transformative influence of the host culture and language on their sense of self and locus of belonging; the evidence related to these participants’ experiences manifest a two-fold phenomenon. These experiences may testify to the aspect of behavior known in sociology as *the stranger* described by Simmel in 1908 and based on the appropriation of the Greek term “*metoikos*” referring to the foreigners who were living within the host communities of city states, and “who did not enjoy the rights of the citizenship”

(Underhill, 2012, p. 234). The stranger lives in the host community and distances herself from the native members of the group due to the lack of strong affective bonds with the host communities. According to Karakayali's (2009) review of that sociological phenomenon, the stranger has to be differentiated "both from the "outsider" who has no specific relation to a group and from the "wanderer" who comes today and leaves tomorrow. The stranger, Simmel poses, comes today and stays tomorrow. The stranger seems to entertain a membership of the group in which he lives and share participation in the groups; social life and yet remains distant from the native members of this group (Driedger & Peters, 1977). Further on, compared to "the other forms of social distance and difference (such as class, gender, and even ethnicity) the distance of the stranger has to do with his "origins." Therefore, the stranger is perceived as extraneous to the group and even though he is in constant relation to other group members, his "distance" is more emphasized than his "nearness" (Karakayali, 2009, p. 538). As Wood (1934) suggests, the stranger is viewed as being in the group but not being part of the group. When the study participants acknowledge the manifestation of their "blurry" identity caught between two or more cultural and linguistic contexts, or admit their search for some monolithic stratum in their polycentric identity (Roesler, 2010), they seem to personify the stranger, who, despite being given the membership of "the club", is neither fully representing this club nor is feeling part of it. Yet there is not enough evidence to say that the status of the stranger for these populations is equal to feeling marginalized.

5. All participants manifested a concern about the future of passing on their cultural heritage to the generations to come, be it related to themselves as parents of children identified as hybrid identities or through hypothetical cross-cultural marriages; this concern is consistent with the Jungian concept of *emergentism* when the seeking for meaning is not necessarily equal to finding this meaning in the unknown and unpredictable realities. This finding is also

consistent with how hybridity translates into Stern's typology of self-concept, when the "half-here and half-there" self may be perceived as a self-agency merely acting according to the demands of the social circumstance what in the long run may threaten the sense of self-coherence.

6. In terms of perceptions on citizenship loyalty, the participants' responses gravitated towards 1) considering themselves as subjects of their home country if they are sojourners and loyal citizens of their host country if they are immigrants; 2) a few participants feel that they are attached to both — home and host country — in terms of citizenship affiliation; 3) one participant preserves citizenship of his home country despite living for more than twenty years in Canada as an immigrant due to the restrictions on dual citizenship in the home country (Satoru); and 4) one participant did not specify her citizenship sentiment yet asserts that Manitoba is her home (Chelsey).

7. All participants confirmed that they enjoyed talking about the themes of the study and participate in reflective activities to compose their biotext; many find the topics important to discuss and mentioned that they acquired a better sense of their cultural heritage and affiliation after the study; one participant mentioned that the topics may sound too sensitive to the populations like herself and that these populations may be judged negatively as lacking solid cultural loyalties and affiliations and therefore unreliable to their either home or host country; one participant mentioned that he was particular impressed by the significance of the reflective activities he took part in while preparing his collage.

## CHAPTER VI

## VISUAL ANALYSIS: THE GAZE

**Images Speak: Collages as Biotext**

Expression of human experience would be quite limited if we never used visual images to render our feelings or perceptions of this world and our place in it. Images construct worlds as much as words construct biographical records of our existence. Images are also powerful because they not only construct subjective realities but also represent them (Howells & Matson, 2009) as well as reflect the collective through the individual. What is seen on the surface of a collage creates a deeper meaning as part of the visual communication of its author with the viewer; similarly the pages of a book reveal the lifeworld of the writer for the reader.

Here, looking at the study participants' collages is what the viewer will see:

A lonely seagull, a river, a bench, one of its legs broken; a drawing of a watch and a laptop, a picture of a tree in yellow (Fig. 1).

A bird's view of checkerboard wheat fields; an old-fashioned mill; a red-brick barn; flowers in bloom; landscapes in spring and fall colors (Fig. 2).

A beautiful flower is sticking out of the wooden fence as if in curiosity to see the environment behind the fence; its roots and stem are on the one side of the fence and the bloom is on the other (Fig. 3).

A wedding: A bride in a traditional Indian outfit; a bridegroom—in a traditional Western tux; a brightly decorated wedding pot—a *jaggo*—with candles that a bride-to-be wears on her head on the night before the wedding and later invites the neighbors to a bride's night party by a loud knocking on their doors; a plate with *dosa*—a favorite Indian dish; a greeting card with the word *Thankful* (Fig. 4)

A painting of an old island village in the frame; the colors in the painting are subdued, as if they also were telling a story from the past; a father and a son are smiling into the camera,

happy, cheerful, almost lookalikes<sup>3</sup>; the azure oceanic waters are whispering something to the piece of land with the white sand—the eyes and voice of the island of Tokunoshima (Fig. 6).

A group of girls in Ukrainian costumes are sitting on the grass weaving the flower wreaths; the colors of the Ukrainian flag exactly match the yellow wheat field and bright blues skies (Fig. 7).

Each of these images speaks. When you look at them for a long time, you may even hear the words. Or rather—the sounds of some inner rhythm and intonation. The sighs and calls. The smirks. The silent nodding. Some of these images may seem disjointed, disconnected, hushed; while others are well-organized, coherent and loud, just like a staged speech. I wonder if these images are culture-free, or, conversely, culture bound? Paradoxically, they may be both. With each new collage comes a new set of images conveying a unique “mood, concern or purpose” about the dominant life-themes (Ochberg, 2003). The question is: how to elucidate these themes and intonations in the visual biotexts going beyond the pure voyeurism of the viewer who attends mostly to the active side of the images and their performance-based, aesthetic content? In other words — what method can help me to analyze the *text* in the visually represented *bio*?

### **How to analyze visual images? Methods and approaches**

One of the main challenges of this study was to find ways to analyze and interpret the data represented in non-verbal or poetic formats. Speaking about the first, in contrast to analyzing the data represented verbally, the visually represented research data appears to be a widely-ranged field of subjectively-perceived images with an abundance of symbolic expression that can be viewed and understood differently across individuals. Clearly, in this case, a technique of *iconography* or *thematic analysis* (Rose, 2001) introduced by Erwin Panofsky, when special attention is given to variations and patterns of repetitive motifs across the images,

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<sup>3</sup> This image may look a bit distorted due to the large angle of the camera pointed at faces too closely.

had to be supplemented with some other critical strategy to minimize the bias of the researcher's search for the presumed themes. Speaking more specifically, iconography can be differentiated from the method of applying a so-called technique of a "good eye" with its focus only on how images look. In contrast, the method of iconography addresses three levels of image interpretation: *natural*, *conventional* and *symbolic* (Rose, 2001). In such a case, what can be seen on a primary level of observation — the look of the image or situation it describes — is supplemented by the realization of secondary, conventional meanings of that image, that is, what it stands for in more general social terms, and finally, on the third level, what underlying principle of a more symbolic, or cultural, value is condensed behind that image.

To avoid a one-sided interpretation of the images represented in the research collages, after an iconographical interpretation of the significant themes in the biotexts, I then used Gauntlett's (2007) approach for analyzing collages where the researcher gives the participants their own artwork and asks them to interpret it. Then the researcher notes the emerged themes and summarizes them. This process of *verstehen* or seeking to understand the meaning the participants made of their own work (Simmons & Daley, 2013) seemed most reasonable in this study. On the one hand, it allowed the participants to reflect on such elements of the creative process as "person-process-product" mode of thinking (Groch, 1969), while on the other, it allowed me to compare my interpretations of the images presented in visual biotexts with those made by the participants.

More so, this approach echoes the Lacanian notion of *gaze* (1977), which had been elaborated as the earlier account of the ego-development mirror stage. According to Lacan, the gaze is formative to the pre-existing subjectivity. It describes a form of visuality where the subject looks into its image as a picture that exists as a product of the pre-construed reality (Rose, 2001). In this respect, the gaze can be understood as a culturally constructed form of self-observation. Borrowing an interesting metaphorical take on how the gaze stimulates an

alternative outlook of oneself, as proposed by Silverman (1992), I offered the study participants an engagement in peculiar “binarization of spectator and spectacle”. They had to look at representations of their [cultural] identity through the lens of a socially shaped observer and at the same time an independent author of their own story. In other words, they had to observe, interpret and reflect on their visual stories with and without the *spectacles* on, those that were *culturally* edged “to fit the frame” that the viewer chooses or those that were chosen for her.

Due to this collaborative interpretation, the emergence of new meanings led to a more inclusive exploration of the participants’ lived experiences. Besides, this reverse cycle of the creative process suggested by Simmons and Daley (2013), namely “product-process-person”, prompted a better understanding of experiences related to the “inherent” (by blood lines) or acquired hybridity. I must say that it was very curious for me to compare my vision of the themes presented in the collages with the interpretation of the same images provided by their authors. Sometimes, these visions coincided almost identically, while in other cases our reading of the same collage differed. This comparison of the subjective visions of the same artwork helped us to retell the stories with attention to the differences of the meanings retrieved from the images. To illustrate, when I saw Paul’s picture of a seagull isolated from its flock, I immediately thought of it as an identification of how Paul perceives his own isolation from his “kind”. However, Paul said that for him the seagull did not stand only for loneliness or isolation from its flock but mostly as a symbol of being free, wild, and not being “domesticated”:

Now that I look at it, yes, probably I was thinking, yes, beautiful sky and the horizon, and this seagull is not flying, it is on the sidewalk. It is separated from the flock. Now, at the time when I wanted to take a picture, another one was trying to approach this flock, so I just separated them and again I would say it’s like the seagull itself — they are not domestic animals; they are going into the blue sky flying and they far away, how about

the river... it flows...maybe going away...not escaping just going away... (Paul-II, p. lines, 102-107).

When I saw a few lines written in German in Chelsey's collage about the guiding power of God in one's life — *Durch Sturm, Durch Trocken, Durch Wind Ich stand*<sup>4</sup> — I thought that it had to be a translation from some psalm and as such shows Chelsey's religiosity. However, Chelsey laughed at my interpretation of these lines and said that it was her own rhyme and that she simply decided to have it in German to honor the roots of the native language of her Mennonite community.

I used the same approach to analyze the poems, musical or video pieces collected as part of the biotexts. I asked the participants to reflect on the themes expressed in their pieces prior to my semantic "verdict" on them. However, in the reading and analyzing of the found research poems there was still less "pure" authorship in the "person-process-product" cycle. Instead, we were engaged in a more collaborative interpretation of the themes that emerged in the interviews. Nevertheless, this process of working together on the artistic images made the data analysis not only more inclusive but also more creative and less predictable. Notably, in this respect, the *verstehen* technique described above echoed the theoretical position of the concept of a *double interpretation* when "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 51). Moreover, the major characteristic of this auto-ethnography is to subjectively explore the experiences the self is living through. The process and the product, in this case, become less syncretic. Rather, auto-ethnography reflects a phenomenon where the person *is* the product of her expression, and the product of her creative narrative about herself *mirrors* the self. Following McDermott (2008), therefore, I must say that the collaboration, emergence and transformation with the application of *thematic analysis*, *verstehen* process and *double*

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<sup>4</sup> Through storm, through draught, through wind I stand (translation from German)

*interpretation* technique became three guiding principles and strategies of my theoretical approach to analyzing the biotexts in the differing artistic formats.

Furthermore, to attend to a more in-depth understanding of the messages represented in the photo- and video-graphic images, a collaborative analysis of the recurrent themes described above was complemented with a *discourse analysis* (Rose, 2001). This type of analysis is based on the Foucauldian view of *discourse* as a set of statements that makes an object of sociological inquiry. Viewing the visual stories as articulations of specific discourse, a structured entity that resembles a collectively perceived and individually created *thing*, whose “meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed” (Laclau, 1988, p. 254), is of particular value for the current study because of its direct relevance to the understanding of culture as a set of specialized shared knowledge. The latter resonates best with the Zizekian “Nation Thing” described in Chapter II of this work. In addition, this notion of discourse, due to its analytical value and interpretative flexibility, has relevance to a number of sociological theories, among them psychoanalytical and cultural theories (Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008). Therefore, a discourse analysis — a method of looking at visual images to identify specific articulatory practices and describe the roots of identity formation and ownership of social capital, both in individual (psychoanalytic) and collective (cultural) terms — seemed quite practical for analyzing the ways cultural hybridity can be *gazed* upon. In this case, the visual bodies of biotexts and contexts that they create can be reflective of the study participants’ perceptions of their hybridity. Similarly to how verbal texts can be viewed as materializations of meanings, representations, and ideologies (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) so can the visual contexts become articulations of these meanings and representations.

### **Procedure.**

Once this method was formulated, the seven visual biotexts provided by Vivi, Paul, Chelsey, Jas, Marianna, Satoru, and Dina were selected, viewed, and analyzed using the

*metafunctional* principle offered by Halliday (1978). This principle considers three discursive metafunctions that help the viewer create a systematic outlook on 1) ideation or the ideas about the world and an individual's place in it expressed in visual format; 2) projection of social relationships, and 3) the capacity of visual images to articulate “interpretable coherent texts” (Malherbe, Suffla, & Seedat, 2016).

