Performative Photographic Narratives: Stories of Egyptian Jewish Diaspora and Egypt's Lost Cosmopolitan Identity

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Abstract

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The purpose of my research is to investigate how photography informs the ways we perform storytelling and self-reflections of diaspora as a lived experience emerged from wars and contradicting political ideologies. The Egyptian Jewish diaspora was the result of series of wars between Egypt and Israel from 1948 to 1973. Through an ambiguous perspective of diaspora, I am representing my story in diaspora as a Canadian immigrant with Egyptian roots comparing my experience with those of my research participants, two Egyptian-Canadian Jews who fled Egypt during the nationalism wave and after the Suez Canal War in 1956. In a Deleuzian sense of multiplicity, I am examining the ways video-recorded interviews create unfolded images of the narration process that links the narrators' geographic presence to memories of lived experiences and personal identity, and invite the viewers to become part of the process. Photographed self-portraits are self-representations that are analyzed through understanding the intersectionality of the body, mind, and soul. Our stories highlight shades of relatedness that emphasize cultural hybridity and multiculturalism as a means of understanding the complexity of humans identity and life experiences. I describe a rhizomatic learning experience that brings holistic education into community practice as a method that foregrounds social and cultural transmission and transformation as the process of self-realization and becoming other.

Dedication

I dedicate this project to my parents, Haidy, and Anita

For you, I will continue to blossom.

Acknowledgments

My deepest gratitude, love, and respect to Mireille and Maurice for their remarkable contributions to this study; through you, I realized myself as an art educator, researcher, and human being. It is also with infinite love and cherishment to my supervisor, Dr. Anita Sinner, for opening the gates of life, recognizing my potentials, and bridging me with my dreams. All my admiration and affection to Dr. M.J. Thompson who continues to inspire me with her artistic and academic guidance. I would like to thank Dr. Boyd White with great humbleness for his insightful work that has profoundly influenced and informed my own. A very particular thanks to the blossoming rose in my life and the apple of my eye, Haidy, for believing in me. Love across boundaries of geographies to my mother who taught me that life without passion is just a waste of time. Finally, to my father's spirit that has never left me, as I feel your daily presence, and I will continue to honor your legacy through my work.

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Chapter 1

Setting the Scene: Composing My Story

> Sometimes a homeland becomes a tale. We love the story because it is about our homeland and we love our homeland even more because of the story. (Alareer, 2014)

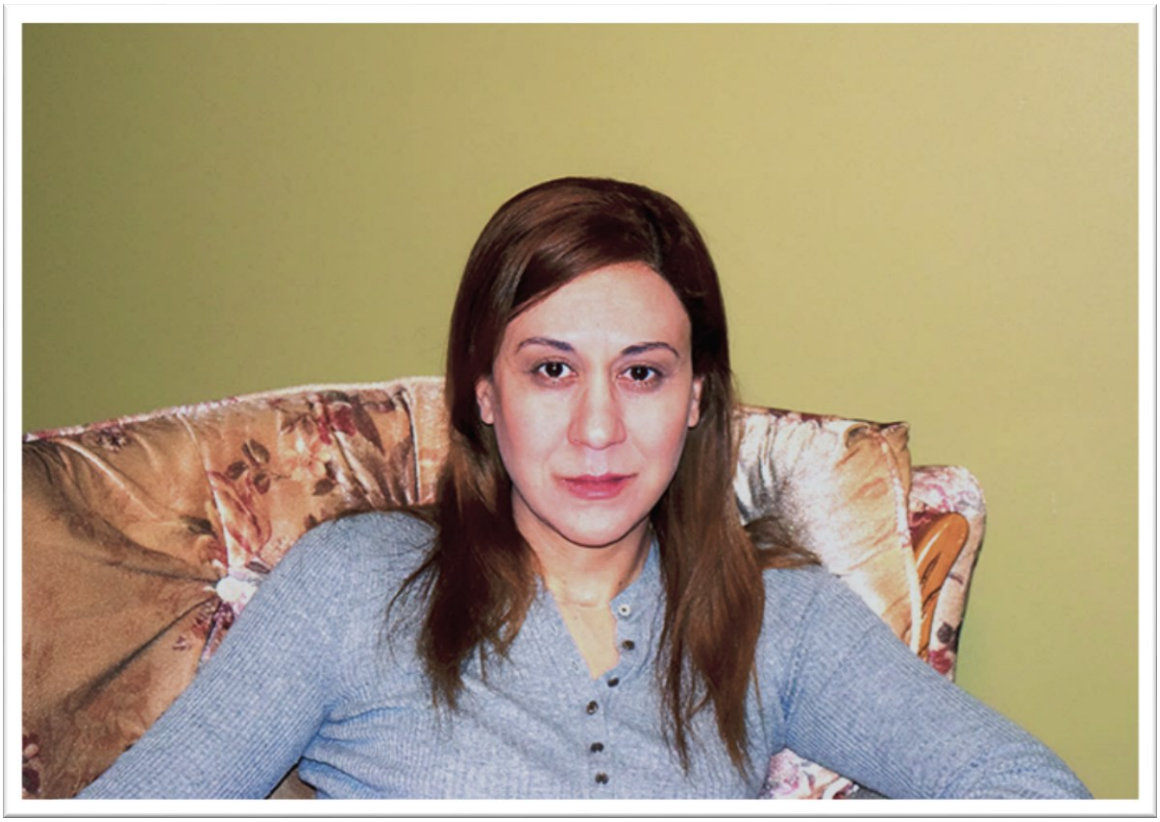

Figure 1. Self portrait

Egypt has been and will always be my homeland. It represents my roots, which spread through thousands of years of great history, my childhood memories, and my parents' stories. I grew up in a family where stories played a significant role in our everyday life. My mother studied literature and my father was an art teacher and a photographer. His photographs depict visual narratives of Egyptian society during the 1950s and 1960s, when Egypt was a cosmopolitan country with a sophisticated culture. Through my childhood and teenage years, I developed my own image of Egypt as I saw it through my mother's stories and my father's lens. This image

was not in great contradiction with my reality at that phase of my life. As a Muslim, I used to go to a Christian school and lived in a neighborhood where both Muslims and Christians had strong social bonds. However, there was always something missing in my image of Egypt, something that was evident in my father's photographs, the visual culture, and media, but was regarded as history. It was the diverse Egyptian communities that were no longer present in contemporary culture.

As I grew up, I started to see Egypt through a larger aperture and my image gradually changed. More stories were unfolding and I learned that the missing part of my image had been forcibly excluded as a result of political conflicts between Egypt and British colonialism. The Egyptian Jews represent one of the communities that paid a very high price for the ever-growing conflict between Egypt and Israel. That conflict did not only affect the Egyptian Jewish community, but also other communities from different nationalities who used to live in Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The nationalist wave that came as a result of political conflicts and a series of wars from 1948 to 1973 turned Egypt from a cosmopolitan to a singular society. As a child, I had always dreamed of becoming an artist and traveling the world, but I never dreamed of emigrating to live in a different country. In my imagination, traveling was a fancy word that stood for great expectations and endless potential, but I could not see the other side of the world until I grew up and my feet hit the solid ground of reality.

When I left Egypt to come to Canada fifteen years ago, I realized that traveling could also lead one to a diaspora. When I experienced living in Canada's multicultural society, I learned that diaspora contains individuals' experiences of being uprooted from their homeland for various reasons, which I can relate to one way or another. As a Canadian immigrant from an Egyptian background, I have experienced the feeling of being uprooted from my geographies of

self, my stronghold, in my own way, fleeing Egypt for personal reasons. The pain I have experienced leaving my homeland and family to move to Canada alone in my early twenties remains with me until today and that affinity aligns my lived experiences in part with that of the Jews of Egypt who were forced to leave the country for both political and religious reasons. Although I was not forced by the law to flee my homeland, I still feel the pain of leaving something very precious for the unknown and the fear and challenge of relocating myself in different cultural settings (see Figure 2).

Figure *2.* Ranya remembering immigration and relocation

Because of its internationally-known policy of multiculturalism, Canada was the ultimate place to move to start a new journey in my life. As an artist, Canadian society with its diverse population enriched my practice. I was immersed in arts organizations that included Canadian artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. This immersion enabled me to grow as an artist and expand my worldview. Also, I became aware of the importance of tolerance of cultural differences. This promotes the richness of Canadian society and is something that no longer exists in Egypt.

What Led Me to This Research?

My interest in storytelling and performance arts started when my parents introduced me to simplified versions of the classic novels of Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, and Shakespeare. Many of the novels that I read were reproduced in movies like *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations, King Lear,* and *Hamlet.* I used to compare and contrast the movie with the written novel. The movies represented the images that framed and informed the text and I learned that there is a strong relation between storytelling and performance (see Figure 3). Furthermore, this personal interest in storytelling was rooted in my environment and everyday conversations.

Figure 3. Ranya remembering childhood

My father's photographs represented visual narratives of Egyptian society during the 1950s and 1960s, and I used to imagine these photographs as screenshots taken from black and white movies of people from diverse cultures performing sceneries of their lived experiences. Inspired by my parents' stories and reflections, I grew up with a deep connection to this era. My father's photographs, along with the architecture, postcards, and art works that had remained untouched in museums, formed a critical archive depicting glimpses of cosmopolitan Egypt interwoven with the modern settings with which I grew up during the late 1980s and 1990s.

The purpose of my research is to investigate how the visual arts, specifically photography, inform the ways we perform storytelling and self-reflections of diaspora, in this case that of Egyptian Jews who fled Egypt during the nationalist wave between 1956 and 1968 (Abadi, 2006; Amar, 2012; Toledano, 2003). Alongside my family background and childhood memories, my personal experience as an immigrant planted intense feelings of empathy and compassion for the lived experiences of Egyptian Jews in diaspora. Given the social history of this cultural group in Egypt, I continue to have questions about the Egyptian Jewish heritage that is being rapidly demolished due to the decreasing numbers of Egyptian Jews who are still living in Egypt (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Reflections on immigration and purpose of the research

In this research, I am driven by the following questions: Why is it significant to document the stories of Egyptian Jewish experience in Canada? Why are their experiences pedagogically significant to art education? What will art educators learn about questions of diaspora that will influence art practice, curriculum design, and instructional delivery? These questions are framed by the larger socio-cultural issues and concerns of who will have access to this heritage in the future and what can be done to save the Egyptian Jewish heritage from being forgotten, and most

of all, how to document the lived experience and life stories of Egyptian Jews who were forced to leave their homeland with no possibility of return.

Being an immigrant, artist, and art educator enabled me to develop a deep understanding of personal life history through art making. I am concerned with the ways art education discusses social issues that highlight the significance of transition and transformation in the lives of immigrants in Canada. Furthermore, the term diaspora refers to the lived experience of many populations who migrated to Canada for various reasons, among them Egyptian Jews and myself. Although Canadian society represents preserving diversity where people share the same civil rights and responsibilities, many community centers are being established based on cultural, ethnic, and/or religious backgrounds. This phenomenon expresses these communities' attachments to their historical backgrounds. I still remember the day when I received my Canadian citizenship card. The judge gave a short speech reminding us that being a Canadian does not demolish our origins and historical identity (see Figure 5).