Applying the strategies of discourse analysis proposed by Rose (2001) I looked at the collages with “fresh eyes”; immersed myself in their contexts, identifying the significant themes; examined their meanings and textual and intertextual coherence; paid attention to their complexity, contradictions, and “messiness” (Law, 2004); and looked for the salient invisible, paying attention to the significant details.

Remembering that “all discourse is occasioned” (Gills, 1996), I focused my gaze on the gaze of the participants on themselves, who knew that their biotexts would be gazed upon by me. I went back and forth in between those “gazes” until I elucidated a few salient themes, which were coded, tracked, and listed below. To separate the participants' gaze upon their perceptions of cultural home from my gaze upon their visual narratives and my own cultural story, I applied the strategy of finding the glimpses of my story in their story after giving my interpretation of their story. To elucidate the process of such analysis, Paul's, Chelsey's, Vivi's, Dina's and Jaspreet's biotexts will be explored below — because each of them exemplifies a combination of explicit and implicit representations of cultural spaces in the format of a visual narrative, while Satoru's and Marianna's biotexts will be evaluated in the *Findings* section of this chapter.

### **Paul's story.**

Paul's biotext (Fig. 1) includes pictures taken by camera and those drawn by hand. Taken together, they create a very special mood and atmosphere of intense silence full of eloquent messages that can be heard in the lines of his biotext poem, where the objects that so obviously

symbolize lonely pursuits in isolation from the world become the very tools to stay connected with what they separate Paul from — his contacts from the past. Here is how Paul comments on his images:

[With] a laptop you can connect to cultural things too — we call it virtual reality, but still it is kind of reality. And time, time is what we all lose. We lose. That's why I intended to put that portion there too. I think when you move to another area, I don't know... If you move to another city or definitely when you move to another country, *that's* something that cannot be reversed. That's time. (Paul-II, p. 4, lines 130-134)

The theme of time as a passing and flowing entity somewhere around us, as much as within us, is a recurring theme in Paul's biotext. Paul says that the isolated seagull personifies a part of his identity that he still needs to become while the yellow tree symbolizes for him the sadness of how soon the colorful beauty of summer and autumn gives way to winter bareness: It is beautiful but what happens?

The leaves are on the verge of falling. On the verge of, like, giving up. Yeah, that was the intention, it might look beautiful, and the bench, that's pretty much loneliness, I just set the camera and just sit there and take the picture and put myself in it. But I think it is loneliness and it is beside the river but the water in the river never comes back, so we have to put them together right? River, I would say is pretty much a symbol of life because it flows, and of course, it is connected with people. This tree is pretty much my life. And computer. A watch. That's my life now. (Paul-II, p. 3, lines 110-114)

This description matches Paul's found poem:

The yellow leaves are falling.

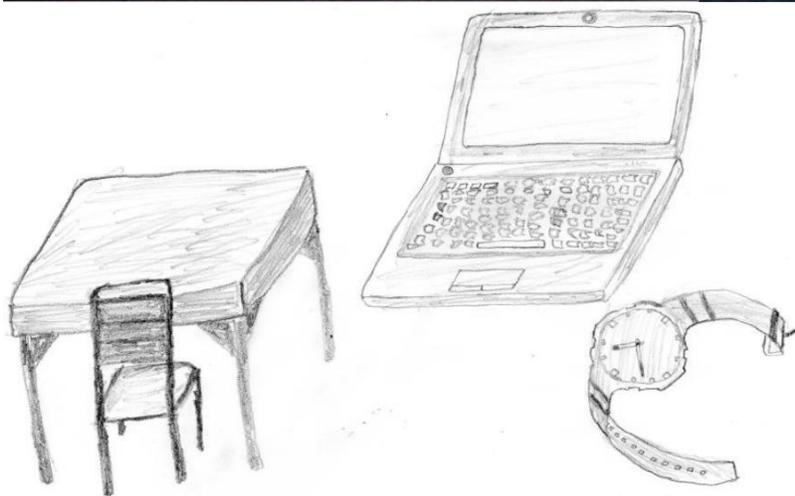


Figure 1. Paul's biotext

But the tree — it's still the same.

Its leaves are always new.

Just like myself — a book, amidst so many

fingers over its pages

Sliding back and forth...

...My watch is ticking stiffly on my wrist.

It says it's time to go and hide my melancholic freedom.

I pass the yellow maples.

Shall I ask them:

Maybe you know

If I will ever step again at rocks

that shroud their freedom

beneath the Zagros Mountains?

I'm trying hard to hear their answer.

And here it is:

Just silence.

Following Shultz's (2003) system of locating prototypical indicators in personified narratives or salient cues of meaning, such as *primacy*, *uniqueness*, *frequency*, *negation*, *emphasis*, *error*, etc. In terms of *primacy* — what comes first tells more than anything else, and *frequency*—a textual element that is repetitive — Paul sees his sojourn in Canada and his [con]fused identity not only through separation from his “flock”, which seems irreversible but rather as a “physical”, painful experience of feeling a loss of time that will never come back. This image of time appears in his collage as a “metaphysical, third constraint upon consciousness” (Nabokov cited in Shultz, 2003, p. 155); it is that image of time “whose” voice is nothing but a

deafening, ear-splitting silence. Here Paul talks about a connection to his past that is being lost. When I asked him whether a river and a yellow tree symbolized something that was lost, Paul said:

It is changing over time. Or it is being lost. It's moving...you cannot reverse time the same way as you cannot reverse water in the river. It just goes and you just LOSE that thing. I cannot be ten years younger. ...somebody who immigrates or goes to live in another place even for a short time, definitely; they cannot be in the same position, in the same time there again. (Paul-II, p. 4, lines 136-140).

To summarize, Paul's cultural story conveys a story of a person who is quite lonely, and who is sometimes lost in his memories, and sometimes, lost in his nostalgia, not about the past but, paradoxically, about his unknown, yet to be determined, very unclear future. Interestingly, his *cultural* story is lacking the culture of his ethnicity; it feels as if he is aware of his roots yet at the same time denies the value of ethnicity as a marker of cultural identity. He may be grieving his lost connection with the place of his childhood or may even whine about the lack of ethnic stores carrying the foods from Iran in Winnipeg, but these cultural markers — ethnicity and ethnic foods, or his first language, Farsi — do not really *mark* his cultural story. Paul's main message is about his lonely journey to the meaning of his belonging that is yet to be found.

By NOT including any of the traditional symbols of ethnicity into his biotext, Paul asserts his view on cultural belonging as a journey to home, a place where he is welcomed with no specifically attributed “face control” or a set of the pre-existed cultural markers; to be more exact, home for Paul is a journey, not a place. It correlates with a sense of passing time, a flowing river, fluidity, and continuity of the journey. Using psychoanalytic terms and tripartite approach offered by Laclau and Mouffe, Paul describes his story of identity in the absence of its traditionally conditioned cultural markers. His biotext resembles travel notes made by a lonely

traveler who is searching for a place to stay. His *cultural* story in the habitual sense in these biotexts is practically absent. The national flags, ethnic dishes, folk costumes — those conventionally perceived symbols of cultural affiliation — are absent in both biotexts. Rather, the focus of the meaning here is centered on the lost and not yet found cultural identity. Paul uses unorthodox images to mirror our search for alternative symbols of cultural belonging. Birds, trees, a watch, a laptop, the cut-in half-biracial faces and inhabited and empty birdcages become most salient symbols of the cultural discourse we as authors are trying to render to the viewer.

In addition, Paul's photo of the bench in the isolated park area near the river may evoke a feeling of a calming and soothing pursuit of someone sitting on the bench watching the river flow, if not for one small, disturbing detail that turns that peacefulness upside down. It is the fact the bench in the photo has *a broken leg*. That broken leg tells me there is something in that idyllic scenery that is out of order. To me, it speaks to vulnerability, some twisted harmony amidst confusion; it speaks of loneliness and at the same time an assertiveness of the author's right to search for an alternative path of belonging. The broken leg of the bench together with a seagull isolated from its flock in Paul's images renders an idea that the social capital — the adherence to the group, the shared knowledge, and the social relationships in one's cultural story (as well as absence of such) — may be both a blessing and a curse, and that to a large extent our social conventions and ways of perceiving identity resemble those caged, locked from the outside as well as from the inside. The cage bars may be invisible and may be unnoticed, or, once noticed, the cages are left abandoned. Obviously, Paul's biotext problematizes a socially constructed meaning of culture by NOT viewing it as a set of the prescribed language or ethnicity related markers. Why? Because, according to the author of this collage, culture, as well as representation of his own hybridity, is something he cannot really describe but is something that he can only experience, feel and know. No wonder, as the concept of culture as a "structure

of feeling”, offered by Williams (1958), is opposed to a concept of culture as a set of restricting markers, gets its authentic value in this visual narrative.

### **Chelsey’s story.**

If Paul’s collage echoes significantly with the themes of his interview, Chelsey’s collage (Fig. 2) has little in common with the dramatic story of her denied identity. It seems as if she tried to wipe away the tears shed during her interview while telling her story by selecting the most peaceful and picturesque images of her geographical home — Manitoba. With attention to the interpersonal metafunction of such a switch from traumatic to peaceful in Chelsey’s story, her collage aimed to show and tell the viewer — “Look, I am fine, despite whatever I passed through before, and my home, and my religion, are with me to support my faith and back up my uneasy truths”. It feels as if Chelsey wanted to rewrite her story and start her journey by looking for not only her geographical but also a symbolic home. Further along, a reference to the past is very salient in Chelsey’s collage. The images of checkerboard wheat fields with a red-brick barn and an old-fashioned Dutch style mill ground our eyes in the deep waters of historical past. The words “heritage”, “tradition”, “Dutch”, “nature”, “firm ground” and “farmland” are the first themes that come to mind, just like the symbolic anchors of Chelsey’s identity as a Mennonite. Notably, this key word that largely defines her cultural identity is absent from her collage, yet it is present in almost every single sentence in her interview transcript. In Shultz’s topology of saliency cues (2003), this moment could have occurred as a deliberate “incompletion”, a communicative error of not mentioning the most important thing that one should apparently have started with. On the one hand, self-defining memories (Singer & Salovey, 1993) are those pieces of memories that are “recalled and thought about” so many times that they become so much of ourselves that we may omit identification of the main episode or its description for the simple reason that it is already embedded in our consciousness. We do not mention the memories because we cannot see ourselves without them. So, why name what is inherent and self-

explanatory and already there? On the other hand, Shultz mentions that some defining memories are indicative of a magnifying intensity of some experiences, especially if they are rooted in a negative experience. The absent words whose presence haunt the viewer throughout the collage may speak of such unresolved conflicts. My assumption is that the word *Mennonite* is dear to Chelsey's heart as much as it is very painful because of some duality of her denied identity's story. If she used that significant word, it would be too much of a presence of the painful memory, too much of remembering about that "scarlet letter on her chest" — a symbol of the most traumatic yet important experience in her life related to her parents' divorce. In the story of their divorce, Chelsey mentioned that it felt as if her mother had a scarlet letter of condemnation from the Mennonite community. Deep inside Chelsey still carries that scarlet letter too. In my understanding, the word "Mennonite" was absent from Chelsey's reclaimed identity, because she had to fight hard to reclaim her true Mennonite belonging. This marker of Chelsey's identity absent from her collage seems to signify that watchful gaze of her past that is still controlling Chelsey's present, and most likely, will be shadowing her future.



Figure 2. Chelsey's biotext.

Two visual biotexts stand out: Vivi's and Dina's.

**Vivi's story.**

Vivi's biotext (Fig. 3), unlike the collages of other participants who used multiple images to create their cultural story, represents only one image—a photo she took somewhere in her Canadian neighborhood. At first sight, it seems to present just a moment, one of those silent dialogues between a person and nature when, on seeing a beautiful flower leaning against the fence, the photographer wishes to keep a nice memory of that moment on her smartphone.



Figure 3. Vivi's biotext.

Neilsen (2007) calls these “in-the-moment” encounters with things that we record on film” or digital devices “*phenomenological bookmarks*” (p. 25). By revisiting these bookmarks we can “return to the sites of our experiences” and continue to contemplate the variability of their meanings. In fact, the image taken by Vivi is a perfect illustration of her found poem that was

compiled on the basis of her interview transcript before she took her biotext picture. Its recurring theme is framed within a set of questions:

Where is my home?

Is it a country, or is it a place?

If I say that I come from China,

Do I really mean it's my home now?

If I live in Canada now,

Do I mean it's my shelter?

Is it a place to hide?

Looking at the image of the flower in Vivi's collage, we can pose a similar question: Where does the plant from this image belong? Its root is on one side of the fence and its bloom on the other. Vivi confided to me that, while she was searching for the suitable images to represent her hybridity visually, every time she would pick up a Canadian or Chinese symbol of the corresponding culture, she thought that they seemed either "too Canadian" which did not *yet* represent her, or "too Chinese" which *no more* represented her. She had that feeling because now, while she has been living in Canada for a longer time span than in China, these symbols could no more express her emerging, "blooming" Chinese-Canadian identity. A locus of her cultural belonging was hard to uncover, yet on seeing a flower that grew behind the fence but spread its bloom over it, Vivi understood that it was the best reflection of how she felt. I must say that the metaphorical value of that image best of all reflects my own experience of being an Eastern European and Canadian with my roots firmly clung to the ground from *over there*, while my more recently shaped identity is still "growing" here, in Canada. In this sense, to univocally identify a locus of an ambiguously felt belonging is next to impossible — it is as much *here* as it is *there*. Truly, the context of this visual narrative creates a perspective captured by the person who is gazing at the object of her present reality — a flower — that also reminds her of her own

past — her roots — left in China, which still powerfully control her emerging Canadian identity. From this perspective, Vivi's biotext resembles Satoru's stance on the dominating role that the image of his island still plays in his life even after his living more than twenty years in Canada. It seems as if cultural heritage rooted in the collective memory of the early life experiences can cast a shadow over a recurring mental recall that does not let Vivi, Satoru and I, fully emerge as Canadians despite the number of years lived in Canada. Using Vivi's words I can also ask myself:

Can I call Canada home now?