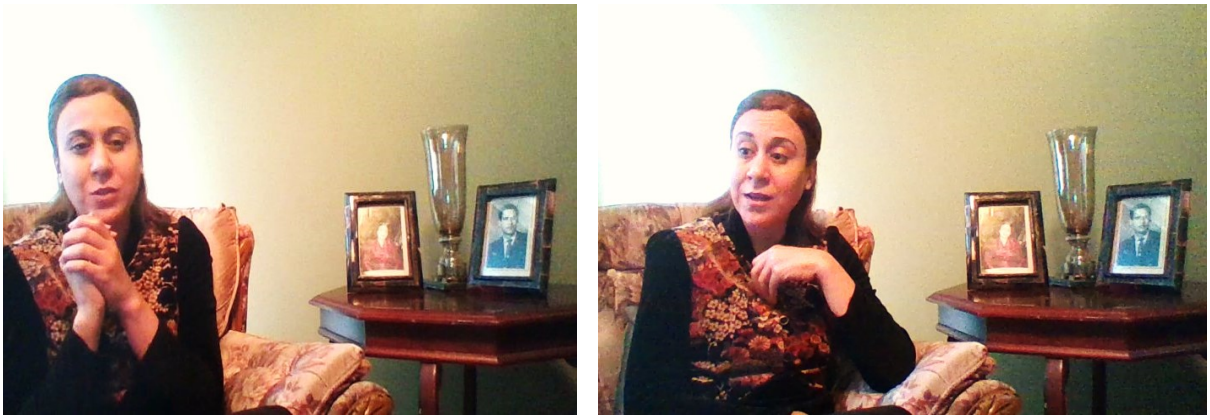

Figure 5. Immigration and becoming Canadian

For some people, like Mireille and Maurice, the research participants, the notion of historical identity could raise so many issues regarding the fact that they left their homeland forcibly with no possibility of return. In this research, my story represents my personal

experience of diaspora in comparison and contrast with the research participants' stories, a self-exploration of the ways we remember and perceive our identities before and after leaving Egypt.

My studies in visual art education at Concordia University polished my interest in social studies intersected with art practices. My practice as an art educator has deepened my interest in storytelling as a means of self-expression and exploration. During my practice with several populations, I observed the ways that art-making activities develop gradually to include storytelling. Once the learners are engaged in the art-making process, they become interested in explaining their ideas and intersect them with the personal stories and lived experiences that inspired their artwork. I also discovered that telling personal stories evokes unexpected emotions that affect the narrators' physical responses to a great extent and shape the process of the narration into performance (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Reflecting on storytelling and performance

These observations led me to more in-depth readings and studies discussing storytelling as a platform of performance, photography as an instrument that captures performative moments during the narration process, and storytelling and performance as pedagogy in art education.

Although I am not a professional photographer, I developed a deep passion for photography through my father. My father left me a legacy through his narrated photographs. His artworks not only represent narratives of cosmopolitan Egypt, but also narratives of his personal life. Each of his photographs reveals a part of his identity as an artist, his worldview, and his personal vision of the relations between the space, the bodies, and the captured moments. To me, all these elements gathered to represent performed scenery.

It is becoming clear, based on academic research, that the term performance is a broad concept and can be interpreted differently depending on the nature and purpose of the inquiry. Furthermore, in the field of art education, storytelling is regarded as a form of performance when focusing on the way the story is being told (Riessman 2008; Creswell, 2013). In my practice as an art educator, I have experienced with my learners that the art-making processes are usually regarded as a tool of self-exploration that enable the learners to develop better intellectual skills. Throughout the development processes, I focused on the learners' abilities to explain their artwork, their source of inspiration, why they chose certain colors or shapes, and how they evaluated the overall experience. The responses always came in the form of personal narratives and life experiences. What used to fascinate me was their emotional and physical engagement while telling their stories, which I consider to be a piece of performance on its own. There were so many times when I wished I had a camera to document these moments of engagement, and when I got into the Master's Program the topic of performative narratives and photography spoke to both my heart and mind.

Stories of Egyptian Jews' diaspora connect me to my heritage and my parents' stories about cosmopolitan Egypt that I grew up dreaming of but never lived in. As such, I am keen to examine the ways storytelling informs the narrators' performance and unfolds hidden aspects of

personal identity that can be captured in video-recorded interviews, still-screens, and photographed portraits. This research aims to examine the ways performance can be used as a pedagogical approach that enables individuals to construct a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and most of all to understand their emotions towards these experiences and how they affect their self-perception. Sitting back and watching their video-recorded interviews and reflecting on their photographed portraits with captions of verbatim quotes of their stories will enable them and myself to understand not only the life experience, but also the choices and the progress that they have made in their lives.

Panoramic view of Egyptian Populations Before and After the 1952 Revolution

During my studies in school and at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Egypt, I studied Egyptian history starting from ancient times to modern history. The academic curriculum was mainly focused on detailed narrations of historical and geographical notions that shaped the political and economic landscape of Egypt. However, the academic curriculum never discussed Egyptian demography through history and its cultural impact in detail. The rich demographic history of Egypt was evident in popular culture, but not highlighted in educational settings. Egyptian history extends for thousands of years, which makes Egypt one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Egypt was considered the cradle of European civilization, as it was regarded by the Greek as the wellspring of all their learning (Colston, 1881). Colston describes how Egypt was a highly organized empire 3,000 years before the Pharaohs of scripture. After the glories of the Pharaohs and the conquest of the Cambyses, came Alexander the Great followed by the Ptolemais. Furthermore, the Egyptian soil was trod by Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Jesus, and his mother Mary, which makes Egypt a hallowed land for Jews, Christians, and Muslims equally. After the Coptic civilization, came the Arabs. Next, came the long dynasty of the Mameluke

Caliphs which ended with the Turkish conquest by Sultan Selim in 1517, another change that affected the Egyptian demographic and linguistic makeup. The Turkish conquest was followed by the French Campaign on Egypt from 1798 to 1801. Next, came Mohammad Ali, the founder of modern Egypt. Mohammad Ali's family went on to rule Egypt, which was also under British colonial rule until the revolution of 1952. The complexity and diversity of Egyptian ancient history reflect the nature of the mixed blood of the Egyptian people. It also raises important questions around the Egyptian identity and who is an Egyptian (Colston, 1881; Reid, 2002).

However, for the content of my research, I am focusing on the cosmopolitan nature of Egyptian culture during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. In the late 1970s, several literary works were published exhibiting the diverse nature of the Egyptian population during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Starr, 2006). Alongside these written works, there were also postcards that depict images of Egyptian society in the early nineteenth century. These images represented visual illustrations of diverse ethnic, national, and religious Egyptian communities. However, it was more popular among Egyptians to document what is publically known as the golden era in the modern history of Egypt. Togo Mizrahi (1901-1986), an Alexandrian Jew with Italian nationality, was a film director and producer who is one of the pioneers of the Egyptian film industry that started in 1935. Mizrahi's films exhibit vivid narratives of Egypt's cosmopolitan culture and social life during the early twentieth century (Melnick, 2016; Starr, 2009). The Egyptian film industry during the 1950s and 1960s played a significant role in documenting the Egyptian cultural and social structure that was based on the emergence of its diverse nationalities and religions. Artists and actors who led the cultural scene and presented Egyptian popular culture reflected an image of the urbane society of Egypt during this era. I

grew up comparing my father's street photography, which closely resembled the images of that era, to the monoculture sociopolitical landscape in which I grew up in the 1980s and 1990s.

After the 1952 revolution, there was a major shift from cosmopolitanism to nationalism. Nasser's regime was deeply involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and he consequently emphasized Egypt's Arab heritage as the main and only national identity. This political shift caused most ethnic and linguistic minorities to flee the country gradually (Elibrachy, 2009). Although the nationalist wave was meant as a political announcement of Egypt's independence from British colonial rule, it was a major factor in demolishing the Egyptian Mediterranean and cosmopolitan identity. The nationalist wave expanded to include Egyptian economic structures. Nasser's regime nationalized all private industries that were owned by Egyptians and non-Egyptians (2009). Wealthy Jewish Egyptian families were amongst those who were considered as foreign communities who lost their assets and successful businesses in the nationalist wave (Landau, 2016; Silvera, 1999). However, the 1952 revolution gained Egypt its independence from British colonial rule and the Ottoman Empire, which was met with wide approval from most Egyptians (Meital, 1997). Despite the political and socioeconomic shift that overshadowed the Egyptian landscape after 1952, the Egyptian Jews remained living in Egypt. Only when the Tripartite Aggression happened in 1956 did the Egyptian cultural and social structure change to a great extent (Podeh, 2016).

The Tripartite Aggression was an invasion of Egypt in late 1956 by Israel, the United Kingdom, and France as a military response to the Egyptian presidential decision to nationalize the Suez Canal, which was under colonial control (Searight, 2016). The involvement of Israel in war put the Egyptian Jews in a hazardous position in which their loyalty to Egypt was questioned by the Egyptian regime. Moreover, the political tension between Egypt and Israel increased

rapidly and developed into a series of wars in 1967, 1968, and finally 1973, when the Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat and the Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin, signed the Camp David Accords witnessed by United States President Jimmy Carter (Berggren, 2014). Through this political conflict, the Egyptian Jewish community struggled to keep their Egyptian identity. Most of them were forced to flee the country and only small numbers managed to remain in Egypt, however, they lived as a marginalized group (Effenberg, 2009). By the late 1960s, Egypt had lost its pluralism and it was defined as a mainly Arab country.

Zoom in on the Jews of Egypt

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Jewish community in Egypt used to run its own affairs under the Fatimid Caliphs in Cairo. Historical documentation of this period is mostly taken from the Geniza document collection, which was found in a storeroom in Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat in Old Cairo (Cohen, 2013). According to Cohen, the Jewish community was considered an ethno-linguistic minority sponsored by the Islamic Caliphs from the eleventh century to contemporary times. During the nineteenth century, there was a major wave of Jewish immigration to Egypt. Jews from Middle Eastern countries, the Balkans, North Africa, and Europe immigrated to Egypt and established their communities in big Egyptian cities like Cairo, Alexandria, Tanta, Port Said, Mansura, Mahalla al-Kubra, and Ismailiyya (Miccoli, 2015).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the estimated number of Jews in Egypt was between 6,000 and 7,000 living as minority on the edges of Cairo's *Haret Al-Yahud.* In the second half of the nineteenth century, rich and middle-class Jews left the district of *Haret Al-Yahud* and moved to different parts in Cairo (Landau, 2016). By the year 1948, the estimated number of Egyptian Jews was 80,000, which, along with resident foreigner communities, reached 200,000 by the outbreak of World War II (Silvera, 1999). At least a quarter of the Jewish

population held Greek, French, British, and Italian citizenships, while the rest had Egyptian official documentation as Egyptian citizens (Miccoli, 2014). During the nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century, a large portion of the Egyptian Jewish population lived in *Haret Al-Yahud*, which was considered an old, lower status Jewish quarter (D. A. Starr, 2006). Starr explains that most of the Egyptian Jewish literatures written in the diaspora reflect nostalgia for the lost pluralism and social inclusion between the Arabic-speaking Jews and their Muslim and Christian neighbors. Most of the Jewish population in Cairo and Alexandria owned either small or large businesses; they had retail trades in fruit, tobacco, cotton, silk, and sugar (Landau, 2016). Alongside commercial activities, Egyptian Jews ran industrial enterprises and held governmental positions during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. According to Landau, towards the end of the nineteenth century, more Egyptian Jews became bankers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, and other liberal professions like clerks, merchants, artisans, and peddlers, as they have become fully immersed in Egyptian society (Landau, 2016).