Maybe no,

Maybe not yet,

Maybe not now...

My life is in the state of a big change...

### **Dina's story.**

Dina's biotext is a musical video. Although I anticipated a variety of alternative images or mixed media formats from the participants' biotexts, I did not at all expect a musical video. It came as a complete surprise. Dina did not make it herself but just picked it from the Internet. It was not her initial urge though to use a musical piece to express her idea of *home*. She first wanted to create a visual narrative. But it turned out that a few weeks before her participation in the study, Dina gave birth to her first son, and for her, a young mother who was still taking a few courses in nursing at the U of M, it was too hard to find enough time for a more personal representation of her biotext. She confessed that all her time at that moment was split between her son and the textbooks scattered all over her room. She complained that she had almost no time for sleep. Nevertheless, in a month following the interview, Dina sent me a musical clip and pointed out that the song performed in the video was very close to her perception of *home*, be it in a cultural, geographical, or linguistic perspective. Here is what she wrote in an email

commenting on her biotext: “I feel very connected to this video because it shows a few Israeli sights, the profusion in fruits, the people I know, the soldiers. I also was a soldier a couple of years ago. Also I love Israeli songs and I love this language. I feel that this song *is* about me.” Considering herself more Israeli than Russian, Dina chose a video with a song in Hebrew. The action took place in Israel at the Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem, which is famous in this country as the place bearing the essence of the Israeli culture. As both Dina and Tanya mentioned, many Jerusalemites have an emotional attachment to Mahaneh Yehuda, which has been around for 100 years, because this unique place integrates the old and the new ...all the flavors and aromas of the local food, along with “the colors and the traders' interaction with the crowds. For years, the locals have recognized this market “as a symbol of the Jerusalem, a place that represents them, symbolizes them and gives them a unique identity in a larger Israeli social context. It is nicknamed "MachneYuda," which is also the name of one of the finest Israeli restaurants located in the market” (Machne, n.d, para.1). Dina specifically mentioned that places like markets best of all corresponded to her feelings about Israeli identity — a big family of sorts where people freely and willingly share their emotions. She admitted that while in Israel she was constantly feeling being part of a family where emotions could run high and where there was no place for “fake politeness” that she thought she often encountered in Canada:

In Israel you feel closer to people, you feel like a brother, like a sister. You walk in the street with someone you feel connected like a family. You cannot be always pleasant to your family. If your mother gives a sandwich to you, you'll say “thank you! mother, I appreciate that, OK, bye”. It's more kind of family thing. And Canadian, if you are polite, it makes a distance, I don't want to have distance with my friends. They are more real.

(Dina-I, p. 9, lines 281-286)

Interestingly, the lyrics of the song in the clip do not exactly match the scenes it displays, as can be the case with other musical pieces. Looking at the happy faces of the people who are passing by the singer at the market, the viewer may think that the song is about exactly that — how close people feel to this place, this country, even when they just walk around the market. But the lyrics suit more of a love song. I asked Dina if the lyrics of the song mattered, and she said: “not really”. She said that the nice, lively melody and the images of happy people that felt like a family were the main reasons why she chose this video as her cultural story. This statement is consistent with a view of music not only as a cultural product reflecting the symbolic value of a certain social context but also as part of a collective practice that connects people through the evocation of emotions (Leavy, 2015). It is in light of this resonance that I completely trusted Dina when she said: “I *feel* that this song *is* about me”.

### **Jaspreet’s collage.**

It is one of the most picturesque visual biotexts in this study (Fig.4). It is full of bright images reflecting the colorful markers of Punjabi identity — the images of North Indian food, the lavishly embroidered bridal attire, body paint henna patterns, jewelry along with a portrait of a Sikh guru decorated by a flower string wreath. By all accounts, Jaspreet’s collage may well serve as a perfect illustration of Singh’s (1999) recollection of the most salient aspects of Punjabi national identity:

It could be its cultural way of life and forms of articulation of leisure consumption—music, songs, dances, and humour. It could be the day-to-day living: cooking and eating food, daily rituals of cleanliness and conceptions of sexual activity. It could be birth, marriage and death ceremonies. It could be the modes of aesthetic imagination and articulation—embroidery, painting, sculpture, and jewelry, etc. (p. 154)

Through all these means, the symbols of Sikh culture in Jas's collage thrive as artifacts of visual anthropology. Jas chooses the most common "public objects" (Leavy, 2015) to render the ethnographic value of both sides of her national identity — food, dress (its material side) and temple and shrine (a spiritual side). Jas's work eloquently demonstrates how her consciousness as a Punjabi "is shaped by the materiality of signs" (Carpentier et al., 2008, p. 173). In addition, she accompanies these images with a few short but powerful statements: "My religion; up" in half-western, half-Punjabi attire. my culture; my festivals; my family; my life, my identity".

Notably, in this list religion comes before anything else, before culture and its festivals, followed by family. The primary markers of Punjabi identity rooted in Sikh religion manifest who Jas perceives herself to be despite living in Canada since she was thirteen. However, in contrast to Dina's diminished adherence to her Russian cultural roots, fading further away with the course of time, Jas feels even more nostalgic and loyal to her Punjabi culture the more she lives in Canada. She does not shun her Punjabi roots as Dina does her Russian origins, although Dina became an immigrant to Israel at the same age as Jas came to Canada — at thirteen. While Dina admitted that she often had an urge to hide her knowledge of the Russian language and viewed herself more Israeli than Russian, Jas is, quite oppositely, extremely proud of her Punjabi heritage. She nourishes it and persuasively confesses her loyalty to the group identity she belonged long before she came to Canada. Through the dominance of the traditional Punjabi symbols lovingly selected and displayed in Jas's collage, we can see not only how much she tries to reclaim her Punjabi self, but also how her other self is temporarily "put aside": the symbols related to her Canadian identity are *not* being displayed at all. Interestingly, in the interviews, Jas mostly spoke of her Canadian self rather than Punjabi self. I was expecting the same stance in her collage. However, when I saw Jas's collage, it became

immediately clear that Punjabi identity “took over” her Canadian identity. What may occur here is a process of re-emergence of Jaspreet’s dormant heritage identity that came out more saliently in the visual format than it happened in the verbal expression. This illustrates the capacity and power of visual art to “jar people into seeing something differently. This kind of consciousness-raising, unleashed by images, may not be possible in textual form” (Leavy, 2015, p. 228). Obviously, an opportunity to reflect on her cultural story in a visual format stirred up for Jas a new look at herself after we discussed the themes of hybridity in the interview. An account of that new look in its own right, her collage let Jas recognize and reveal better a truer part of herself by telling her story differently than it had been expressed earlier in words. In this sense, the method of producing multiple narratives by the study participants themselves or in collaboration with the researcher as fragments of their cultural story worked quite effectively for this study. For some, the collages-biotexts complement their life story told in the interviews with the unspoken truths often revealed; while for others the story told in the visual context regains its situatedness and factual value in the interview transcripts or found poems. I find this multiplicity of ways to tell a life story one of the main discoveries of this work: the specific mode of expression has literally enacted a complementary angle of looking at oneself for the study participants. Thus, each life story, when revisited and recreated in a different format, received a quality of assemblage stemmed from multiple sites. In this way, the previously silenced themes along with the inconsistencies or contradictions initially kept from the gaze of the viewers acquired new relational discursive venues and implications. In a word, it turned out that with the more choices in modes of expression being offered, the study storytellers have discovered more semantic layers of their identity to be revealed.

# Sikhism



**My religion**

**My culture**

**My festivals**

**My family**

**My life, my identity.**



Figure 4. Jaspreet's biotext

## Findings

By creating biotexts-collages, which appear as both conceptual and performative (Norman, 2008), the study participants described their identity drawing on the themes discussed in the interviews, namely those of home, multiple loci of their identity, a sense of belonging, and self-images of themselves as hybrids (or not as such). What representations of these themes did I see? Oddly enough, the first association that came to my mind on seeing the collages and a video was an image of a suitcase with a double bottom. In almost all of the visual biotexts, which can be imagined as a “collective autobiography”, I noticed a presence of the attempt the authors made to fulfill the study task — portraying their identity — in polished, carefully structured and “brushed” conformity of the images chosen with what we discussed during the interviews. I felt that the participants wanted to show me, and I guess, less so to themselves, that they were playing by my rules. They designed a collage or chose an image that made the reality of their cultural story in conformity to how it had been told before they started working on their collages. Unfortunately, my suggestions to unleash the participants’ creativity in some bold and released energetic manner in representations of their true selves were not followed. Perhaps, it happened so because of fear to delve deeper, under the safe surface of their day in, day out habitual selves, or, just for the lack of time or some other considerations. Therefore, in this regard, the collages looked like illustrations of the conversations that we had before that task. Sometimes they were assertive in regards to the perceived hybridity, and sometimes they reflected a more diffused sense of hybridity perceived by the authors. Bearing this in mind, I tried to look into the hidden, compressed compartment of “the suitcases with the double bottom” that the participants conveyed in the images in their collages. The themes that I discovered there are described below.

### **Representations of cultural story.**

Looking at the cultural stories in collages, I had a feeling that there was some inner tension whether to depict an idealised construction of “home” or to present a socially conditioned perception of a locus of cultural belonging that was easier to express through the symbols of ethnicity, such as flags, national colors, foods, and linguistic affiliation. In three collages, Paul’s, Vivi’s, and Satoru’s, there is no attribution to any symbols that could be traditionally perceived as representations of a dual or multiple ethnicities. Paul’s collages have images of the objects that mean “home” to him. Satoru mostly chose pictures of himself and his children and a few landscapes of his island. Vivi’s biotext is a photo that she took somewhere in her Canadian neighborhood. In the other three — those of Jas, Marianna, and Dina’s musical video biotexts — the affiliation to one or a few cultural backgrounds of the authors are expressed through the symbols of ethnicity. To illustrate, Jaspreet’s collage (Fig. 5) showcases dosa, which is a Panjabi dish, similar to a crepe, in the Indian restaurant. Jaspreet is wearing typical Sikh bridal attire; her hands are in henna patterns that brides need to expose at the wedding. Other images show the Sikh temple where she and her Canadian husband had a wedding ceremony. A Sikh shrine is a symbol of her religion and her identity. The collage starts with a word *Sikhism* in a big size font. This mixture of images as well as short statements univocally demonstrates that Jas’s main perception of herself is rooted in her adherence to Sikhism.

Marianna’s collage (Fig. 7) stems from traditional symbols of Ukrainian identity. We see a map of Ukraine, a national flag, girls in traditional flower crowns and folk costumes performing a folk dance, and the first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada who are also wearing folk costumes.

Dina’s video biotext moves even further in rendering her Israeli identity despite the Russian roots. She used a music video with the song performed in Hebrew. This video

depicts the market place in Israel; the dynamic melody of the song creates an atmosphere of a joyful, friendly place where all people seem to be close friends or relatives. There is no Russian or English in her biotext. Dina uses only Hebrew, which certainly indicates her deeper affiliation to the Israeli part of her hybrid identity.

The discursive symbolism of the visual biotexts addresses either personal or collective levels of self-representations (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Trimmingham, 2015) of the participants' cultural identities. On the personal level of self-representation, the authors use unique symbols to describe their cultural story or perceptions of home. They defy the traditional symbolism of cultural markers that entail the collective level of telling a cultural story. Interestingly, for the second group it is the collective symbols of their culture that truly make them feel their authentic self, while for the first group, culture and identity emerge as a relational agency of selfhood, which transpires in connections between the collectives and personal through the less-stigmatized objects and spaces of the specific meaning.

### **Did I see what “they” see?**

It was quite interesting for me to compare my iconography of collages with how their authors would interpret them. Mostly, my interpretations coincided with theirs, especially when it came to the level of “common sense” analysis of the explicit images that the study participants used to describe the spaces of their cultural belonging. We agreed on the value and meaning of the traditional and conventional symbols depicting their adherence to ethnic affiliation or expression of themselves as nationals of a certain country. For instance, the national flag of Ukraine and folk-costumes on the picture with dancing girls clearly stand for Marianna's perception of herself as Ukrainian. In her interview, she mentioned that she and her daughter were wearing folk-costumes on certain occasions when they participated in the events organized by the Ukrainian Association in Germany. In the same vein, Jas expressed her desire to arrange a

shrine in her house before she made her collage. When I saw its picture in her visual biotext, it was neither surprising nor difficult for me to understand why she added this picture to her visual story. The image was a proof of how important it was for her to bring in more of Sikh religion to the new house that she and her husband moved into after their Indian wedding.