However, Landau, (2016) states that during the nineteenth century, the Jews with foreign nationalities in Egypt demanded western protection. This historical fact reflects how the Jews perceived their identities as ethnic and linguistic minorities who lived under foreign protection in Egypt. Furthermore, it brings up the idea of living in diaspora in their homeland, as it highlights feelings of insecurity and incongruity. As Landau explains, the Jews from cultural backgrounds other than Egyptian spoke different languages and were regarded by local Egyptians as foreigners. Also, Landau highlights the religious aspects of their identity, as Egyptian Copts and Muslims saw the Jews as enemies from a religious perspective. For example, the Jews were forbidden from entering Coptic churches in Egypt. In addition, unlike Christianity and Islam, Judaism was never included in public and Christian schools' curriculum; only Jewish schools

provided specifically Jewish religious education in its curriculum. Although the Jewish community did not make up a significant percentage of the total Egyptian population, they made important contributions to the economic and cultural development of Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Miccoli, 2014).

Miccoli explains that among the Jewish communities in Egypt there were families who were known as elites in Egyptian society. These families dominated the Jewish community leadership in major cities like Cairo and Alexandria. In Cairo, there were the families of Cattawi, Mosseri, Suares, and Cicurel who owned a series of stores across Cairo that sold European fashion and other products (Miccoli, 2014). Although all Cicurel stores were nationalized by Nasser's regime, the stores remained carrying the Jewish family name until the mid-1990s. I remember my mother's stories of her childhood and youth growing up in downtown Cairo near one of the Cicurel stores and dreaming of buying one of their highly priced and elegant dresses that were mainly French or Italian-made. During my childhood and youth, Cicurel's stores were owned by the Egyptian government and used to sell Egyptian-made products with very reasonable prices. However, I used to compare and contrast my mother's detailed and illustrative stories of how fashion used to be in the past to what she considered low quality, unattractive products sold in the present. During Mubarak's regime, Cicurel stores, among other national retail stores, were part of the major wave of privatization and globalization during which the government opened the country's economy to foreign and international investments and these stores have now been replaced by international companies and global brands.

I was able to witness the phase of transition through which Egypt shifted gradually from the remains of nationalism with traces of cosmopolitanism to the new era of globalism between the 1980s to the mid-1990s. Small boutiques, large retail stores, restaurants, coffee shops,

synagogues, churches, and missionary schools that carried foreign names in different parts of Cairo complemented my father's photographs and represented visual illustrations. All these representations were missing the people who owned and lived in these places at that time, as the Egyptian demographic mosaic had changed to represent a new demography with a sole culture that contradicts its modern history and ancient diverse heritage. The first wave of Egyptian Jewish immigration from Egypt was with the outbreak of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the declaration of the State of Israel. However, the majority of Jews were expelled from Egypt after the Suez Canal War in 1956 and the wave of fleeing Egyptian Jews continued through the 1960s (Miccoli, 2014). By the end of the 1960s, most of the Egyptian Jews had already resettled in Europe, the USA, and Brazil, leaving behind them around 2500 Jews who remained in Egypt against all odds, whereas the number of Egyptian Jews who migrated to Israel was estimated at 30,000 (Miccoli, 2015).

Egyptian Jews who remained in Egypt lived as a marginalized group. Some of them had mixed marriages with Muslim and Christian Egyptians, which granted them a better level of social inclusion and enabled them to establish small families which provided them with a sense of belonging (Minkin, 2012). However, the following generations adopted one of the two official religions in Egypt, Islam or Christianity. Members of the Jewish community in Egypt suffered through the years to maintain their Egyptian identity along with their religious beliefs. Currently, one of the major difficulties facing the members of the Egyptian Jewish community is a consequence of their funeral rituals. Without at least ten males, the funeral prayers and rituals cannot be performed. As a result, in case of the death of one of its members, the community has to depend on the presence of Jewish males from foreign embassies in Cairo. Furthermore, the Jewish cemetery in Cairo, named Bassatine, has been neglected for decades by the Egyptian

authorities, which has resulted in severe damage to the cemetery over the years. It was the community members who took the initiative to restore the cemetery and protect the remains of their ancestors (Minkin, 2012).

The sad reality of the Egyptian Jewish community in Egypt was publicly exposed after the revolution of 2011 and the overthrow of Mubarak's regime. Freedom, social justice, and equality were the main demands of the hundreds of thousands if not millions who gathered in the streets all over the country (Amar, 2012; D. Starr, 2009). Over a period of 18 days of constant protests, street photography played a significant role in capturing exceptional moments of Egyptians rebelling and expressing their anger toward the government. Most of these photographs depicted moments of individuals performing their personal manifestations of liberty of thought and speech. Among the stories of injustice that were discussed in the Egyptian media after the overthrown of Mubarak was the situation of the Egyptian Jews. While resisting her tears, Magda Haroun, the current leader of the Egyptian Jewish community in Egypt, told her personal story as one of the very few Egyptian Jews who remain in Egypt. In a television interview, Mrs. Haroun spoke for the first time about the sorrows her family went through during and after the nationalist wave and explained the sad situation of the Jewish community in Cairo. In a gesture of solidarity, many Egyptians responded to Mrs. Haroun's invitation to visit the Jewish synagogue in downtown Cairo, publicly known as the Adly Street Synagogue. Mrs. Haroun's stories about the Jewish community in Egypt highlighted the dramatic shift in Egyptian culture throughout its modern history. Moreover, it opened in-depth dialogue around Egyptian identity and who decides who is and what Egyptian is. More concerns were later discussed with Mrs. Haroun about Egyptian Jewish heritage and ways to save it from being destroyed or/and forgotten.

My Personal Experience of Art Education in Egypt

During my childhood I was surrounded with art materials and hundreds of art history and literature books. At home, there was always an ongoing dialogue about different art orientations. A large part of my vocabulary was unconsciously adopted from my parents' conversations. As mentioned earlier, when I was 10 years old my father introduced me to Charles Dickens's simplified and illustrated novels. I started my first readings outside of my school curriculum with *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, and *Oliver Twist.* By the time I became a teenager, I had become friends with Jane Austin and Emily and Charlotte Brontë. That was my world outside of school and my mind was trained on imagining through reading, travelling to places I had never been to and meeting people I had never met. Becoming an artist was inevitable, not because I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps, but because it was how my brain functioned: reading, imagining and visualizing, as I used to make sketches of every novel I read. These sketches were visual representations of my personal interpretations of my favorite novels. In 1994, I was admitted to the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo, Hilwan University.

As fine arts students, we were required to conform to a very limited and strict curriculum that left little space for creativity. Drawing classes mainly focused on technical subjects, such as a complete understanding of drawing in perspective, the lows of lights and shades, and setting a successful composition, in which we were required to maintain a certain level of knowledge and apply it systematically (see Figure 7). There was almost no room for creativity or self-reflection that could have enabled us as students to expand our practice and think of art projects as arts research instead of just being technical observers. We were trained to be observers and draw what we saw in detail. Hyper realistic drawings were the only indicator of our abilities to maintain high grades and achieve the recognition of faculty members. Still life, architectural

drawings, landscapes, and models were the dominant subjects of all projects, and grading criteria were based on the completion of accurate proportions and a complete understanding of light and shadows as well as perspectives. The teacher/students relationship was constructed on hierarchical bases. As students we were required to conform to direct instructions and never question our practice. We were recognized as students only, not as students/artists. The curriculum was designed to train students' technical abilities, allowing us to produce technical drawings, which were the main goal of the academic curriculum. As Freire (2014) notes,

> Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor…This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling and storing the deposit. (p. 244)

Figure 7. Ranya remembering herself as a Fine Arts Student

In the Faculty of Fine Arts, educational approaches were similar to the "banking concept" described by Freire. This teaching philosophy reflected an overall image of Egyptian society during Mubarak's regime, which was characterized with oppression. Educational institutions were one of the mechanisms employed to serve the presidential institution. The artistic and

cultural milieu in Egypt was very active during the 1990s because of ongoing international events like the International Cairo Biennale, the International Salon for small art works, and the youth salon. However, as students we looked at these events as windows opened to the outer world upon which we could not reflect or even find different approaches for our own practices. It was a privilege limited to faculty professors who were considered as professional artists with established backgrounds in the field of fine arts and the freedom of experiencing and exhibiting their artworks.

International arts events highlighted the ever-growing gap between the mono-cultural settings in which I grew up and the ways that multiculturalism could have richened Egyptian society. It also highlighted the complexity of Egyptian society, which remained divided by the differing socioeconomic statuses of its citizens. While students who attended governmental institutions had limited access to better educational levels, students who had the financial capacity to be enrolled in private and international institutions had completely different educational experiences. This situation remains the same today and it is the main subject of ongoing conversations and debates among scholars, ministry of education leaders, and people who are concerned with the future of their children.

Conflicts in Education as an Artist/Student

In 1999, I had a scholarship to the American University in Cairo to obtain a certificate in Contemporary Art Criticism in co-corporation with the University of Wisconsin. The seminars and workshops were held at the Townhouse Gallery in downtown Cairo, where I met and worked for the first time with artists from different parts of the world (see Figure 8).