Even the more implicit visual images that were used by study participants to describe their cultural story, such as in Vivi's collage, did not present a big difficulty for shared interpretations. On seeing the flower "glancing" over the fence, I asked Vivi if the blooming part of the flower represented her Canadian experience while symbolically its stem behind the fence indicated her Chinese roots. She immediately agreed. Even on the secondary and third level of Panofsky's method of interpretation, the perception of the symbolic value of the images the participants used in their biotexts and how I understood them was the same. To specify, I asked Chelsey if she used German rhymed lines to honor a connection to the language of her Mennonite ancestors, for example, Low German. She said that she truly wanted to show that she valued German as part of her Mennonite heritage. However, despite such a coincidence between my interpretation of the images and those of the participants' on the primary, natural level of the analysis, there was a big part that the participants did not fully acknowledge in their biotexts. After Baron-Reid (2011), I call these symbolic spaces of the present or absent description of spaces of belonging *ghostlands*. The comparative chart of these descriptions along with the semiotics of hybridity is given in the chart below (Fig. 5).

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Explicit signs of cultural belonging</b>	<b>Implicit signs of cultural split</b>	<b>Semiotics of hybridity</b>
Vivi	Absent. No representations of her Chinese background or attachment to any Canadian symbols.	The fence that separates the stem of the flower from its bloom.	The flower that grows on the one side of the fence is "looking" over the fence to its other side.

Paul	Absent. Home space is not connected to traditional cultural markers.	A seagull separated from its flock; A bench with a broken leg; Objects of daily use represent home space.	Symbols of a passing time—continuity and at the same time discontinuity of his experience.
Chelsey	Absent. No mention of “Mennonite”.	Present. Used both farmlands of Manitoba and the old “Dutch” mill as symbols of her home space.	Using landscapes of home space and verbal affirmations that keep her strong while withstanding the identity denial.
Marianna	Prevalent National flag and folk costumes stand for her Ukrainian identity.	Present An empty box left for mentioning of her present place of residence. (Germany)	Representing traditional markers of cultural belonging to the home country and no mention of the host country as home space.
Satoru	Absent No mention or representation of Japanese or Canadian cultural markers.	Combination of Tokunashima landscapes with pictures of his house in Canada: two homes, two spaces of belonging.	Pictures of family and land: symbol of split between the spaces of belonging. Home is a land and home is a family. Which is “the one”?
Jaspreet	The symbols of Sikh culture are prevalent.	Two pictures of the newlywed couple: one with Jas in her Sikh wedding attire and another with Jas in her western outfit. Where is true Jas?	Despite the prevalence of the Sikh cultural markers, a few symbols of Canadian identify—Jas in her western dress.
Dina	Prevalent: The video piece is only in Hebrew and shot in Israel.	Home space excludes English or Russian or any other cultural markers associated with them.	No mention of any other cultural belonging but Israeli vs. mention of the Russian background or Canadian experience in the interview.

Figure 5.

### **Where the ghosts of the past meet the ghosts of the future.**

Among the significant discursive messages that I received from viewing the biotexts in the visual format are a sense of empowerment and even a privilege felt by the participants in regards to their ownership of multiple cultural roots. However, I developed the sense that these were expressed from the outside. At the same time, a certain confusion about the same aspect of participants’ selfhood—a multiplicity of cultural representations—was also almost imperceptibly visible as if coming “from the inside”. These less salient descriptors of the hardly

noticeable discursive agenda were embedded in almost all of the collages. To me, they mark the underrepresented yet existing compartments of the cultural stories [un]told in the biotexts through the missing elements. That is, the empty spaces of belonging that were yet to be defined, and the elements that stand out against the overall assertively positive messages were eloquently expressed.

If compared to the interview transcripts and the biotexts in the poetic format, these hidden or more salient gaps falling out of the context of the smoothly presented life stories, reminded me of the “ghosts of the shadow identity” mentioned above. These ghosts and the spaces they occupy mostly refer to the experiences of the past that still hang a shadow over the present, or they cast their shadow on the unclear future. The key words that come to mind to describe the tension between these two modalities of the shadow identity are difficult memories, difficult emotions, fear, vulnerability and uncertainty. The ghost-like spaces where the shadows of the past meet the shadows of the future come to existence due to the fixated life episodes or situations or hard relationships that the authors of the visual narratives continue to ruminate about even over the course of time.

The first biotext that bears a shadow of the ghosts of the past is Satoru’s collage (Fig. 6). Initially Satoru sent me his biotext as a PowerPoint. The slides with the visual images were accompanied with excerpts from his interview transcript. As I move along with the data collection process, I took the liberty to separate the verbal story that has been already analyzed as part of interview transcripts in Satoru’s biotext from his visual story. I placed all the images from his PowerPoint on one page to see what would come out of the slides if they were made as a collage. Now, looking at those segments of his visual narrative, I can clearly see the shadows of the past mentioned above. A few of

these have openly revealed their gaze to the viewer: a picture of the lonely coast of the island, Tokunashima, the same coast but with Satoru in red clothes walking on the beach and looking at the oceanic water as if searching for something he had lost many years ago.

The photo of the painting depicted the old village where Satoru was born and spent his childhood as an islander. Knowing that Satoru has been living in Canada for more than twenty years, has a Canadian wife and his children are Japanese-Canadian, and that he calls Canada his home despite his strong affiliation to his native land, I felt as if the lands of the past depicted in the images in his collage have become to a large extent “lands without a substance” (Baron-Reid, 2011). The call of the past is very strong but Satoru seems to come to terms with it. Above these lands he placed pictures of himself, happily smiling together with his son, while on the next picture his two children, at a younger age, also look happy. This is *the present* for Satoru. This is what matters most to him. Yet he cannot deny that the past is still there. The ghosts of the past remain what they are — just the ghosts. Yet ghosts have a habit of reappearing continuously, and serve to remind and haunt him about himself whether he like it or not.

Another ghost of the past that casts its shadow over the so vibrantly depicted present reappears in Chelsey’s biotext. I have already mentioned that the absence of the word “Mennonite” in her visual narrative speaks volumes regarding how painful the experience of her denied Mennonite identity truly was. Then I asked myself — what do those lines of poetry that Chelsey wrote in English and German actually mean? She added them to the quotes from the Bible, amidst the photos of beautiful lands full of greenery and wild flowers, across the landscapes with the old-fashioned mills and pictures of herself visiting places and sitting at fancy restaurants.



Figure 6. Satoru's collage.

The word “ABUNDANTLY” in capital letters (in this case, quite synonymic to Jaspreet’s “Thankful” card in the end of her collage) adds to the glory of the land and people who live in it. So why would she place the words, “Through the storm, through the wind, through the draught I stand” over the beautiful places and smiles? There is no image of storm in this collage. There is no wind other than perhaps the one around the old-fashioned mill that most likely does not work anymore and represents as a symbol of the Dutch—Menno Simmens’—culture.

Suddenly I realized the true meaning of these lines. So *that* is what strikes me as an odd addition to the overall lustrous picture of Chelsey’s story! It is the realization that the lines are not coming from the present day, happily smiling at the viewer, Chelsey. They come from the voice of the *ghost of her past*.

Even if we look at most “declarative” collages, where the participants proudly state their cultural affiliation to one side of their hybrid identity, we can still find at least one element that speaks about a state of confusion and uncertainty behind the bright and happy façade of other images. If Satoru’s and Chelsey’s collages reveal the ghosts of their past, Jaspreet’s dazzlingly beautiful biotext reveals a ghost of her future. This murky shadow of uncertainty finds its expression in the pictures of Jas and her husband Doug; one is their wedding picture where Jas wears a Southern-Indian wedding attire, and Doug is wearing his tuxedo. And the second image is a depiction of both of them standing dressed in a western outfit. Looking at these pictures I was wondering: will the cultural story of Jaspreet’s and Doug’s future children include the story of their grandmothers and grandfathers on the both sides or only one? Will their story find its continuation in the Mennonite or Panjabi traditions? When Jaspreet and I talked about hybridity while discussing her collage, the main concern that she expressed was about the yet untold story of her and Doug’s children. For Jas this was definitely a zone of potential tension

projected to the years to come. This is how the voice of her unclear, undetermined future came suddenly to the surface, all “dressed up” in half-western, half-Panjabi attire.

Further along, in Marianna’s collage, which might look more like a chart than a mixture of images, I have found the clear traces of the ‘*ghost of the present*’. (Marianna definitely knew what collage was, but she wanted to add lines of text under each image, and finally, for a more consistency, arranged the images and text lines in the format of the chart). In the last box of the chart in her collage, which is made up by the pictures accompanied by the text, there is *no image*. This box has only a text. I did not pay much attention to this fact in the very beginning, and later on noticing this, I even thought that perhaps this final image was accidentally deleted when transferring the file from Marianna’s e-mail to the body of this work. But I checked all the initial files containing the biotext and it proved right — there was *no* picture selected for that box. Only the text. Notably, this is the one box of the two in her collage where Marianna mentions German, the country where she lives and works for more than five years so far. I find this absence of an image as a final statement related to her story about a life of a “successful Ukrainian” in Germany, very eloquent. This empty space, left without any visual representation other than a few lines of text, ascribes the whole visual piece with a hidden vulnerability and uncertainty that Marianna was trying to avoid by praising her status of a successful Ukrainian professional in Germany. The bright and happy image of herself as a Ukrainian who wears her folk costume “only when celebrating Ukrainian holidays in Ukrainian community” leaves me with a feeling of some internal dissociation that takes place in reality. I get a feeling that it is still hard for Marianna to come to terms with not living *at home*. Obviously, Germany has not become a space of true belonging for Marianna. Rather, it is a place of her residence and a successfully progressing career. This empty box in her chart-collage signifies a space of being vulnerable and uncertain; it is the ghost of Marianna’s present projecting her shadowed fears onto the future of

herself and her daughter. What sacrifice can be worse than that, when for the sake of promoting our ethnic identity in another country, we have to leave our home country for good? Do we have to surrender to living a convenient lie as immigrants or sojourners in a different culture, pretending we are still who we were before, and suppress that deep-seated feeling of shame in order to survive that shame? Truly, the abjection from mother [land], using Kristeva's rhetoric, does not come easy. Even though abjection seems to be nothing else but the reverse side of Irigarayan *hospitality* serving as the mechanism of adjustment of the newcomers to the new homeland for the sake of survival, it still creates the empty spaces of homelessness within our selfhood. By all accounts, the process of *acting* like someone else and *the process of still being oneself always shadows becoming that new person*.

 <p>I am Ukrainian. I am proud of being Ukrainian.</p>	 <p>Ukraine- it is my country. It will not change wherever I will live and work.</p>
 <p>Everyone in my family is preserving Ukrainian traditions.</p>	 <p>I have the Ukrainian folks costume and wear it in Ukraine and in Germany, where I currently live and work. In Germany, I wear my folks costume only when celebrating Ukrainian holidays in Ukrainian community.</p>
 <p>I am particularly proud of Ukrainians who immigrated to Canada from 1891. I admire and respect their contribution to the development of Canada.</p>	<p>I am happy to being able to promote the Ukrainian idea in Germany and Canada as well as to demonstrate with my example of the professional success as university professor who Ukrainians are.</p>

Figure 7. Marianna's biotext

Looking at the visual biotexts, I was thinking about my own story. Living and working in Canada for more than ten years so far, I have to see my mother at least once in two to three years, and visit my husband's elderly father once a year. We often joke that we live in between the flights. Once on a plane, I caught myself with the feeling that my life has truly squeezed itself into that span of eight hours in terms of the return flight to Europe. That airborne space — a symbolic cusp of my life between the two destinations of my transcontinental residence — is temporary as is my feeling of home which sways back and forth in between these spaces of personal, collective and relational belonging. While my outer, successful and positive identity, succumbs to the fact that these flights “to and from” become a quintessence of my hybridity, my shadowed identity grins at me and whispers — “You are actually homeless! Your true space of belonging is on the plane, because there is no way how you can sit on the two chairs at once. You are either here or there, which, means nowhere in particular”. This stance emerges from the suppressed shadows of my selfhood, speaks to how multiple affiliations of diverse and distant cultural spaces transpires into a capacity of a self-inflicted prison that immigrants and sojourners place themselves in and, perhaps, unwillingly, their children too. Just like myself, each of the authors of the collages has their own ghosts, their shadows of the past, the present, and the future. Hybridity does not come without a price. To cope with the truths of the shadowed identities can be difficult.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The discursive context of the visual biotexts reflects an array of self-other dialectic, including personal, collective, and relational levels of representations of selfhood in regard to the participants' cultural stories. Some of these representations show the power of a controlling societal image of culture through a display of traditionally perceived cultural markers, such as languages used for inbox texts, typical geographical landscapes, national flags, religious artifacts, traditional dishes, and folk-costumes. Others reject the idea of conventionality and turn to the expression of