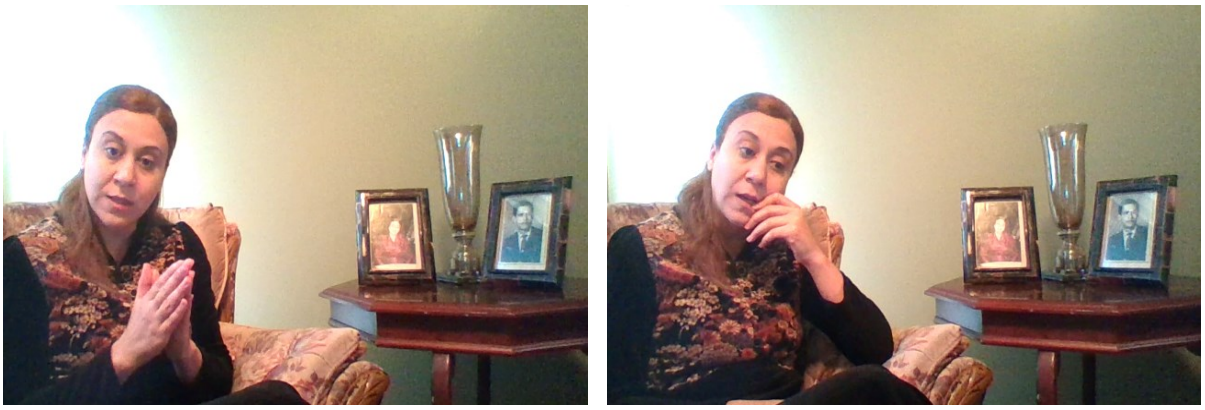

Figure 8. Ranya remembering educational experience in the American University in Cairo

The workshops provided educational courses in which we reflected on our practices as independent professional artists and developed new understandings of contemporary art movements. These workshops helped me reflect on my personal ideas and I was encouraged for the first time to try new approaches in printmaking. During the seminar, there were ongoing conversations between artists and artist/teachers. The seminars processes accompanied with studio practice, were meant to produce research that discussed issues of contemporary art movements in Egypt. O'Sullivan (2014) highlights the importance of reconstructing prior knowledge and making a shift in the way we linked different sources of knowledge to each other. The seminar included an introduction to performance. During these workshops, we were focusing on performing the process of creating the space in relation to the artworks. The organized and consistent movements created a piece of performance of its own. This educational experience introduced me to a different artistic milieu, as the artists/teachers were from different nationalities with different backgrounds of arts orientations. This micro-cosmopolitan social and educational community represented cultural and academic values that I was missing in the Faculty of Fine Arts. Furthermore, I experienced different approaches to the art-making process that enabled me to enlarge my perspective on the ways social issues can be discussed through art. Being a graduate student in the Visual Arts Education Department at Concordia University

encouraged my ability to think analytically and critically about personal experiences through the lens of an artist/teacher (see Figure 9).

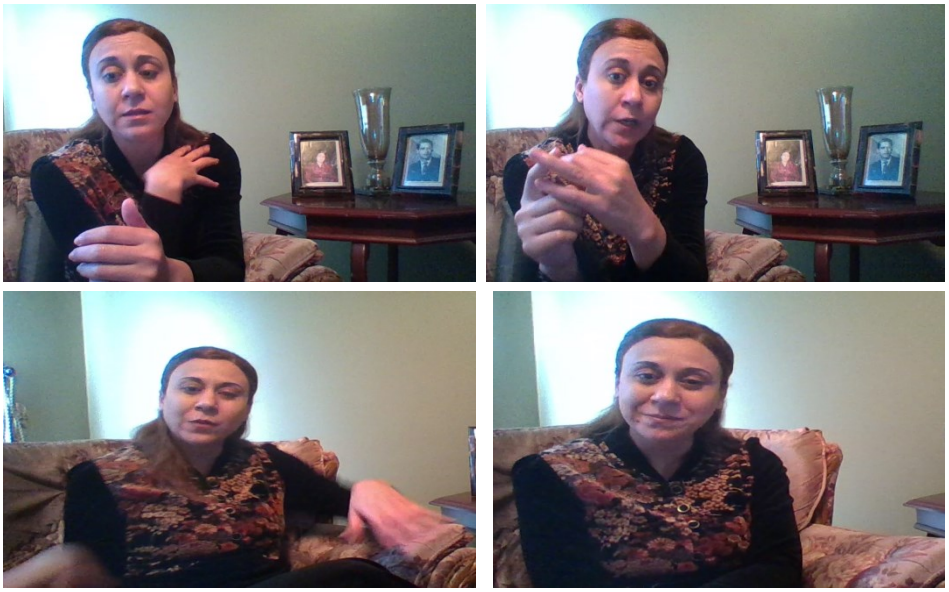

Figure 9. Ranya storying her experience with Visual Art Education at Concordia University

As an artist, I learned that the art-making process is considered as a kind of research in its own right that can be intersected with different research methodologies in order to serve educational and social purposes. “As learning is the central tenant of research, it follows that an understanding of the ways people learn through seeing, visualizing, and making visual imagery is critical to any explanation of why art-making qualifies as research” (Marshall, 2014). In this case, the artwork is being analyzed and examined to inform educational theory following at least one research methodology (Leavy, 2015; Creswell, 2013).

> Analysis of these visual features may provide researchers with a powerful means by which to understand processes, deconstructing underlying ideology and powerful cultural ideas about the nature of learning and the subject positioning of participants (Gourlay, 2010).

Loads (2009) explains that learners' artwork is used to examine aspects of their personal experiences, as such, the art-making processes represent the intersectionality of the research methodological approaches with the individuality of human experiences that inform educational theories. In conclusion, throughout my practice as an art educator, I developed a teaching approach that mainly focuses on learners' personal experiences as sources of motivation and inspiration that guide my understanding of the learners' personal progress and cognitive development.

Through this study, I am examining multiple theories and methodologies in an attempt to create a hybrid rhizomatic learning experience. I am intending to bring personal histories of diaspora to the forefront as the research subject and narrative performance as a means of tracing shades of relatedness and commonalties between the research participants and the viewers/readers. This inquiry harnesses still-screens and photographed portraitures as artful expressions that point out storytelling as a process of self-representation. In that sense, I offer an invitation to an expanded discussion about the role of art education as an interdisciplinary field that connects sociopolitical and cultural subjects to artistic practices of performance, storytelling, and visual life writing.

Chapter 2:

A Theoretical Lens

> It's the role of narrative to bridge the gap between philosophies as abstract theory, ideas in the ether, and life as lived on the ground. (Held, 2016)

My Research Question and Goals through a Theoretical Lens

In this inquiry, my thinking is framed by a host of theoretical approaches that build on the following thesis questions: How do performed narratives inform pedagogy in art education? Why is performance a vital tool in storytelling? And does photography reveal personal stories that reproduce social and cultural geographies? My research questions have emerged through the years of my practice as an art educator. The goal of this inquiry is to gain deeper understanding of the ways storytelling informs performative photographic portraits that highlight nonverbal clues through the narrators' facial expressions and emotional engagement. In this case, the research participants, Mireille Galanti and Maurice Elia, are two Canadian Jews with Egyptian roots telling their life history in diaspora, fleeing Egypt during the nationalist wave to different countries before settling in Canada. Through the stories of Mireille, Maurice, and myself, I am discussing the ways our life-world provide different narrations of diaspora (Safran, 1991) through the lens of art education, and exploring cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 2012) as an approach to reconstructing deeper understandings of the human experiences of immigration and cultural transition (Dekker, 2001).

I met Mireille for the first time during the winter of 2015, when I started seeking connections with Egyptian Jews living in Montreal. Mireille happened to be a family friend to one of my university professors who introduced us to each other. In a small coffee shop in

Montreal, Mireille and I sat for hours sharing and comparing our memories of cosmopolitan Egypt. After our first meeting, I received an email from Mireille inviting me to the monthly gathering of *Amicale Alexandrie Hier et Aujourd'hui,* a community of Canadians with Egyptian roots and cosmopolitan backgrounds. During this social gathering, I introduced myself as a Canadian immigrant from Egyptian roots and artist/teacher who is keen on exploring the stories and life history of Canadian Jews with Egyptian background who fled Egypt during the late 50s and 60s. At the beginning, the community members were very perfervid to know what led me to do this research. They were eager to understand the link between art education and Egyptian Jews' diaspora. As such, I represented my topic in detail, highlighting my family background, the cultural and academic milieu I experienced in Egypt, and the role of art education in constructing a rapport between different populations in Canada's multicultural society (Grant, 2016; Papastergiadis, 2013). During a sociable lunch with the members of the community, I met Maurice for the first time. Through a friendly conversation, Maurice and I exchanged contacts to arrange another meeting to further our discussion around the project and the possibility of him contributing to the research. At that point, I became familiar with the community members and started to attend their social gatherings on a regular basis.

In this research, the term "diaspora" is being discussed through an ambiguous perspective. Baser & Swain (2008) explain that although diaspora as a lived experience has emerged from wars, conflicts, and the promotion of contradicting political ideologies, it also has made significant contributions to establishing peace within countries that have suffered through wars. The former explanation informs the Egyptian Jewish diaspora, which was the result of series of wars between Egypt and Israel. The stories of Mireille and Maurice reveal their personal struggles and forced detachment from their historical, cultural, and linguistic roots.

These struggles continued after their exodus for both religious and political reasons, as the remains of their lived traumas (Landau, 2016; Silvera, 1999; Starr, 2009 & 2006). On the other hand, I have versed a different type of diaspora. Through my life experience in Egypt, I was brought up with vivid images of cosmopolitan Egypt and lived the contradicting reality of the singular Egyptian society that only acknowledges the culture and the religion of the majority as the main trait of the country. Being a Muslim student in a Christian school taught me values of inclusion and offered me free access to Christianity as a culture and a religion. For example, my family celebrated Christmas Eve. There was always a special dinner and exchange of greetings with Christian neighbors and friends and accompanying my Christian friends to the Sunday mass was a thing that I used to do on a regular basis. This cultural milieu enabled me to live and see different aspects of Egyptian society other than those of the Muslim majority.

Cultural identity and self-realization

While still living in Egypt, my apprehension of culture was limited to what was provided by my surroundings and by the cultural norms that my parents criticized through their narratives about cosmopolitan Egypt. Through the years I developed a distorted image of Egypt as I saw it—the remains of cosmopolitanism in architecture and mass media in contrast with a postmodern culture that posits itself under the umbrella of political and religious ideologies and refuses to acknowledge its hybrid ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity. Homi Bhabha (2012) introduced the term *cultural hybridity* as a theory of understanding post-colonial cultures. Bhabha explains that an individual's identity cannot be understood based on fixed factors such as gender, race, or/and education; instead, Bhabha emphasizes that human identity is shaped by the mixed cultures that influenced the society. The oppressed cultural and socioeconomic milieu during the Mubarak regime caused strong resistance in me with intense feeling of alienation that developed

into unconscious cultural criticism. I was unconsciously seeking my identity through the cultural identity of Egypt evident in everyday life activities: in the streets, people's features, costumes, languages, and accents. However, all these perceived images of culture reflected the lost identity of Egypt's pluralism, as it mirrored the religious beliefs and socioeconomic standards of the majority, and I could not relate to this limited and distorted cultural standard (Bhabha, 2012). Now I understand that my personal identity has been shaped by the mixed cultures that influenced the cosmopolitan history of Egypt alongside the ambivalence and inner conflicts that affected me through my life experience in Egypt (2012).

Becoming a practicing artist in my early twenties was the starting point of questioning stereotypical beliefs and cultural norms that regarded religious and cultural differences as points of disagreement (Bhabha, 2012):

> The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridity that emerge in the moments of historical transformation. (p.2)

As a postcolonial society, Egypt's cosmopolitan culture was a mix of different ethnicities and languages of colonial cultures that governed Egypt alongside preexisting traditional culture (see Chapter 1). The nationalist wave came as a revolutionary movement against colonialism. However, the nationalists misread the Egyptian history that resulted from mixed blood and cultural diversity. As such they did not focus on cultural hybridity and cosmopolitanism as a means of social inclusion. Instead, they demolished all aspects of cultural medley in Egyptian society and replaced it with political and religious ideologies that focus on one cultural trait and one national identity (Abadi, 2006; Amar, 2012; Bhabha, 2012; Elibrachy, 2009).

I did not expand my critical views of modern Egyptian culture until I became a student in the Faculty of Fine Arts. In 1998, I had an art history assignment about historical architecture in Cairo. I intended to present a study about three religious buildings: Saint Mary's Church, constructed between 1188 and 1215; Sultan Hassan Mosque, constructed between 757 and 1356, both located in old Cairo; and the Sha'ar Hashamayim Synagogue, publically known as the Adly Street Synagogue, located in downtown Cairo, which first opened its doors in 1899. Unlike the mosque and the church, I was not granted a free and safe entry to the synagogue. On the contrary, the synagogue has always been surrounded by polices officers. My attempt to enter the synagogue was investigated by a police officer who looked at my identity card that indicates my name and my religion and asked me to leave the site immediately. This incident was a turning point through which I realized that I do not have access to the Egyptian Jewish heritage. I became attentive to learn about the remaining Jewish community in Cairo and their history through the very limited number of studies that were published in Arabic and available in public libraries.

Diaspora as holistic and transformative learning processes of becoming

In 2003, I moved to Montreal and I experienced living in a multicultural society for the first time in my life. Moving to Canada in my early twenties was a radical shift and I had to adjust to completely new cultural settings. Although I was in a deliberate search for my identity as an artist and as a woman, the sharp cultural transformation was very overwhelming to me. As a newcomer, I had to provide myself with security and stability, which consumed a great deal of time and tremendous effort in a very competitive work field that only acknowledges its own certified experiences. As such, I was looking at Canadian society from a distance without true whack of inclusion, and I constructed a very blurry image of Canadian multiculturalism. Only

when I joined Canadian artists' organizations did the image gradually start to become clearer and I realized that the arts can play a significant role in transferring knowledge and human experiences, turning them into visual manifestations that connect people of different cultures with each other.

As an art educator in community settings, I have encountered the ways the art making process can facilitate the delivery of cultural values among learners (Leavy, 2015). Although my social emergence in Canadian society developed gradually through consistent efforts to apprehend and adapt to new cultural settings, my feeling of alienation continued along with my journey as an immigrant. Safran (1991) describes different modes of diaspora: recalling memories of places and geographies of homeland with a consistent desire to return, alienation in the new country, and the continuation of supporting homeland. During interviews with Maurice and Mireille, there were several moments in which they expressed all of these modes through narrating, recalling memories of geographies, people, and historical events. Furthermore, Maurice and Mireille are members of communities based in Montreal. These two communities were established to help its members maintain their cultural identity as Egyptians who fled Egypt for diverse reasons.

> The term '*diaspora'* is inherently geographical, implying a scattering of people over space and transitional connections between people and places. Geography clearly lies at the heart of diaspora both as a concept and as lived experience, encompassing the contested interplay of place, home, culture and identity through migration and resettlement. (Blunt, 2003, p. 282)

Blunt's identification of diaspora explains Mireille's interest in establishing a community for Canadians from Egyptian roots who were born and lived in the city of Alexandria before their

inevitable exoduses and immigration to Canada. During the social gatherings of the community, I sensed their desire to narrate stories of their memories of homeland. Sharing their stories enabled me relate to their personal history and construct deeper understanding of the ambiguity of diaspora as a human experience. Butler (2001) describes diaspora population with their experiences of splitting up in different destinations, their consistent search for a new homeland, and their awareness of personal identity. As such, geographies play a fundamental role in the process of narrating life stories of diaspora as part of the self.

In this study, our narratives are representing historical impulses with personal history of the lived experiences to reproduce imaginary conceptual expression that are compatible with the research speculations and historical notions (Bolin, 2009). Our visual and written life stories are multilayered representations of our holistic and transformative progress of becoming Canadian citizens. Maurice, Mireille, and I are sharing our life histories and narrating different learning experiences through which we were able to identify ourselves as individuals with the complexity of our heritage and densest alienation. London (2003) explains that holistic pedagogy corresponds to an "infinite web of interdependent elements" (p. 304). As such, the study historic backgrounds (see chapter 1) in conjunction with our visual performative stories inform the intersectionality and hybridity of holistic education practice. Consequently, learning becomes an emergent fluid experience in correlation with the multiple forms of exhibited data (Hvolbek, 2013).

Through video-recorded interviews, Mireille, Maurice, and I are telling our stories of living in and leaving Egypt in different eras and for different reasons. As an art educator, I am avid to explore narrative performance (Leavy, 2015; Creswell, 2013) as a theoretical approach representing artful expressions that enable both the narrators and the viewers to create a rapport

and become part of the process. Goffman (1959) refers to the term "performance" as all human activity that occurs during an observed period of time within specific settings and which have some influence on the observers. In that sense, Goffman affirms that "person" as a word means a "mask" and in this regard, each one of us is always "playing a role" through which we recognize each other and know ourselves. Through this literary concept, Goffman concludes: "In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and integral part of our personality. We come into this world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons" (p. 19). Based on Goffman's theory of performance, examining social life and personal interactions as a form of performance intersect with storytelling as social activity that requires communication and delivering knowledge. As such, storytelling as a platform of performance in narrative inquiry focuses on narrators as characters leading the narration process (Riessman, 2008; School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012). Performed narratives in art education are important because they blur the edges between art and life experiences (Green, 1999; Leavy 2015). As such, videos and still-screens alongside photographed portraits are exemplifying visual illustrations of the performativity of the narration process. As pedagogy, performed narratives of personal history emphasize the emergence of human experiences as central content for creating a fluid learning environment (Denzin, 2006). In that sense, our visual and written stories highlight the emergence of body, mind, and soul as humanitarian mediums that harness knowledge transition, activate imagination, and invite creative interpretations (London 2003).

Community art education praxis

Sharing my personal story with the community provided transparency through which the community members were encouraged to conjure up their personal views and parts of their lived

experiences (Creswell, 2013; Leavy 2015). Mireille and Maurice were excellent candidates, as they represent the last immigration wave that fled Egypt in the late 1960s; they both come from different ethnic roots and after leaving Egypt, they moved to different countries and experienced different cultural contexts before settling in Canada. Furthermore, Maurice and Mireille revisited Egypt with their families decades after their exodus, so their contributions to this research provide very rich insights in comparison and contrast with my story. Our narratives represent vivid examples both visually and textually of the complexity of the human experience with diaspora and the process of becoming through cultural transition and transformation (Dekker, 2001). Moreover, our stories reflect the mélange of Egyptian culture; Maurice, Mireille, and I represent the mixed blood of the Egyptian population.

Mireille, Maurice, and I are examples of the métissage of Egyptian heritage and Canadian multi-culture. Thus, our narratives draw the viewer's/reader's attention to the whole rather than the part of the human struggle in search for inclusion. Miller (2006) argues that holistic education aims to teach the wholeness of the individual experience. In that sense educators can create connections between the personal and the public, and the particular and the general. Lawton (2012) explains that holistic knowledge is constructed through the context of individuals' personal lives and provides the learners with interdependent learning environments. Thus, our stories aim to expand discussion around narrative performance and diaspora as an ambiguous human experience. In that sense, I am guided by Lawton's (2012) holistic education strategies: 1) "transformative" learning through our personal and critical reflections of our lived experiences; 2) integrated connection to life and living through which our stories bridge the past with the present, and the particular with the general; 3) personal and collective meaning-making, as we were keen on narrating consistent and coherent life experiences that invite the readers to

create meaningful interpretations; 4) personal and public "community" as our stories intend to raise awareness about alienation and social inclusion. In conclusion, the data gathering methods aimed to expand the research audience through providing rich and divers data that intersect artistic practices with theoretical approaches and philosophical assumptions as a means of creating a rhizomatic learning experiment (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2005). Accordingly, this study examines diverse key concepts in an attempt to retrieve in-depth understanding of personal expressions of diaspora "All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarity, lines of flight of intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection" (1980/2005. p. 3). Deleuze and Guattari explain that a "rhizome" unendingly creates connections between "semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances" that relate to the arts and social struggles. Thus, the research subject of performed narratives of diaspora connects multiple key concepts, ideas, and approaches to address sociopolitical issues from a humanitarian perspective and through the lens of art education.

The diversity of our stories in conjunction with our video-recorded interviews, still-screens, and photographed portraits typify visual representations through which storytelling intersects with facial performances of the narrated events through emotional and physical engagement (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). Still-screens point out the relations between expressed feelings and lived experience that led to these feelings. As such, photographed portraits are employed as self-representations that can be analyzed through understanding the multilayered relations between the body and the feelings through lived experiences (Sinner & Owen, 2011; Arsenault, 2012). Moreover, these visual representations of our performed narratives plan to invite the viewers to conceptual perceptions of the lived experiences (Braid, 1996). Braid's

theory suggests that the experience of following a narrative can activate the viewers' minds through what he refers to as "experiential meanings", the exploration of the relation between understanding the lived experience and the process of following narrative performance in order to unfold aspects of how the viewers construct their personal interpretations.

Throughout the interviews, Maurice and Mireille recall their memories of the Suez Canal War in 1956. Mireille in particular was deeply engaged, reenacting moments she witnessed and lived through the war which led the majority of the Egyptian Jews to flee the country. (Schneider, 2011) reflects on how time can be understood and dealt with as "full of holes or gaps and art as capable of falling or crossing in and out of the spaces between live iterations" (p. 22). In that sense, Schneider stresses the need to question how audiences are becoming witnesses to the "monumentalizations" of the past. Schneider explains that throughout witnessing the reenactment of historical and political events such as the 1956 War, the spectator crosses borders of comfortable political affiliation. This crossing causes feelings of discomfort that harness questions around the re-turns in time. As such, Schneider asserts that the process of the reenactment is a collaborative and multimodal activity that includes all of us, "reenacted, reenactor, original, copy, event, bypassed, and passer-by in a knotty and porous relationship to time" (p. 22). According to Jones and Stephenson (2005), the performativity of the body is represented through various art forms and productions like photographs, videos, live performance, and through the textuality of the text. Hence, Jones and Stephenson affirm that "textuality" stands for characteristics of the written work, the use of the language as a metaphor of the expressed condition. For example, both Maurice and Mireille narrated their stories in English. However, each of them used different expressions that reflect personal feelings towards specific events. Furthermore, during the narration process, Maurice and Mireille used several

terms in Egyptian dialect to describe certain places, as such, the diverse use of language(s) is regarded as a form of performance.

In this research, photographed portraits create visual narratives. I am focusing on the photographic punctum and the legibility of gestures, what is important to Maurice, Mireille, and myself in our stories. In that sense, the video-recorded interviews highlight the ways the stories are being told (Riessman, 2008) and us as subjects of the photographed portraits (Barthes, 1981; Sontag et al., 1978). Throughout the process of reflecting on past events and lived experiences, photography works as a visual documentation to make the unseen seen through verbatim quotes and facial expressions. (Frosh, 2001) explains that photography as performance is an experiment in social power through the visibility that is presented to the viewers. In this sense, photographed portraits alongside the verbatim quotes represent part of the lived and told experiences that can be conceptually interpreted by the viewers. moreover, performed photographic narratives not only represent the aesthetic value of the study, but also emphasize the importance of visual art education to construct bridges of empathy, compassion, and appreciation to the lived experiences between the research participants and the viewers (White & Costantino, 2012; Fróis & White, 2013). Performed portraitures are visual life-writing that provide the viewers with metaphoric representations that can be interpreted from broader social perspectives and enable the readers/viewers construct bridges of empathy and appreciation to the shared experiences (Sinner & Owen, 2011; Lightfoot, 2008).