cultural affiliation selecting images of objects or people having more idiosyncratic symbolism. This includes symbols of cultural identity construction, for example, in which culture or home is a family or just a feeling of [dis]location and not the location itself. Although the primary stance of the authors' gaze upon their cultural affiliation bears a predominantly positive and even "romantic" assessment of the circumstances their identity is being constructed in, there is also that presence of the absence that speaks to the parallel existence of the shadow identity in the participants' relation to their perceived or denied hybridity. Bearing in mind the psychoanalytic view that the nature of the subject can be better described and understood by what it is *not* opposed to, the authors of the visual biotexts manage to reveal certain truths about their selfhood without saliently expressing them. Such empty signifiers (Laclau, 1996) of meaning produce an effect of the indirect representations of how hybridity is perceived or not perceived by the authors. At the same time, by thoroughly avoiding dramatic symbols that may be used to describe their selfhood shifting within a range of diverse cultural affiliations and mixed loyalties, some of the authors hide these beneath the glossy, utterly positive images-descriptors of their trouble-free self-acceptance, while others prefer to articulate the tensions of their problematic self-identification more evasively. In other words, although the ostentatious exteriority of "the folk-costume romance" (Potamitis, 2008) expressed in a number of collages may distract the viewer from the hidden struggles that the authors of the collages may experience, this loyalty to folk-stuff may even more draw the audiences' attention to the less visible spaces of selfhood. In particular, formal markers of belonging such as folk costumes may *eloquently* hide borderlands inhabited by the 'ghosts' of the shadowed identity the participants cannot completely wipe out of their selfhood. By willingly or unwillingly letting their ghosts of the present, past and future speak up, the authors of the collages deconstruct the essentialism of their own approach to representations of their hybridity. Similar to how they assemble their discursive self-image during the interviews, the authors of the visual biotexts shift their position on their hybridity by alternatively shuffling the negation and acceptance of the split spaces of their

belonging. Furthermore, the visual narratives coming from the collages used as texts strikingly mirror the tension between a traumatic lack of Nation Thing in Zizekean terms that the authors of the collages may feel as still present in their selfhood matrix. At the same time, these texts display a complete disavowal of their commitment to the groups with whom they can share the Nation Thing. In a word, there is a prominent trace of a shift between the spaces of the discursive contexts regarding the cultural affiliations entertained by the authors of visual biotexts. That is, the collages manifest a suppressed fear of their authors to be dislocated from some steady point of their self-identification and yet describe them as constantly enjoying the power of their being anywhere or anybody they want. However, that freedom of sliding within diverse cultural spaces is inadvertently accompanied by a constant search for a new space that they wish to find and ... be dislocated to. In this regard, Bhabha's notion of the third space needs to be adjusted by a shift from a *space* as a locus of a mixed, bi- or multicultural identity, towards a *search* for such, a process rather than a locus of some destination. It seems as if hybridity urges individuals to never locate their referential point of belonging but rather to seek for its multiple, fragmented and ever-changing representations. The visual biotexts, which focus on "what is" with a projection of "what will be", prove that there is a constant tension between a need to escape from the hidden, often deliberately ignored trauma of such an ambiguity with its "constant threat of dislocation", a disruption of the symbolic order (Van lintout, 2008 p. 350). In Lacanian terms, this is a reference to an awareness of pragmatic convenience of acting and being someone else in study participants. Vivi's picture of the flower peeping gently over the fence, behind which its stem grows, a gaze of sorts coming from within upon the place of belonging, can be the best illustration of the *Au/dela, Fort/Da*<sup>5</sup> contextual discourse emerging from the visual biotexts.

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<sup>5</sup> "Fort !" and "Da !" are exclamations meaning "Gone!" and "There!". In psychoanalysis, allusions to *fort/da* refer to Freud's second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, 2005).



## CHAPTER VII

## EXPERIENCES AND IMPLICATIONS

**The Self as Author and Hero: Aspects of Multiple Self-depicted by Self**

*The clouds have not lifted, but deepened.*

Salman Rushdie

I borrowed part of this chapter's title from one of the headings in Justin Weir's book *The author as hero*, the monograph that talks about the auto-referential tradition in Russian literature of the past. Quite interestingly, this tradition allowed the authors to depict a character's childhood through this very character's adult's eyes, as if as a child, the same person had an ability to call for his projected in the future adult self and depict the episodes of his own childhood experiences through the knowledge and perceptions of himself as a mature adult. This literary method created a peculiar, memoir-like dimension of seeing and portraying character's lived experiences throughout major life stages. To exemplify, as Weir poses, in the novel *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak, Yuri Zhivago's childhood memories are imaginatively synthesized through his adult identity. It appears that "the author's relation to discourse forms the basis of [the character's] selfhood" (Weir, 2002, p. 71). In other words, by endowing his character with a gift of progression of his own self-extended in time and an ability to gaze upon himself at different stages of his life, Pasternak views the identity of his character, a doctor, who writes poetry, as a *metaphor* that functions only in relation to the most significant steps of his selfhood. This relation refers to Yuri Zhivago's family, history, and poetry as aesthetic representations of himself (Weir, 2002, p. 47).

Similar to the described tradition, the autoethnography in the poetic form makes the author her own hero whose lived experiences are viewed from the same and yet a different gazing eye — that of the author who projects herself towards the three agencies — the subject, the evaluator and the creator of the text that helps to analyze the hero's experiences. Thus, composing biotexts in the artistic format allows the authors of the text to look at themselves as the Other and establish a so-

called “subject-other contact through language” (Frosh, 2010, p. 138) through words or visual images.

Another important domain to mention about this study is that it bears elements of a collaborative research project. From the very beginning I hoped that through my dialogic experiences with the study participants I could better understand not only the target research topics but also have a chance to go beyond a typical research framework when the researcher just interviews the participants and records their stories. By offering the participants to be engaged in the biotext process where in working on generating poems and collages or contributing to the analytical purposes of the generated research poems, we could, all together, reflect on the multiple versions of hybridity in specific personal circumstances. Largely, I threw on the study participants a role of a performative group because they were asked to produce and then present their biotexts, so that their activities can be categorized as *performative* (Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003). Accepting the role of autoethnographers, the participants disclosed their *narrative identities* (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Ricoeur, 1990; Singer, 2004) upholding to continuity, coherence and meaning by reflecting on their experiences through the lens of the interview themes; they also participated in editing the interview transcripts and responded to my interpretation of their biotexts. Narrative identity can be described thus “as [a] person’s internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose” (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 234). To explore how their acclaimed or never perceived as a fact cultural hybridity influences their selfhood, the participants were challenged by telling the stories about themselves in the poetic or visual format. As mentioned above, this pursuit was considered engaging, interesting, and daring. It appeared that the conversational contexts, including pre-research and interview conversations, have become a starting point for meaning-making processes. Next, attentive listening, sharing memories and retelling the stories in the biotexts set up a social

context for the themes to emerge, develop, and later — being interpreted and analysed. In this chapter I will summarize the findings and interpretations in regards to research questions, methodology and implications for educational research.

### **Abjected, Imaginary or Inventive Selves? Challenges and Powers of a Multiple Being**

*There were three men went down the road*

*As down the road went he*

*The man he was*

*The man folk saw*

*The man he wished to be*

Source unknown (cited in Kearney, 2003, p. 113)

I started this thesis by mentioning the abundance of differently applied and perceived representations of identity, such as national, ethnic, linguistic, personal, social, cultural, etc. While working on the data analysis, and seeing how many new meanings or new sides of what we knew from the scholarship of the past and present can be added to that list, I thought that the manifestations of different sides of self in social sciences are virtually endless. Significantly, most of them, what is typical of all social constructs, dwell in our minds more than they do in our lives. Yet they are discernable in each of the established and constructed domains across the board.

To list, five main findings stem from the data analysis and interpretations of the biotexts: First, cultural hybridity challenges the notion of fixed identity or nation identity, which becomes more and more unsustainable in the context of cultural fusion in the globalized world. The study data confirms the evidence from other studies suggesting a heavy influence of identity formation by social situations; therefore, as Phoenix and Rattansi state, “identities are often multiple and fragmentary” (Frosh, 2010, p. 101). In this respect, hybrid identities can no longer be considered as unique and referring only to the politics of the postcolonial stance. Poststructuralist and postmodern literature with its attention to multifarious representations of subjectivity deconstructs the view of

identity as a product, a bag of certain qualities that individuals carry over through time without changes. The data found in the study is consistent with the argument of modern psychoanalytic authors (Deleuze et al., 1988; Latour, 2007) that identity emerges as “a restless coming-and-going [principle] of the subject” that in the tenets of “the criss-crossing of bodily and symbolic networks which create the point of coherence that fade away and re-form” may work “in unpredictable ways” (Frosh, 2010, p. 120).

The study confirms that many of the participants *do not recognize* any specific uniqueness in their experience of acting freely in both of their cultural frameworks. Even though they do associate themselves as hybrid identities they do not find their circumstance to be something extraordinary. The younger participants find it even hard to understand the difference between themselves and others in terms of their “unique” cultural experience because they differentiate themselves from other peer groups only in terms of race (“All Moroccan guys want to have white girlfriends”; “my Venezuelan classmates know that I am Chinese because of my race”). Talking further about diasporic and relational identities, with the emphasis on disruptions of the sense of continuity due to physical or affective displacements, Stuart Hall describes cultures as “places of beginning”, where the subjective self is learning through the shared knowledge of the collective self. However, in the Lacanian stance, identity is as much a product of the social self as it is a product of the adaptation of the *personal* to the *social* self, or rather “emanation of the dissolubility of the two” (Frosh, 2010, p. 118). In conformity with these statements, the study showcases that the answer to one of my previously posed questions whether all of us are [socially constructed and personally developed] hybrids, the answer is a definite “yes”, no matter whether we recognize it or not.

Second, cultural hybridity is not necessarily being produced solely in the politically charged situations, for example, in the postcolonial spaces or war and post-war conflict zones, notwithstanding it also surely does. With a modern tendency of moving more freely around the

world that became easily available for migratory processes, cultural fusion may take place literally everywhere where the borders are accessible for passing, whether it goes across land borders, or the borders of virtual spaces at this time of the explosive intervention of electronic media in our daily lives. From this perspective, cultural hybridity may emerge in different forms as a result of immigration, cross-cultural marriage, prolonged sojourn due to professional or academic pursuits, transnational interactions of sorts, including the ongoing process of information exchange, or transnationalism, when individuals share their personal time and careers between two countries of residence. Therefore, hybridity cannot be understood solely in the context of biological mixture of blood lines; nor can it be applied exclusively as a discursive, offensive label for the oppressed and subversive identities of the postcolonial reality, although historically a strong political and emotional meaning of that term was in wide use.

Quite oppositely, cultural hybridity may be considered more broadly, in reference to a criss-crossing of ethnic, linguistic, spiritual, religious and other mixed markers or realities of the core identity. Hence, hybrid identity is not purely an agency of postcolonial discourse. The term coined by Bhabha has obviously trespassed the limitations of the theoretical framework it has been introduced to. It seems obvious that, although the elements of power games may be at play in the context of cultural adjustments of the populations situated between their home culture and the host culture, there is little place for unidirectional, subservient mimicry on the part of these populations gained at the expense of their original culture disavowal. Paraphrasing Soia (2009), the postcolonial meta-Marxist critique of the representations of power in hybridity nowadays translates into the power of representations, emerging in hybrids' claims for "the right to be different at many levels" (pp. 50-51), which, in my view, is one of the most typical features of hybrid identity. In fact, this happened to be one of the biggest surprises in the current study for me. In contrast to my

expectations that cultural hybridity will be perceived by the study participants mostly as a traumatic personal and social experience, when the incoming populations of international students or immigrants to Canada might experience pressure to adjust to the host culture, the data univocally confirms that despite a number of certain challenges, the participants feel more comfortable to represent mixed cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their subjective encounters than not. More so, even challenged by the duality of their situation, they call their cultural hybridity “an empowering” experience that gives them an advantage over the populations who come from the monocultural or monolingual backgrounds (without looking down upon the latter, though). Some of the participants do not deny passing through the dramatic moments of personal struggles associated with their culturally-split identities, but still consider their experience to be a matter of considerable personal growth, not a trauma.

Moreover, exposure of the participants to fellow-citizens of diverse cultures in the host country stimulates a willing movement towards cosmopolitanism rather than seclusion in one of their dual/multiple cultural spaces. This point is consistent with Appiah’s (2006) suggestion that “because there are so many human possibilities worth exploring, we neither expect nor desire that every person or every society should converge on a single mode of life” (p. xv). This stance leads to another set of questions to be explored in the follow-up studies — if hybridity naturally leads to cosmopolitanism and striving for testing, sharing and developing some universal, “global” culture, can the age of globalization signify the death of culture in its most traditional sense due to the intensified disavowal of markers that taint cultural ownership? Truly, how much of the Metis culture can be identified in the representation of itself (a Metis culture) compared to any other culture in regards to, say, the value of human life or other practices and beliefs of universal concern that are learned from communicating with populations representing other cultures in Canada with

whom the Metis share a legitimate citizenship? In other words, who owns the right to represent Canadian values — the Metis, the French, the English, the First Nations or the multiple groups of newcomers arriving to Canada after the first two claim their cultural ownership? Certainly, the answers to these questions cannot be easily explained in sociological terms.