Our video-recorded interviews highlight the role of the non-verbal in the narration's process and create a visual, spatial, and kinetic lens looking at the narrators in different ways involving the face, the body, and movement (School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012). Throughout the process of video-recording our stories, Maurice,

Mireille, and I became characters of our own stories. In a lecture at the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College, Chicago (2012) Peter S. Cook explains that geographic transition of performing narratives occurs as the narrators shift between the world in which the story took place and "the reside world" of the narrator. While narrating my story, I was shifting back and forth between memories and the present time. This shift is represented by the non-verbal clues in my facial expression and body movement. Cook argues that there are two types of narrators: the first is the auto diegetic, which means that the narrator is the main character of the story that makes shifts between the geographies of the story world and the reside world; the second is the token space, who is talking about their lived experience within the reside world. Our video-recorded interviews show Mireille and I unconsciously mixing the two types together, while Maurice is telling his story from the reside world. The process of remembering places and events made me unconsciously move into time and geographies to retrieve images of my past life to reflect on as part of my lived experience. I then come back to my reside place to further explain the events that I was describing. On the other hand, Maurice created a token space through which he was referring to space and events from his reside world until towards the end of his interview, he became emotional as he was reflecting on his journey and demonstrated deep emotional engagement (Livholts, 2015).

In this research, I am adopting narrative inquiry as both a theory and a methodology through which I develop understanding of Maurice's, Mireille's, and my life stories (Creswell, 2013; Levey, 2015) Narrative inquiry as a theory enables me to tighten my theoretical approaches to art education. Our performed, photographed, and written narratives exhibit our personal life experiences in diaspora in relation with immigration and cultural transition. The research aim is to explore the ways narrative inquiry harnesses artful representations of personal

stories and life experiences. The experimental process of video-recorded interviews, still-screens, and photographed portraits highlight the reciprocal relationship of empathy and appreciation constructed between Mireille and Maurice as research participants and myself as a researcher and a research participant (Louchart & Aylett, 2004; MacDonald, 2014). As I am sharing my personal story in conjunction with Maurice and Mireille's, I am creating transparency that demolishes the boundaries of hierarchy between Maurice and Mireille, and myself and establishes "reflectiveness and care" (Green 1995, p. 153). Starting my thesis with a historical view of Egyptian cultural structures helped me to move gradually from general sociopolitical notions to an in-depth discussion of the particularity of human experiences (Leavy, 2015).

Diaspora is the equilibrium of our performed narratives. Our personal stories represent the different examples of diaspora in relation to our historical background which state the disruption of the equilibrium; how does diaspora differ from one person to the next and how do we represent this disruption through our performed narratives. Through reflecting on and narrating past events, we attempt to repair the disruption to construct deeper understandings of our identity transformation through diaspora, immigration, and cultural transition (Rios & Adiv, 2010).

> Any attempt to understand time and place beyond our own requires the ability to wonder about and emphasize with questions and speculations we can never fully know, yet the recognition of such limitations should not be as reason to forgo engagement in historical study. It is incumbent upon the historian not to over extend her or his speculative or imaginative conjecture beyond what the material will support, yet it could be well argued that imagination and speculation are qualities that can assist the historian in delving into investigations in ways that are both unique and meaningful. (Bolin, 2009)

Our first interviews revealed historical background of each one of us and complemented the sociopolitical and cultural notions presented in literature. However, Maurice, Mireille, and I were intersecting our childhood memories with our experience of diaspora. Mireille reflected on the fact that she still has items from her childhood that she brought with her to Canada from Egypt; the same observation was made by Maurice and myself. When I asked Maurice and Mireille the reason they still kept these items after all these years, their responses were very similar, as they explained that these items connect them to their parents, history, and the heritage from which they were forcibly excluded. Maurice and Mireille's responses to this question drew a distinct line between my experience and theirs. Their nostalgia is linked to the trauma of war, the insecurity and instability they had to go through; additionally, it reflects the feeling of loss, as their families had to give up all of their assets before they could leave the country. On the other hand, I still have my roots established in Egypt; my feeling of alienation was a result of the inconsistency of Egyptian culture and my inability to relate to the culture of exclusion and marginalization. I express feeling of nostalgia through reflecting on several items from my childhood and early youth, school notebooks, novels, and journals; however, there is an item to which I am the most attached: one of my mother's dresses that she used to wear almost 50 years ago. Every time I put it on this black velvet dress, it not only connects me to my mother, but also takes me back in time to an era in which I never lived, but of which I always dreamed.

In conclusion, examining life history and generating diverse forms of data require establishing democratic practice that provides the research participants with access to generated data and becoming fundamental part of the whole process as an ongoing learning experience (Green 1995). Through each interview, Maurice and Mireille's personal notes and interpretations were given my highest consideration and regarded as part of my guidelines to the following step.

As such, the data gathering processes became a fluid and reciprocal learning experiment, as Murices, Mireille, and I were sharing perspectives and constructing bridges of understanding to each other stories. Accordingly, life writing contribute to holistic and rhizomatic learning as means of generating data from different perspectives to bring multiple concepts into examination and offer an invitation for further reflections and interpretations. Finally, this study is a continuous process of interweaving theoretical with methodological approaches.

Chapter 3

Photographic Bracketing: the Mixed Media of Artful Research

During the first semester of the Master's program, I wrote a final paper in one of my courses discussing, *What Brought Me Here*; I told my personal story about how my work as an artist had made me interested in becoming an art educator. This paper paved the way to adopting narrative inquiry as a method (Leavy 2015; Creswell, 2013) of understanding the vitality of personal experiences in shaping personal identities in conjunction with photographed portraitures as visual representations of the self (Lightfoot, 2000) . Storytelling was the starting point of my thesis proposal. Reflecting on and writing my lived experience in Egypt, including my family background and cultural milieu, enabled me to weave together threads of the past and the present that made me the person I am today as an artist and art educator and helped me to appreciate the life stories of Maurice and Mireille (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The Egyptian Jewish diaspora is a historical and sociopolitical topic that has always been viewed in connection with the lost Egyptian cosmopolitanism. As a Canadian immigrant from Egyptian roots, artist, and art educator, this topic enables me to explore issues of social inclusion and citizenship in Canada's multicultural society in tandem with my subjects' life histories, testimonials, and memories as Egyptian immigrants of multiethnic and multilinguistic backgrounds (Bochner & Riggs, 2014).

In this sense, narrative inquiry as a research method harnesses artful expression by providing a wide perspective of individuals' life experiences (Creswell, 2013). As a researcher, I am ardent to narrate my story in collaboration with Maurice and Mireille to provide a multilayered study of three stories that invites the viewers/readers to form creative interpretations. Following Creswell's (2013) narrative types, I started the research by interweaving my personal story with historical and sociopolitical content and highlighting the

personal factors that shaped my interest and the relativity of my lived experience of diaspora in relation to Maurice and Mireille's stories (see Chapters 1 & 2). This approach helped me achieve levels of transparency and construct bridges of understanding and trust with Maurice and Mireille. Our video-recorded interviews provide oral testimonies focusing on our memories of living in and leaving Egypt and our life experiences of diaspora, as life history portrays individuals' personal experiences through private situations and communal cultural and political contexts (Creswell, 2013). Although this inquiry is aiming to provide reflective answers to the ways photography informs how we perform storytelling and self-reflections on diaspora, during the research process, many questions emerged, such as: How do we challenge historical and cultural notions when perceiving personal identities? What are the roles art educators can play to reproduce knowledge about the Jews of cosmopolitan Egypt? And what can performative photographed portraits contribute to creating bonds of sympathy to and recognition of lived experiences?

I have chosen narrative inquiry as my primary research methodology alongside performance as an effect that transfers the core of human lived experience to the viewers. Through each step of the research, our personal narratives are interwoven with theoretical understandings of the diverse nature of our life experiences and the importance of art education in constructing bridges of recognition and respect (Lightfoot, 2008). In this sense, performative photographed portraitures of Maurice, Mireille and myself provide multilayered conceptual and experimental visual manifestations of our lived experiences in diaspora (Arsenault, 2012). Narrative inquiry as a methodology enabled us to shape and transform our life experiences into stories in multiple forms: oral and video-recorded interviews, still-screens, written text, and photographed portraitures. As a platform of artful expression, narrative inquiry offers the viewers

and the readers an invitation into our worlds and an opportunity to create meaningful interpretations of our stories (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007).

Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative research focuses on highlighting political, social, and cultural issues and provides the researcher reflective observations as findings of the research. In that sense, Creswell notes that qualitative research requires the accumulation of various forms of data followed by revision of the generated data, the creation of meaningful interpretations, the organization of the data into categories "that cut across all the data sources. (p. 45). As a method, life experiences and told life stories are the starting point of narrative inquiry (2013). Czarniawska (2004) defines narrative inquiry as a specific type of qualitative research in which written or spoken stories focus on events or series of events in a chronological order. In that sense, Creswell (2013) elucidates the process of implementing personal narratives into qualitative study by studying one or two individuals, gathering data through their stories, reporting personal experiences, and creating chronological order of these stories.

Creswell (2013) defines features of narrative inquiry as:

1. Narrative researcher collects personal stories of lived experiences from individuals. When the story is being told to the researcher, it is being co-constructed be the researcher and the research participants, thus the story is "intended as a performance to convey some message or point"
2. Narrative stories reveal personal aspects and may cast light on the narrators' personal identity and the ways they perceive themselves.
3. Narrative stories are being shaped by the researcher to create coherency and consistency; however, the researcher does not change the context of the stories.

4. Narrative stories contain “specific transition” that is highlighted and discussed by the researcher.

Since this study represents three stories of personal experiences of diaspora focusing on Egypt’s lost cosmopolitanism and Canada multiculturalism, I am guided by Creswell (2013) definition of case study:

1. A case study is bounded with specific places, time, and examining real-life situations that are still in progress to generate multiple forms of data.
2. The intent to understand specific social issues or concerns.
3. A case study is mainly concerned with offering in-depth understanding to the discussed issue through providing varied forms of qualitative data such as interviews, photographs, and written stories.
4. In this case study, I am analyzing the generated data identifying themes and subthemes that cut across the data and provide comparisons between our stories.
5. Finally, the case study ends with conclusion and findings that represent my interpretations alongside Maurice and Mireille’s and offer an ongoing conversation about performed narratives of diaspora ad the subject matter.

Historically, educational research has been defined as the process of reconstructing personal and social stories (Creswell, 2012; Leavy, 2015). Johnson and Golombeck (2002) argue that narrative inquiry invites teachers to question and interpret their methods of knowing and teaching. As the research participants, Maurice and Mireille were selected from a large and gracious group of Canadian Jews with Egyptian roots in Montreal. The selection was based on Maurice and Mireille’s level of interest in contributing to the research and their willingness to meet with me on a regular basis, in addition to their deep sense of dedication to the subject of the

study. In my research, Mireille and Maurice's personal narratives of diaspora enabled me to explore deeper dimensions of the Egyptian Jewish diaspora from their experiences. Although this is a finite case study of two stories in contrast to my own and not generalizable beyond this study, I believe this approach provides a larger aperture through which to view the nature of the historical struggle from sociopolitical and cultural perspectives. Through sharing my personal narrative of diaspora, I create common ground with Mireille and Maurice that emphasizes cultural hybridity as a means to construct bridges of understanding and appreciation of the life experience of others (Creswell, 2013; Bhabha, 2012). In my work as an art educator in community settings, I have become increasingly aware of the sociopolitical factors that shape and affect our identity, including multiculturalism, social inclusion, and the process of becoming Canadian citizens, and in that regard, this study aims to contribute to that body of research.

Maurice and Mireille's narratives exhibit some commonalities, as both of them are Jews who fled Egypt during late 1960s and who visited Egypt years after the exodus to reunite with their roots and heritage. However, their social and cultural contexts were different. As such, Maurice and Mireille's personal stories of diaspora represent the complexity and the diversity of diaspora as a term that refers to individuals' experiences of being uprooted from their homeland (Baser & Swain, 2008)). Furthermore, my personal story of diaspora provides a different perspective of social exclusion within the homeland and then through immigration. Our three stories exhibit different factors of diaspora and the journey of implementing one's self in a new society within different cultural contexts while highlighting personal history as an integral part of life (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). This narrative inquiry is a qualitative, artful exemplar (Leavy, 2015) that offers ethical contributions to art education through compassion and appreciation (Freeman, 2007). Thus, in this research, narrative inquiry unites several factors of shared lived

experiences: 1) the relation constructed between the research participants, Maurice, Mireille, and myself as the researcher and a research participant at the same time; 2) the diversity of data that include video-recorded interviews, still-screens, written stories, and photographed portraitures; 3) the shift from the general historical and sociopolitical context to the particularity of our lived experiences; and 4) the emergence of new epistemologies (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

In turn, performance as a methodology provides the viewers with a new way of thinking and interpreting the narratives (Leavy, 2015). In this sense, (Gray, 2003) explains that performance creates unconventional ways of knowing and understanding the narratives and their social vitality. Performance-based methodology in tandem with narrative inquiry brings the research participants to the forefront of the research as characters are not only narrators (School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012). In a lecture of School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, (2012) Peter S. Cook explains that performed narratives highlight the concept of geographies during the narration process. In this sense, Cook explains that the narrators' performance exhibit their shift from the world of the story to the narrators' residence space. Personal emotions emerge during the narration process and build bonds of passion and sympathy between all parties involved in the study and the viewers/readers. In my research the performativity of the body is represented through various art forms and productions; photographs, videos, still-screens, and through the textuality of the texts that aim to create and highlight levels of engagement between the narrators as the research subject, the researcher, and the viewers (Jones, Nfa, & Stephenson, 2005). Schneider (2011) highlights the importance of performance as a process of repetition that define the beginnings and the endings of events, performances, and objects of representations of the stories as original spaces and the resident spaces of the narrators. Video recorded interviews are documentations of

the process of remembering and reflecting on past events (Tagg, 2009). Maurice and Mireille's facial and physical responses highlight moments in which they were moving back and forth in time and space. The process of remembrance structured the beginnings and the endings of the events on which we were reflecting and represent the ambiguous relationships between the body, different geographies, and different eras (School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012); Schneider, 2011).

Schneider (2011) defines the process of reflection on as reenacting past events. By telling our stories, we were reenacting our memories of historical events that influenced our lived experiences of diaspora. These processes of reenacting raise questions around aesthetic engagement with the paradox of intermediality that is being expressed visually through video-recorded interviews, still-screens, photographed portraitures, and written stories (Schneider, 2011). The conceptual interpretations of the photographed portraits provide vast possibilities of understanding personal history in relation to historical and sociopolitical aspects (Leavy, 2015). As such, photographed portraitures alongside written narratives aim to offer the viewers/readers with an educational aesthetic experience that highlight the term "enlightened cherishing" as a mode of criticism and perception that combines thoughts and feelings as principal components of understanding and appreciation (Barrett, 2003). Our photographed portraits, as a final step of the narration process, not only provide visual representations of the ways we perceive our identities, but also are illustrative moments of events that complement our stories with final reflections and statements. In this sense, photographed portraits are means of self-empowerment, change promotion, social awareness, and giving voices (Bustle, 2003). Still-screens depict moments of emotional and physical engagement. However, they are also the primary steps in preparation for the final photo sessions that I organized and led in collaboration with Maurice and Mireille. As

an art educator, all visual representations aim to raise the question: What do these images contribute to art education? Egypt's lost cosmopolitan identity, from which Maurice, Mireille, and I emerged, can in this way be linked to the Canadian multiculturalism that gathered us on common ground, and from this source of information, my methods of inquiry generate comprehensive life stories that chart learning in the process of becoming-other (Deleuze, 2001). For example, during Mireille's first interview, she was reflecting on her memories of the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956. In the video-recorded interview, Mireille was performing what seemed to be a frozen image of herself standing on the rooftop of the building where she used to live in Alexandria watching the British, French, and Israeli aircrafts bombing the coasts of Egypt. She told me that this was the moment when she knew that they would not have a future in Egypt any longer. As an art educator, this illustrative moment of Mireille's story raises a question: How do I reflect on such a moment in a classroom and what new knowledge can be delivered? As an art educator and Canadian immigrant from Egyptian roots, I believe that sharing lived experiences not only creates bonds of sympathy and understanding, but also encourages the viewers/readers to challenge and question cultural and sociopolitical notions that emphasize stereotypical beliefs about specific populations and communities (Bustle, 2003; Sullivan, 2002).

Methods of Data Collection

The primary step in my research was establishing a social network with two communities of Canadian Jews from Egyptian roots in Montreal, the Association of Jews from Egypt in Montreal and *Amicale Alexandrie Hier et Aujourd'hui*. As Maurice and Mireille are members of both associations, I was able to attend social gatherings and introduce myself and my project on several occasions. I started my research with a pilot study focusing on Mireille's story and

testing my theoretical and methodological approaches. I introduced the ethical and consent forms to Mireille and discussed the research rationale by sharing my personal story as a Canadian immigrant from Egyptian roots and how my family background informed me with historical narrations of Egypt's demolished cosmopolitan identity. Furthermore, I explained the research process step by step, starting with a detailed explanation of the video-recorded interviews process, questions list, interview duration, and reviewing the interviews alongside stills-screens and interview transcripts (Creswell, 2013; Leavy, 2015). Building on the pilot study, I began by wanting to ensure that both Mireille and Maurice were well informed of the research requirement and that they approved of sharing their real identities with the public. Upon gaining Mireille and Maurice's approval on the ethics and consent forms, as well as the approval of the Concordia University Ethics Committee, I started official meetings with Mireille and Maurice individually.

I started generating the data in parallel with completing the literature review (Creswell, 2013, p. 44), enabling the process of the research to inform its philosophical assumptions and build on the emergence of human experience from a sociocultural perspective and through the lens of art education. In this sense, as a researcher, I was orchestrating the process, facilitating a smooth transition from one step to another (Leavy, 2015). Mireille was the first participant to be interviewed. Her two interviews were held in the conference room of the Association of Jews from Egypt in Montreal. Mireille chose the association because she is one of the founders and she wanted to introduce me to the community. Besides, the association was established as a declaration of the historical and cultural existence of the Egyptian Jews. For Mireille, the association forms a part of her cultural heritage and is a natural setting (Creswell, 2013). In this study, storytelling emerges from narrative inquiry and serves as a platform of performance and photography as an instrument that captures the narrators' performative portraits during the

narration process (Barthes, 1986; Choo, 2010). The multiple forms of data in conjunction with my field notes and observations enabled me to build themes and categories from the bottom up. Throughout I moved from general sociopolitical and historical notions to personal events and interpretations of the human experience, working back and forth between the highlighted themes, notes, and visual data to create consistent meanings (Creswell, 2013, p. 45).

Throughout our video-recorded interviews, I focused on how we told our stories and what the stories were about. In that sense, the process of data collection focused on what we remembered and how we remembered the narrated events (Riessman, 2008). The process of remembrance was captured through still-screen images taken from the video-recorded interviews of Mireille, Maurice, and myself. These still-screens operate as photographic narratives that stand on their own, but also complement and inform the narrators' verbatim quotes. As such, the photographic illustrations highlight the intertextuality of the transcribed narratives and visual meanings performed through photographic portraits (Barthes, 1986; Sontag, 1977). Tagg (2009) argues that such photography functions as a means of "surveillance, record, and evidence" of the struggle of the lived experience. The visual data plays a significant role in this research as it not only informs my questions, but it also contributes to public education as visual documentation:

> We are also dealing with a public cultural strategy that turns on a new mode of address and capture-a rhetoric of recruitment that, in the words of its theorist John Grierson, would instill unity and discipline, without forgetting the humanitarian virtues, the world give the irrational public a pattern of thought and feeling, including civic appreciation, civic faith, and civic duty (Tagg, 2009).

Thus, video-recorded interviews and still-screens work as an immediate visual documentation of Maurice, Mireille, and my testimonies of our lived experiences in diaspora. The variable sources

of data provide the research participants with perception and understanding of their lived experiences. As a researcher, I am focusing on understanding and learning the meanings Maurice and Mireille hold about their life stories and identity perception (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). However, because each one us is providing a different life experience of diaspora, the research offers multiple perspectives on the topic. In this sense, our stories provide reflective answers to the primary research question and emerging research questions (p. 47).

Still-screens and photographic portraits in tandem with written stories are different segments of life writings and representations of the ways we perceive and understand our life stories (Guattari & Deleuze, 2000). Based on Sinner (2011), the analysis of photographs evolves from the methods of photography, used technologies, composition, and social context. As a researcher and art educator, video-recorded interviews provided me with rich source of visual data through which I related the historical and sociopolitical content of the research to the particularity of Maurice and Mireille's lived experiences in relation to their emotional and physical engagement as a form of performance. As such, visual representations became essential to better understand the textuality of written text (Adams, 1994). Writing my personal story in tandem with Maurice and Mireille's provided a reflectivity characteristic in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). Positioning myself in the study highlights my bias, and foregrounds my positionality, which shapes my rational and personal interpretation of their stories in conjunction with their personal interpretation (p. 216).