Third, the study confirms the prediction regarding the critical role of *space* and *spatiality* in the development of selfhood, particularly in how the perceptions of belonging and shifting of that sense are formed and [un]formulated in hybrid identities. The prefix in brackets in the latter refers to the cases when the participants found difficult to precisely locate, differentiate, and name the markers or constituents of their symbolic “home” or the locus of belonging. On the one hand, the associations with home and sense of belonging expressed by the participants are consistent with Bourdieu’s notion of habitus; on the other, they reflect the idiosyncratic perceptions of space and spatiality in terms of collectively shaped conditions of belonging which situate and signify the reasoning for and essence of personal affiliations. As stated by Soja (2009), “a strategic awareness of the collectively created spatiality and its social consequences has become a vital part of making both theoretical and practical sense of our contemporary lifeworlds at all scales, from the most intimate to the most global” (p. 49). I have found that the formative, architectonic meanings of selfhood are identified by the participants through their sense of personal spaces and connective threads between such markers of belonging to these spaces as family, land, ethnicity, language, spirituality, faith, loyalty to traditional practices, personal experiences, and other sometimes unexplainable domains that invoke the feelings of fitting in, self-worth and well-being. In this sense, an intricate mixture of physical, mental and social fields of spatiality brings us back to the concept of *Thirdspace*, inspired by Henri Lefebvre in his study *Production of Space* (1991), and further theorized by Homi Bhabha. Leaving behind the “black or white” or dualistic terms of spatial perspectives in identifying the spheres of human agency as solely “in between position”, including

the reductionist binary of “I vs. the Other”, and respectively Firstspace vs. Secondspace, Lefebvre offered a perspective of a “*trialectical* thinking that considers not only the social and historical dimensions of life but also the spatial one” (Soja, 2009, p. 53). In many ways, the stories of the study participants reflect how they quite harmonically dwell in mutually exclusive, transdisciplinary worlds, which exemplify the consciousness of the thirdspace. More so, the same notion of spatiality in reference to production of [in]formative identity fields matches the principles of geophilosophy offered by Deleuze and Guattari, who consider “a surface plane in terms of forces and space not as a pre-existing domain” (Collins, 2014, p. 133) but as a reciprocally constructed field of cultural production. I particularly see the link between their topology of dynamic forces influencing “our being-in-the-world” with the views on genealogic influence of the “geo” spaces of being, expressed by the study participants; in their biotexts identity formation is presented through a reciprocal process — we create cultural spaces as much as these, socially generated spaces create us. And it is the extent of a “welcoming” quality of these productive cultural spaces that may radically change our perceptions of belonging to them.

Fourth, the study participants acknowledge that they use their multiple cultural frameworks quite pragmatically, as a necessary point of reference in a certain cultural milieu to achieve their personal goals. Mostly they choose the appropriate pattern of behavior from their repertoire according to the situation, and do not view such behavior as something necessarily harmful for their sense of integrity. They admit, however, that in order to conform to the established patterns (modes of thinking, expectations), they have to abandon or put on hold something that inherently belonged in them before the new encounters emerge. The participants view this shifting between the multiple cultural contexts as an adequate response to the currently unfolding communication, when they have to *reinvent* themselves and imagine what is mostly beneficial in the situation they find themselves. In some cases, they admit that they have to mimic the behavior of the hosts to

adequately function in the professional or academic milieu. Interestingly, when appropriated, their adaptive behavior that bears the mixed cultural frameworks can be criticized or questioned by the fellow-country men from their home communities. The participants admit that they might feel alienated and therefore might have to adjust their communicative style to the “home” environment, switching from “on” to “off” in regards to the host culture mode, which they have acquired during their sojourn or residence in the host country. It is similar to how the process of language code switching takes place in multilinguals (Gudykunst, 2004). As stated by Johnson, “Code-switching ... functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships” (2000, p. 184). Some participants view such switching of contextual frameworks in their cognitive and affective responses as a challenge; others see it as an unavoidable toll paid for their status of being immigrants or sojourners. There is also a tendency observed among the sojourners and immigrants that the more they live in the host country the more the host culture takes over. Yet the extent of that process of assimilation varies across the board. While some of the participants do not observe any change in the sense of their felt self, related to the core culture, others maintain that they feel comfortable with appropriating more characteristics of the host culture. Partly it is connected with the predominant use of the language of the host culture as an indispensable element of the symbolic capital required for such adjustment, and partly — with the loss of connections with the home country. Notably, even facing the conflicting influences of the multiple affiliations where the territory of the conflict is *the self*, the participants demonstrate a tendency to be more open for the consensus solutions (by merging the cultural patterns) rather than yielding to anxieties and resistance towards one of the conflicting sides. More so, to avoid conflicts and maintain the integrity of the continuous self the participants exhibit the development of the conformist identity known in psychoanalytic theories as a negotiation between the “true self” and a

“false self” that reflects the dynamics of ego distortion (Winnicott, 1965). This distortion takes place on encountering the perplexing environmental demands that result in formation of *post-integrative* identities (Frosh, 2010). In all likelihood, the formation of the such identities once again mirrors the process of creating the third space mentioned earlier — “a space where issues of race, class and gender, can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other; where one can be Marxist and post-Marxist, materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and trans disciplinary at the same time” (Soja, 2009, p. 50).

Fifth, the process of self-identification in diasporic identities and sojourners can be viewed as a complex, multifaceted endeavor. This process demands an alignment of personally developed markers of the core constituents of cultural identity and the newly-acquired, prototypical patterns of socialization accepted in the host culture. Such a shift towards identification with a target group is described by the notion of *identity fusion* (Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009; 2011). In fact, members of all societies tend to form relational and collective ties to groups; each of these aspects of group affiliation may vary across cultures. To exemplify, members of Western individualized cultures view their membership in a group in collective, impersonal categories, while the representatives of East Asian cultures view their membership in the group in relational, personal terms (Brewer & Chen, 2007). The *fused identities* mentioned by Allport have such a close relational orientation towards their group that often treat it as a family, and the connectedness with this family provides these individuals a sense of strength and “a powerful desire to act on behalf of the group” (Gomez, Brooks, Buhrmester, Vazquez, Jetten & Swann, 2011, p. 919). The majority of study participants acknowledge a certain extent of fusion with specific cultural groups that for a number of reasons represent a favourable spatiality for their identities to develop. Their connection to certain groups may become so strong that these groups

can control the individual's behavior across time and space. A case in point, Satoru mentioned how, despite his living in Canada for twenty years, he feels that he was still controlled by his island. The same stance of a deep controlling influence on her hybrid identity was expressed by Dina who mentioned that it was after she served in the Israeli army that her true identity had solidified:

I served in the army. It's a very big thing. For Israeli. If you were in the army, it means that you are Israeli. Like you feel more connected to the country. (Dina-I, p. 4, lines 118-120)

When asked if serving in the army was so important for Dina because her family encouraged her to do so, Dina said that, in fact, her mother was against her joining the army. But Dina wanted that experience because she said that she grew in that culture, a military culture. It seems that for Dina joining the army was more important than the attachment to her family. From her story I got the impression that it was serving in the army that shaped her Israeli identity to the full capacity, and which to some extent replaced the authority of her parents. When asked why she felt so strong about joining the army, Dina said that it was not only to protect her country...also if you were in the army you had a specific experience and then when you finish the army, everybody speaks about it:

It's like when you are in Winnipeg everybody speaks about the weather, in Israel everybody speaks about what they did in the army. Even in their forties. So if you want to be part of the community, or a part of a larger society, you want to know about it — you want to serve the army and be able to speak about it. (Dina-I, p. 5, lines 148-152)

This evidence shows how strong the fusion with the group can be. Hybrid or not, the alignment with the controlling cultural group or its ideology is what most likely creates a sense of coherence, continuity and integrity that helps to keep the shifting identities from a complete

decentralizing of their polycentric, “patchwork” (Stein et al., 2010) backgrounds. Thus, the study suggests that, despite their ambiguity and simultaneous involvement in different contextual frameworks, hybrid identities have a tendency of holding one of their multiple cultural affiliations in particularly high esteem and cannot be fully associated with abjected, imaginary or invented identities, lost in their struggle for the core values. By contrast, these populations build their values around the chosen ideology or group beliefs that make the most sense in helping them to better understand and represent who they are. Notably, the [trans]formative cultural membership or ideology chosen for this end does not necessarily match the original culture or first language. For example, for Vivi and Victoria, it is the Canadian culture that became the most meaningful cultural space onto which they enthusiastically project their present and future selves, not Chinese or Ukrainian, as one may predict knowing their backgrounds.

### **How Helpful Was the Psychoanalytical Approach?**

When I planned to bring in psychoanalytic perspectives into the study design as part of the methodological framework to look into participants’ accounts of their perceived or non-perceived hybridity, I was far from the idea that I would be analyzing the biotexts as the clinical psychologist would do with the patients’ artwork in a therapy class. My expectation was that the autoethnographic texts crafted or found by the participants could not but reveal some new meanings of their identity “conflicts” that somehow were not expressed or *could not* be expressed during the personal contacts between the researcher and participants. And for that reason, I intended to employ psychanalytic views that are always looking for the symbolic in the factual, and confirmation of existence of some facts through symbols. Although this goal has been partly achieved, there were certain discoveries that came to surface and became more salient through the analysis of the multithread canvasses represented in biotexts that remained hushed or silenced in the interviews. For instance, my role as an analytic ethnographer was different from the classic view that the researcher is supposed to indifferently “reside” somewhere in the empirical space of

abstract theories and direct her scholastic gaze in search of “holes” and eloquent “pockmarks” in the participants’ works. I was definitely much involved in the co-composition of some biotexts and drew my interpretations of the data based on the participants’ interpretations. So, in my interpretation of the themes through the lens of psychoanalytic theories outlined above, I tried to separate my visions of the life events described from the perspective of the person whose story I was witnessing whether in a poetic or visual format. My verbal interventions, during the interviews or while discussing biotexts, were meant to draw out the immediate responses from the participants, “implying the presence of the two protagonists together” for the simple reason, that without both “being there, locked” in the process of creating meaning, “interpretation in the psychoanalytic sense simply cannot take place” (Frosh, 2010, p. 3).

Overall, reflecting on whether the use of psychoanalytic perspectives in the study of cultural hybridity was worth the effort or not, I would say that if we view psychoanalysis as a psychosocial approach to study identity the answer is obvious — it is very helpful, indeed. To clarify, despite the focal point that psychoanalytic knowledge is initially derived from the clinical practice, it does not mean that scholarship in social sciences has not already taken the liberty in stretching the psychoanalytic theories and methodologies of the past in the direction of a more transdisciplinary gaze upon other major topics, such as identity issues. Thus, applied psychoanalysis has successfully trespassed the borders of pure clinicism and “wild” analysis of Freud’s” (Frosh, 2010), and has been long enough used in women and gender studies, philosophy, literary criticism, cultural studies, and education (Britzman, 1999a; Britzman, 1999b; Irigaray, 2008; Felman, 1987; Freud, A. 1981; Zizek, 1993). It is the hermeneutic capacity of psychoanalysis to delve into the depths of human subjectivity through attention to personal stories (and silences in between) that has always attracted my research curiosity. Following Kingsbury’s (2004) stance, my employment of “imaginative” and “quasi-clinical” psychoanalysis in this study was called for action as soon as the idea of using biotexts came to my mind, because reflexivity and researcher-participant cooperative dialogue that

was among the main procedures in this study, exactly mirrored the reciprocal nature of psychoanalytic approach to stories. In terms of applied methodology, the psychoanalytical perspective operates with the categories that directly refer “to the ground[s] of human psychic being” (Mimica, 2007, p. 14). Besides, the application of psychanalytic methods of analysing the study data, it also gives an opportunity for study participants to express their opinions on the found research poems and participate in the interpretation of their own research-related materials. Therefore, in my view, psychoanalysis can be called an “affective methodology” that enables researchers’ attention to hidden emotions and undercurrent social contexts. Hovering between the personal and social, this methodology highlights the demand for greater equality and transparency in study participation — the two critical variables that more than anything else justify the validity of research findings. The value of this demand is doubled when it comes to exploring the different Other who speaks several languages, lives simultaneously in several different worlds and reproduces oftentimes “unusual”, mixed, unexplainable and “all over the board”, impossible cultural practices (Galetcaia, 2009).

#### **Arts-informed Inquiry in This Study: Was the Risky Adventure Justified?**

*If a goal of ethnography is to retell “lived experience”, to make another world accessible to the reader, then I submit that the ...poem comes closer to achieving that goal than do other forms of ethnographic writing.*

Richardson, 1994

My engagement with the poetic inquiry in this study appeared to be both challenging and rewarding. On the one hand, owing to my bold initiative to offer the participants the opportunity to compose their biotexts in poetic form, I wanted to more creatively approach and access “the richness of the lifeworld” (Galvin & Todres, 2013), their lifeworld with so many diverse

experiences and distinct “vibrant voices” (Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009). Eager to engage my participants in the less formal process than just taking part in the interviews, I did not share some researchers’ fears that it would be hard “to sufficiently give voice to respondents’ stories” (Poindexter, 2002, p. 707). However, my eagerness had yet to suffer from another challenge, a very naïve belief that writing autobiographical poems on the study themes would be as much appealing for the participants as it sounded for myself when I was thinking over the study design. Most immediately, after the very first interviews when the participants stared at me in surprise when being asked to generate a poem, I felt that I was way too optimistic about the arts applied in the study like mine. I sincerely thought that because we would be talking about such intangible and evasive things as perceptions of “home” and identity, shifting between the two or more poles of the multilingual mind, an offer of a poetic format for these autoethnographic accounts of personal experiences would be welcomed. I thought that our talks would plunge into the atmosphere of such personal affairs that it would be difficult to render its implications into orthodox, plain, linearly arranged words and sentences. I looked forward to seeing the uncombed, irregular, perhaps even absurd looking biotexts, similar to those presented by Fred Wah in his books, which challenged the conventional practices of dealing with biographical poetry. Certainly, I was too optimistic in visualizing how the participants of my study would enthusiastically grasp the imposed effrontery of those examples and produce no less daring pieces of something in between the prose and poetry, something unexpected and creative referring to issues of their perceived or acquired hybridity. In effect, this just did not happen.

Clearly, a negotiation of hybrid identity’s landscapes takes place on a confusing territory abounding with tensions. I prepared for these tensions but I was unprepared that my call for poetic and creative representation of hybridity would be so completely blocked by the participants’ views on how their biotexts would look like. Was my taking chances on poetry justified? The answer is

“yes” and “no”. Of course, I had foreseen that not all of the participants would be enthusiastic about generating poems; therefore, I was ready to substitute the generated poems by opting for the found research poems. This saved the day. And, for the next time, thinking about a new study design, I will be more cautious in imagining that the artist sleeps in each and everyone, while my task as a researcher is only to awaken that artist. Speaking about the found research poems, they fixed the problem when the participants were unwilling to generate poems. The process of making them as the only biotext or part of it, when these poems were added to the collage or reflective notes, fulfilled the focal effort of representing the life story using stanzas from the transcripts. Using Rosenwald’s (2003) wording, I would call this process a “refiguration of the apparently isolated biographical text” expressed in the linear format with attention to supralinguistic elements of the meaning: tone, space, intonation, rhythm and stress. Quite magically, the poetic format made these isolated biographical texts sound quite differently, when even plain words gained volume and eloquence being placed in the end or in the stressed middle of the stanzas, and when even hidden emotions suddenly found their way out. To illustrate, here is how Zola’s confession about her affiliation to both cultural fields reads in the linear format:

Before my son was born, I used French very little, only once or twice when I spoke to my family in France and now I use more French than English because I raise my son with French. Work is English, home is French and then my friendships for the most part are English. (Zola-I, lines 29-30, p.5)

And here is the poetic format of the same lines:

I raise my son with French.

Work is English, home is French

and then my friendships

for the most part are English.

I didn't come to Canada to resent English

I came to Canada to embrace it.

And to keep my French.

The words are mostly the same. But the impression of the second piece is stronger. The final verbs “embrace” and “keep” stand out because they fall on the end and the middle of the poetic lines. It feels as if Zola’s confession acquires a more concentrated and declarative meaning; now her view of the equality of both parts of her dual identity manifests itself with an added power caused by a pinch of exaggeration due to the specific placement of the main words in the respective stanzas.

Similarly, in Lumen’s interview the lines sound quite simple with a lot of teenage-sounding “like”:

I was born in Venezuela but my culture is more like Chinese culture because of my parents who are from China. We celebrate events more like in China than like in America. (Lumen-I, p. 1, lines 9-10)

However, when these simple phrases are placed in a diamante poem, the image of his dual identity shows up with a touch of suddenly emerging volume and meaning because of the chopped structure calling for attention of every single word. Pause after pause, the features of Lumen’s mixed identity gains visibility as if gradually transpiring through the previously blurry glass:

Venezuela  
 Spanish, big families,  
 Easy going, chatting, not showing off,  
 I am more like Chinese, though:  
 Listening, making money, thinking, loving festivals;  
 Ancient history, big population,  
 My parents' land  
 China

While making biotexts in poetic form, the two questions, offered by Rosenwald (2003), oriented that process: “What is this person like?” and “What makes this person become this kind of person?” (p. 137). Going back and forth between the linear text and poetic text and then discussing it with the participants progressively made the job: through the mixture of sometimes too explicit and thus less ample phrases and too implicit blurry visions, the participants could finally see better who they are as well as me — not only who they are but also what made them be who they are.

It was much easier with the collages. It turned out that almost all of the participants were more visual than verbal in terms of using an artistic format for self-reflection. My input in this part of the task was less pronounced: I just had to make sense of the images presented and interpret them with follow-up reinterpretations using the feedback from the participants. Interestingly, if compared, the poems were expressed more as *self for others* messages, while the collages reflected a *self for self* approach, if using the moves observed in the narratives' analysis by Kearney (2003). Moreover, one might expect that poetic form to be more focused on the personal, unseen feelings while the images are more likely to showcase the observable, thus social domains. Yet the found poems stand out as biographies, while the collages look more like stories. I am still pondering this paradox, and invite my readers to join me in solving that research puzzle.

To recapitulate, the arts-informed rhetorical forms may become the key for effective data collection and representation (Ely, 2007). Moreover, the research writing in poetic or graphic forms holds a variety of opportunities to provide a three-D space for reflecting on temporality, sociality and commonplace in an original fashion. As condensed forms of self-expression, poems or collages can be used both at the initial stages of the inquiry, as field texts to either elicit conversation with participants or initiate motivational writing (Butler-Krisber, 2010), and at the final stages as research texts to elicit and describe the “metaphorically generalizable” meaning of experience (Stein, 2003). This means that if dialogue with the audience is established in and illuminated through a meaningful creative format, research findings may become true “moments of revelation” (Ely, 2007) with powerful educational and healing effects. It is exactly what I am looking forward to as a researcher.

In any case, using arts-informed methods of collecting data and interpreting it is a valuable resource of looking alternatively at personal stories and getting the answers to research questions. Here is what Chelsey said about her experience of composing her biotext and its value:

It is an interesting process and there is value in it. I think that when we are sifting out the ideas and thoughts we need to engage our subconscious. If we only rely on words and experiences there can be problems with that because sometimes we remember incorrectly or we have convinced ourselves that things are a certain way when they are not. By using a tactile and visual medium we can (possibly) find things, ideas, thoughts that we didn't know that we had. (Chelsey-II, p. 1, lines 29-34)

## Hybridity and Education: Educational Models to Consider

*Group membership can be the enemy of personal agency.*

Le Bon (cited in Swann & Buhrmester, 2015)

It can be easily predicted that in the context of this globalized world, hybridity will be emerging on the surface of experience more often as a rule rather than as an exception. As such, the need for better understanding of this phenomenon in terms of theory and educational practice is obvious. More specifically, both EAL teaching and cross-cultural studies need to be particularly open for new directions in conceptualizing hybridity. This will allow educators and counselors to extend the scope of inquiry and transcend the limitations of critical theories that consider hybridity only within the frameworks of postcolonial and racial identities. It seems that the use of the alternative methods of collecting research data possesses a potential for an open-mindedness and flexibility that is necessary to elucidate the firsthand evidence in educational research. In my view, it is hard to find a more valid research framework that will so intimately represent and “discuss relationships among reader, author, text, [image] and life” (Clandinin et al., 2000, p.13).

On viewing hybridity as a social construct of a variadic nature, the one that both defies univocal understanding and calls for the specification of the context where it is operationalized, we can think of formulating educational models to address the specific issues for the language learner who may be associated with what we perceive as the hybrid in the language classroom. Similar to how the approach to a learner’s identity as a fixed category that generalizes a set of stereotypically perceived features (e.g. Asian students are shy; the Saudi students are good at speaking but less so at writing, etc.), educators may need to turn their gaze to and appropriate the principles of deconstruction proposed by postpositivist and poststructuralist thinkers, including the *pedagogy of difference* offered by Derrida (1994), and Irigaray’s *hospitality of difference*

(2008, 2013). Along with the idea of *inventionalism* both principles deconstruct the positivist and structuralist views of learner's identity by shifting educators' focus from an essentialization of the visible formal markers of identity to the assemblage of non-fixed, non-stereotypically imagined and therefore *impossible* identities of the language learner. If group affiliation is defined by the shared language then error, for instance, will arise out of placing both teachers and learners of the new language into the same group. If defined by geography, a general territorial name or nationality (Canadian/Chinese/Russian, etc.) given to citizens in a multicultural country may not reflect their meta-ethnic or religious backgrounds and would thus skew the identity of those groups. Indeed, when any one distinctive feature of community membership is isolated and chosen to fully represent the learner's identity — based on the premise that that is how she shares the relevant social context with other members of the same community — it will undoubtedly lead to a miss-determination of her identity (Galetcaia, 2014). According to Raffoul (2008), Derrida's semantics of the experience of *impossible* appropriates Heidegger's ethic of the possibility of the impossible, which pertains to the inherent ability of *being* to be open to the alternative scenario of any event. Such an appropriation also echoes the similar stance of the psychoanalytic perspective on the structure of being, with its view of the human psyche as a transient, fragmented, fluid entity, defying strict determination and instead gliding along the virtual boundaries of its life experience. This resonates remarkably with the experiences of language learners, who may affiliate themselves with what educators understand under the term of hybridity and therefore who often feel "lost in translation" (Hoffman, 1989) between the multiple languages and cultures of their personal circumstances.

To oppose clichés and labels, the Irigarayan concept of hospitality supports Derrida's stance on the pedagogical celebration of difference and awareness of the multi-variance of the "I" hidden

in the learner. The *hospitality of difference* reflects Irigaray's attempt to explore the different modalities of the relation to the other that she outlined in her work *Sharing the world* (2008). Of particular interest for exploring new models of viewing a language learner is Irigaray's stance on determining "the need for fidelity to the self before reaching out to the other as an autonomous subject, and then consideration of how both dialogue and silence can be ways of engaging hospitably with another subject" (Still, 2012, p. 41). While the dialogue serves to exchange views on the world with the other, the silence is to let the other speak, which means to listen and hear the other without interruption of the preconceived images of her identity. For Irigaray (2008) in a dialogue, there are always two worlds not one. It is very important, like a friendly host, to let the other participate in viewing these worlds together, and to be able to enter the world of the other — her symbolic house of belonging — with genuine respect and a vision which Derrida (2008) calls *the invention of the other*.

In light of the present discussion, this model illustrates an invitation no longer to view the identity of the learner as a code, "a cipher, an instrument of the discourses of power" (Mohanty, 1998), but rather as an entity that emerges in all the complexity of its "im-possible" experience. The pedagogy of difference reveals — most markedly and saliently in language learning — a striking contrast between the predetermined, "identified" classroom population and the unstable, heterogeneous, quasi-identities behind the very facade of that class. Indeed, class populations are what Derrida views as groups which are "not identical with themselves, ... [and which] do not close over and form a seamless web of selfsame" (Caputo, 1997, p. 107). Setting such a model of pedagogy can perform a very honorable task — build a secure space for any type of identity, whether ethnic, national, cultural or hybrid that we address in our educational dialogue across the language classroom. The logic behind the necessity of that dialogue is simple. There are just more worlds than one.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Advertising for Recruitment of Study Participants

For a research on the phenomenon of cultural hybridity with application of autoethnography by composing biotexts — autobiographical narratives in para-poetic form, or making collages that can consist of fragments of texts, drawings or photos.

If you identify yourself as a person of a dual or multicultural background who speaks two or more languages and sometimes experience difficulty with a clear-cut identification to what culture you belong, you are invited to participate in a study that will give you a chance to reflect on this, using your creative potential.

Students, staff and faculty members are welcome with no limitations in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, cultural affiliations, languages spoken, etc.

The study is conducted by a doctoral student at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning.

The study involves two 40-minute interviews over 3-5 months and collection of personal memos, journals and photos illustrating your “cultural story” with a focus on how you make sense of your dual/multicultural identity.

Compensation for participation will include sharing your story with a larger academic community and a \$30 University of Manitoba bookstore gift card.

Contact Information:

[Tatiana.Galetcaia@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Tatiana.Galetcaia@umanitoba.ca)

Appendix B  
A Letter to Study Participant

Dear study participant,

I am writing you to let you know about a research study that you have the option to take part in. The research study is being conducted to explore and better understand the populations who identify themselves as people of dual and more cultural backgrounds and who speak more than one language.

I am contacting you because you have expressed your interest in this study and volunteer or consider volunteering to become a study participant.

Research studies are done to answer a question of how people of dual and multicultural backgrounds perceive their cultural belonging and citizenship loyalties. What makes a story of their identity and what cultures, languages and ethnicities help them make sense of who they are? It is believed that looking for answers to these questions will help these populations to better understand who they are and what shapes their identity.

The reason we want to know more about how people with a dual or multicultural background view their origin and make their personal story, is to give the target populations an opportunity to voice their understanding of how the diverse cultural spaces that shape their identity develop their sense of belonging to certain community, and incent their participation in social life of this community.

Taking part in research is always optional. Consider your convenience, availability and interest in this study. It is my intent to make you feel comfortable while taking part in it.

There is no cost to participate in the study and there will be no risks involved. All your personal information will be coded and your story will be used under the name that you choose (a pseudonym).

As a thank you for taking part in the study, you would receive \$30 University of Manitoba bookstore gift card.

If you decide to take part in the study, please find a consent form attached to this letter. This form explains the research study in detail. Please read it and feel free to ask me any questions you have before signing it. If you would like to read the consent form and/or this letter in one of the languages that you speak other than English, please let me know. I will provide a certified translation.

Thanks again for your interest in the study,

Tatiana Galetcaia

B.A., M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Grad Studies.

University of Manitoba

## Appendix C

## Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to take part in a qualitative research study on the phenomenon of cultural hybridity with application of autoethnography by composing biotexts — autobiographical narratives in para-poetic form, or making collages that can consist of fragments of personal texts, memos, drawings or photos.

I understand that my participation will involve two 40-minute interviews over 4-6 months (one before the data collection and a follow-up interview within 3-5 months after the data will be collected and your personal story composed). I understand that after the first interview I have to collect personal memos, journals and photos illustrating my “cultural story” that will be used by me or by the researcher for composing of my biotext (a narrative formatted as a poem, or a collage, or a mixture of both) as described in the *Letter to study participant*.

I understand that I am under no obligation to agree to participate in this research. I understand that participation or non-participation will not have any academic, professional and other consequences. **I understand that to help protect my anonymity, I will be asked to read and revise all data generated by the project that contain information about me. This process will allow me the opportunity to edit out any information that I feel is too sensitive or that I feel would serve to identify me.** I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions, to forgo participation in the study and/or withdraw without penalty from the study at any time verbally or in writing. I understand that my specific answers and comments will be kept confidential. I understand that my name will not be identified in any report or presentation that may arise from the study. I understand that only the principal researcher will have access to the information collected during the study. I understand that the findings of this study may be presented at conferences and included in a range of publications. I understand that direct quotes from the data I provide may be used, and that there is no anticipated benefit for participation other than has been mentioned I the Letter to

study participant. I understand that the transcription and analysis of data will be conducted by the researcher. I understand that I may agree to participate in the research but that composing a biotext or making a collage by myself is optional. In case of necessity, the researcher will have the right to use my data to compose a biotext on my behalf. In this case, the researcher can use this material only upon my revision and approval. ***I understand that the data for this project will be destroyed within 5 years of the completion of the research.***

I understand that a summary of the findings of the study will be sent to me, ***via e-mail or in hard copy as I prefer.***

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

I agree to be part of the data collection and composing my biotext \_\_yes\_\_no

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

*I prefer to receive a summary of the findings via e-mail:*

*address* \_\_\_\_\_

*I prefer to receive a summary of the findings in hard copy:*

*address* \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the principal investigator at:

E-mail: [Tatiana.Galetcaia@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Tatiana.Galetcaia@umanitoba.ca)

Appendix D  
Interview Questions

Pre-task interview questions:

1. I am going to ask you several questions related to your cultural and linguistic background.

Where do you come from? What languages do you speak? If asked what is your culture what'd you say? Where is your "home"? Tell me your family story.

2. Do you experience a feeling of deep connection to both or one of your cultural backgrounds/languages? If yes, how does it feel? How do you view yourself when using your first (second) language? What language is a mother tongue for you?

3. Can you identify yourself as a person who identifies herself as a "hybrid" or "hyphenated" identity? If called so, how would you feel?

4. As a person of dual cultural background, have you ever experienced uneasiness or hard feelings related to that? Describe your challenges and strengths.

5. Have you ever experienced any inner resistance towards one of your backgrounds or alienation from them? (Clarification might go as: when you feel challenged by viewing yourself or others as a "hybrid identity", were there any hard feelings or something inside you that resist?)

6. Have you ever felt ashamed of being "hyphenated"? If yes, why?

7. Have you felt empowered by being "hyphenated"? If yes, how?

8. Have you ever felt obliged or forced into observing some of the cultural traditions of one of your backgrounds? Or felt forced into joining a certain cultural community? You think differently?

9. Do you experience feelings of loyalty to a certain country? Like being a citizen of \_\_\_\_\_, do you feel also affiliated to \_\_\_\_\_?

10. Is there anything else you would like to speak of in relation to your cultural background?

11. Have you ever thought of reflecting on your identity in the artistic format — literary or visual arts form? Will it be a big challenge for you to try your hand at that? Will you be willing to share your bio text in any of these formats with larger audiences?

12. Do you have any questions before we finish talking?

Post-task interview questions:

1. Today we will talk about your experience of participation in the study. How did you feel along the way? Please, describe your experience.

2. Did you observe any change in the way you feel about your cultural belonging compared with the time before you started collecting data for your biotext?

3. What did you learn about yourself? Did you find any new features of your identity during this process?

4. Do you think it is important to engage in learning more about yourself and your roots in that way?

5. How does composing a biotext help you to explore your cultural story?

6. What is the role of language to express your cultural story? Did it bother you that you had to talk about your story in English,--the language other than your mother tongues?

7. Did this pursuit help you to clarify your citizenship loyalty? If yes, how?

8. How challenging was it for you to be engaged in reflecting on your background in the artistic form — poetic/visual form?

9. Overall, looking back at the process you were engaged in, how can you characterize this journey — helpful? Beneficial? Too challenging? Useless?

10. What else do you want me to know about your experience as a study participant?

Thanks.

## Appendix E

## Vivi's Poem

What is *home* for me?

Home for me is my shelter.

Where is my home?

Is it a country, is it a place?

If I say that I come from China,

Do I really mean it's my home now?

If I live in Canada now,

Do I mean it's my shelter?

Is it a place to hide?

Well, it's place for me to stay

Because I won't get wet during the storm,

And I won't get cold because of the wind.

It's a place that gives me a sense of safety and some steadiness.

Can I call Canada home now?

Maybe no,

Maybe not yet,

May be not now...

My life is in the state of a big change...

What do I like about Canada

as my new, yet-to be home?

It's the clean air, it's the freshness of food,



more reserved.

In English

I am more fun.

But maybe it's not about the languages,

It's about how well I can use

different shades of humor.

They're like different shades of myself.

I can be very serious and — also constantly making jokes.

English helps me to make it happen more often.

I think in some time

I can call myself Chinese — Canadian

Why not now?

Because I am still Chinese.

Yet it's pretty handy

To be somebody else:

To laugh like Canadian,

To think like Chinese.

To be cautious like Japanese.

But I am still Chinese.

After all, I have a Chinese stomach —

I eat like Chinese and cook like Chinese.

I can't eat cheese or burgers or pizzas...

If my children are born here in Canada,

They still will be Chinese

Because of their parents.

They can choose what they like

To call themselves as they please

But they will certainly know

One, very important thing:

Their parents come here from China.

Appendix F  
Victoria's Poem

I came to Canada from Ukraine,  
I speak Ukrainian, Russian, English and German,  
I had been here for almost fourteen years,  
so I can call Canada home.

I came here in May of 2001  
because I got married to a Canadian man

And now my daughter is fifteen.

Remembering those days on leaving Ukraine,  
It was hard on me and my parents  
to be far away from each other,  
so I went back home and we stayed there for about 8 months  
until my daughter grew a little older, and then we came back to  
Canada.

I was going back and forth quite often  
because my daughter was little and I was a stay home mom,  
and I could not connect myself to Canada yet.  
There were too many things that were difficult and challenging,  
and I was more attached to Ukraine at that time.

But now

I can say that Canada is my home more than Ukraine

because I do not feel connected to the Ukraine in the same way,  
I cannot explain why  
but right now  
Canada is my home.

The war is going on between Russia and Ukraine so  
it's kind of depressing to read the news  
or watch any kind of videos about those events  
and I just don't feel that I can go back there and live the same way as I used  
to.  
It is both sad and yet reasonable for me.

Now I'm more into the Canadian lifestyle  
because I live here,  
go to work here and it's like a different routine

But at first, I didn't feel attached.  
However, after living in Canada for three years,  
I realized that something has changed.  
Some things that are "normal" for The Ukrainian culture  
I do not accept anymore.  
I don't want to see people showing off  
And impress others because of their possessions.

I don't care so much about what people wear,  
how much gold they have or  
what kind of car they drive,

or how many connections they can boast of.

These are the things which have been (and maybe still are)

so important for the Soviet culture.

It makes me wonder

why people spend so much energy in discussing these things.

Honestly, I have not met Canadians

who would try to show off.

Only those people who do come from my culture.

I would say though, I'm still Ukrainian but I'm half Canadian

because I don't think that I have learned enough about Canada yet so

I still have a lot of things to learn

and I know that since I started working

I could see how my perception of what it means to be Canadian has changed

because people here have different values.

I cannot say that I accept everything I see because I have

my cultural perception of things. However, I do not like

how my daughter sometimes copies the Canadian way of

culture because deep inside I don't want her to be totally

Canadian.

I want her to take the positive from my culture and

what I perceive positive from Canadian culture and

find something in between

that will help her to stand up for her own voice.

I want her to be kind and helpful,  
open-minded,  
and never hide her true feelings,  
wearing a fake smile as many Canadians do  
because they think it's good manners.

I'm glad she is sincere and honest  
And I know she will never smile in somebody's face  
and then turn around to speak of them badly. Here  
many try to give you an image  
and then convince you to believe in that image  
they themselves can hardly believe in. Being hybrid for me

means to appropriate  
both sides of what life has in store for you--  
to be open to the experiences of a new environment  
not fully rejecting the past.

For some it may be a harsh time  
of not knowing where they belong,  
For some — it's just learning to be different from  
what they've been before.

For me it's a lucky chance to see  
how life can have a new meaning,  
and how positive a challenging experience can be.

For me it's exciting.

I appreciate what I have.

## Appendix G

## Dina's Poem

I came from three locations — Latvia, Russia, Israel

I speak three languages — Russian /Hebrew/ English

I'm mixed.

I write and read in Russian

I think my *home* tongue is Hebrew.

I'm using English just to study what I like.

I think that languages are tools,

A definite advantage over many when you can understand what they are saying

But they don't know that you can do it, hiding safely in your other "I"...

My home is Israel,

My life is like an adventure.

I live in Haifa, where it is always mild.

I think that home is place.

And people.

Yes, I'm a hybrid in some kind.

Like I said, I can be just one of those Russian girls who like nice things and decorations;

But when I want, I am back to who I also am —

An Israeli girl who likes to wear

a military uniform and who holds

a service to her country very deeply.

In a word, I like to be somewhere in between,

but mostly

I dwell in Israeli thought of who I am.

My home is my religion, my languages.

My parents, and my husband, and my son.

The only problem now — I am not still sure

what language shall I teach him from the start?

Will it be Russian, Hebrew, English?

Or all of them together?

I don't know.

I'm mixed.

My life is like a map tat's marked with many dots.

So *his* will be the same, I guess.

It will be never boring.

Dina's video added to her biotext: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlduM9wJtIM>

Here's how she commented on that video:

I feel very connected to this video because it shows few Israeli views, the profusion in fruits, the people I know, soldiers. I also was a soldier a couple years ago. Also I love Israeli songs and I love this language. I feel that this song is about me.

Appendix H  
Zola's Poem

I'm French and Canadian.

No, it's not a mistake.

I'm not French-Canadian.

I am standing on "and".

I'm living in Canada.

My first language is French.

I am French and Canadian.

I am fine with that "And".

I raise my son with French.

Work is English, home is French

and then my friendships

for the most part are English.

I didn't come to Canada to resent English

I came to Canada to embrace it.

And to keep my French.

I'm not involved in politics.

I do not tear my heart apart.

I'm firmly standing on my "And".

I'm French AND Canadian, you know.

It wasn't that everything was always so great.

The first few years were intense and now

I don't care as much about things they screw up,

but it takes a long time.

Now I can relax because I've been here for twenty years.

I know what it takes

When they judge

And impose their agenda

for the purposes of control

People back in France

notice I've changed,

They tell me I'm more distant,

more aloof,

I don't necessarily kiss right away,

but I can easily go right back

to being more straightforward

about what I believe in.

Canada has taught me to slow down,

To think twice,

Because here it needs to go

much more slowly.

But deep inside, though

I belong here,

I belong there,

I belong in neither of the places

or I belong in both.

If that's what you call being a hybrid,

I don't know,

I don't like the word.

I prefer something along the lines of "mixed",

Because that's how I feel.

Yet, the word "mixed" doesn't even work either way

It's more about going back and forth

between these two realities of myself

I'm not prepared for them to be labelled.

Maybe I reinvent myself

but I think people do that

whether they are immigrants or not,

they try to reinvent themselves based on mistakes or

experiences they've made in the past

and sometimes to me,

when I reinvent myself

it has to do with cultural differences

between here and there

and other times

It's just a different stage in life.

It can be very convenient too.

Because I am not truly Canadian.

I'm what I'm standing on.

I am more "And" than not.

I'm French and Canadian.

I am.

Appendix I  
Natalya's Poem

My home is Ukraine.

My language is Ukrainian.

I also speak Russian and now it took over my Ukrainian tongue.

I feel sorry for it — my vanishing language that makes me who I am from a child,

And I am sorry for myself, losing my Ukrainian-speaking side.

My home is *Ukraine*

for me,

living in *Canada*.

How much of a *home* are these places by now?

Is Ukraine more like a distant, forgotten planet?

Is Canada more like an exciting, adventurous journey

than simply a place?

Perhaps, both.

Yet I wonder what makes my home

if these places are mixed

in so different functions, people and memories, Is

my home not a place any more

but my family is?

Am I also same mixed

as my places of living?

Maybe not.

I am still who I am —

someone equally good in both languages

Not a hybrid, not mixed, but just able to use both,

both sides of myself

when I need.

Therefore

I can't stand disrespect when they talk badly of both

languages,

countries and people,

When the politics call for the hatred and blame

between Russia and Ukraine,

I cannot understand how

switching between one and another

can be called a treachery to your roots

Since my roots are in both parts of myself,

Raised by the country that didn't call

a habit of switching from one language to another a

treachery.

I can't simply forget who I am and what languages I can speak.

For me *that* will be a treachery.

I don't feel though,

that I am living on a hyphen.

it's just two sides of so closed cultures, mixed in myself,

that it's hard to tell when the one ends and the other begins.

Yet, when I am reflecting on my Ukrainian side,

now displaced to a new land,  
I feel awkward. I'm lost. I feel as if something is wrong  
as if something,  
very, very important is missing.  
So, if you ask me where I belong,  
I don't know what to say,  
And I'd still barely  
describe myself as a Canadian...  
Would I ever do?  
Still a question without an answer.