Interviews

I conducted six semi-structured (Leavy, 2015; Creswell, 2013), video-recorded interviews, one hour each, for Maurice, Mireille, and myself. I started with Mireille through a pilot study during the month of March of 2016, followed by interviewing myself and Maurice during the summer

months of 2016, adopting the same methods. During the interviews, I used my laptop webcam and I positioned myself facing the research participants, as they asked me not to face the camera. They could then focus on me through a friendly conversation. The question list was emailed to Maurice and Mireille one week prior to the interviews. Each participant had the same question list, as the first interview focused on childhood memories, family background, school life, and social life. By emailing the question list to both Mireille and Maurice in advance, I meant to offer them an overview of the interview structure and help them to focus on the coherency of their stories. As such, during the first set of interviews, we focused on memories of cosmopolitan Egypt during the 1950s and the sociopolitical and cultural landscape. As Mireille left Egypt when she was in her early twenties, her memories were vivid and she provided very reflective and distributive narration of her life in Egypt that included her social class, level of education, family bonds, and multiethnic and linguistic roots.

Mireille had her interviews in the conference room of The Association of Jews with Egyptian Roots in Montreal. It took Mireille only five minutes to relax in front of the camera, as she became deeply engaged in the narration process and her reactions and responses were very natural. During Mireille's first interview, I kept direct eye-contact with her at all times and there were moments when I elaborated and reflected on some responses. For example, Mireille mentioned that Italian was predominate language in the household because her mother was from an Italian background, even though her father spoke only the Egyptian dialect. At this moment, I elaborated on the historical notion that most of the Jewish population in Egypt was regarded as a linguistic minority. My elaboration extended the conversation around language and social life and the fact that Mireille had close friends who were not only Italian and/or French speakers, but also were Egyptians and that her cousins from her father's side spoke only the Egyptian dialect.

This expanded dialogue informed historical and cultural notions of Egypt's cosmopolitan identity and the ways that one family can include diverse cultures and languages. Furthermore, this elaboration was important because language highlights issues of social inclusion and links the generated data to the historical research on the Egyptian population and communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although the first interview was in English, Mireille used some Egyptian dialect while describing certain events or places. For example, while reflecting on her memories of the war, Mireille used the Egyptian dialect word *Sotouh* for rooftop. During that moment, Mireille was so deeply engaged both emotionally and physically that her words were very fluid, and her hands were both illustrating the aircrafts' movements in the sky as they bombed the northern coasts (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Still-screen images of Mireille's video-recorded interview

Maurice chose to be interviewed in his home. Like Mireille, Maurice's first interview was guided by a questions' list focusing on childhood memories. However, Maurice was very relaxed and focused on narrating his memories in a chronological order. Only when Maurice wanted to connect a past event to the present, he revisited his narrated memories and referred to the relation he wanted to highlight. For example, Maurice went back and forth referring to Fatt'hyya, his sitter, as a motherly figure and a childhood companion to accompany him to

movie theaters (see Figure 11). After the first set of interviews, I transcribed the interviews and sent them to Mireille and Maurice for member check. I then wrote my personal reflections, highlighting emerging themes and started to construct my second interview question list based the first interview and my notes.

Figure 11. Maurice narrating his childhood memories

The second video-recorded interview focused on the process of fleeing Egypt for different countries before immigrating to and settling in Montreal. It was interesting to note later that both Maurice and Mireille fled Egypt during a nationalist wave and settled in Montreal during a nationalist wave that overshadowed the sociopolitical landscape in Quebec during the late 1960s. In response to this notion, Maurice highlighted the fact that he was around 12 years old when his family fled Egypt and moved to Lebanon and that he was not politically engaged when he settled in Montreal in his early twenties. However, Mireille reflected on this notion as

part of the irony of her life experience, explaining that what was happening in Quebec helped her understand what happened in Egypt and that the Egyptians were trying to find their own identity. However, she stated that “it explains, but [does] not justify.” During our video-recorded interviews, as Mireille and I moved back and forth between the past and the present, we were shifting between two geographies: Egypt, where our memories took place, and Montreal, our resident space. We were unconsciously adopting the token blend method of storytelling (School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012) which affected the ways we performed the narration process and highlighted our emotional and physical engagement (Figures 12).

Figure 12. Mireille and Ranya during the narration process

On the other hand, Maurice was reserved during the video-recorded interviews and reflected on frozen images of his past life in Egypt from his resident space (Figure 13). In that

sense, Maurice's video-recorded interview represented a different approach in the process of narration that mainly focused on reflecting and recalling images (School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012). The process of remembrance, reflections, and elaboration unfolded our desire to share more in-depth stories about our personal experiences. By adopting a minimalist passive interview technique (Leavy, 2015) , I encouraged Maurice and Mireille to reflect on personal and family trauma and expanded their personal interpretations of how lived trauma shaped their perception of identities (Harvey, 2000).

Figure 13. Maurice narrating his story

Like the first set of video-recorded reviews, each second interview was followed by transcribing the interview, sending them to the research participants for a member check, and writing field notes and observations. There were two weeks between the first and second interviews to give Maurice, Mireille, and myself the time to reflect, review the first interview transcript, and make any corrections or additions. The interview transcripts were written after each interview and sent to each participant for a member check and approval (Creswell, 2013). However, together with both Maurice and Mireille, I checked the video-recorded interviews. This process was done upon Maurice and Mireille's request, as they wanted to ensure that in case

they wanted to exclude a part of their video-recorded interviews, it would not affect the rest of the videos and they preferred to go through this process with me. However, the video-recorded interviews were approved by Maurice and Mireille without excluding any parts, which encouraged me to move to the following steps.

Still-Screens

In parallel with member-checked video-recorded interviews and transcripts, I selected moments that reflect the emotional and physical engagement of Maurice, Mireille, and myself during the narration process of specific events. Together with each participant, I reviewed the still-screens in tandem with verbatim quotes that I selected based on my observations during the interviews for moments of passionate animation. I provided the quotes to Mireille and Maurice as a ways of representing these still images and their narrated events. This process expanded the discussion around the stories, and Maurice and Mireille chose different moments of their video-recorded interviews that they wished to select and highlight as still-images. Out of respect for their choice and right to decide the ways they want to represent themselves to the viewers/readers, I adapted their final choices and selected images with verbatim quotes they chose to reflect on further during the final photo session. The video-recorded interviews provided a very organic and fluid visual data production of Maurice, Mireille, and myself. In that sense, still-screens presented animated images that highlight the performativity of the narration process and represent the call for truth, compassion, community, and communication (Tagg, 2009). Of importance to this research is the significance of the selection of the moment, that is, I selected different moments than the participants, and this raised further consideration on my part, which then informed my interpretations of this study (see Chapter 5).

Still-screens of video-recorded interviews resembled snapshots taken from films and documentaries, and In a lecture of School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, (2012) Peter S. Cook emphasized the theory that narrators are not only storytellers, but throughout the narration process they become characters. I believe this is what took place in this study. During video-recorded and still-screen member checks, I wrote notes of Mireille and Maurice's reactions to watching their videos and their verbal responses. Mireille stated, "I had no idea that I can do all this, but I like it," while Maurice expressed his surprise at being so reserved at some points, stating, "Did you notice that I am not smiling at all most of the time? I wonder why?" When I asked him if he wished to exclude these parts, he refused, telling me that the process provided him with different ways of reflecting on his life experience, adding, "This felt like watching a film of my life." Nickel (2000) highlights Bathes' reflections on snapshots as surprising visual representations of the self:

> 'But I never looked like this!' – How do you know? What is the [you] you might or might not look like? Where do you find it? – By which morphological or expressive calibration? Where is your authentic body? You are the only one who can never see yourself except as an image; you never see your eyes unless dulled by the gaze that rests upon the mirror or the lens [I am interested in seeing my eyes only when they look at you]: even and especially for your own body, you are condemned to the repertoire of its images. (Nickel, 2000)

The filming process was different than the photography session process in the sense that during the video-recorded interviews, Maurice, Mireille and I were not concerned with posing in front of the webcam. Instead, each one of us was involved in the narration process. Thus, our performativity was highlighted through the sincerity of our feelings, affect, facial, and physical

motions in response to the narrated events. In that sense, still-screens are visual documentations of what is meant for each one of us as real people in this study, and at the same time represents the performativity of the intermediary response to each statement, moment, and event (Nickel, 2000). As video-recorded interviews document our testimonies of life experiences in diaspora, still-images represent "documentary photography" (Tagg, 2009) in judicious moments through which our individual perceptions of diaspora merged with historical and political phenomena.

Performed photographic portraits

Since narrative inquiry focuses on stories and humans' life experiences as a method of transmitting knowledge and creating meanings of our lives (Leavy, 2015), photographic portraits play an important role in representing the ambiguity of human experience that goes beyond the text and invites individuals to wander around the stories and not to be restricted by their sociopolitical history (Bustle, 2003). In that sense, Mireille and Maurice's photographed portraits not only highlight images as self-representations, but also encourage interpretations to be fully understood. As Barrett (2003) suggests, "They need to be recognized as pictures about something and for communicative and expressive purpose" (p. 42). Both Maurice and Mireille's stories describe their attachment to places, objects, and activities that influenced their lives. For example, Mireille reflected on her social life in Alexandria during her teens and described places that remain until today very vivid in her memory. As such, in preparation for the photo session, Mireille had chosen a park in Montreal that reminds her of a park in Alexandria where she used to meet with her friends. Creating a link between two different geographies played a significant role in determining where Mireille and I should take photographs of her. On the other hand, Maurice's memories of his childhood and family bonds created a great level of transparency and

trust through which he invited me into a very special place in his home, his office, where he had made a special setting for family photographs.

Sontag (1977) describes photography as creating a relation between one's self and the world in order to produce knowledge and therefore power. Although Maurice and Mireille's photographed portraits seem to be direct and simple, they represent visual evidence of their written and video-recorded stories (Sontag, 1977; Sontag et al., 1978). Furthermore, these photographs bring the metaphoric representations of spaces and geographies to the lens of art educators as a "critical creative inquiry" as means of exploring literacy (Bustle, 2003). The metaphoric representations of spaces and objects in Maurice and Mireille's photographs represent their personal approach to living and expressing diaspora. Photographs as visual illustrations of the written stories offer dialectical and innovative data that expand the discussion around issues of social transformation and social justice (Oliver & Lalik, 2001) . Photographed portraits were shared with Maurice and Mireille individually in conjunction with their video-recorded interviews and transcripts. I took notes of Mireille and Maurice's interpretations of their photographs and their reflections on their verbatim quotes. Based on Maurice and Mireille's approval, I started the photographic editing and printing process. Out of respect for and appreciation of their participation in the research, I will provide Maurice and Mireille with printed copies of their photographs as part of this study.

Stories. From the approved transcript and videos, I started writing the story of Mireille, Maurice, and myself, interweaving extracted verbatim quotes to create a meaningful coherent story of each of us (Creswell, 2013; Clough, 2002). Adopting the semi-structured interview method (Leavy, 2015) enabled Mireille, Maurice, and me to keep our stories consistent and helped us create smooth transitions from one phase to the other. However, the transcribed interviews presented

repetitive themes that concisely spoke to the subject of the lived diaspora from various perspectives depending on the individuality of our lived experiences. I will discuss these in the interpretations chapter. Furthermore, Mireille and Maurice's first interviews consisted of some gaps that were filled by reflective responses in the second interviews.

McKerracher and Hasebe-Ludt (2014) define life writing as "an original literacy of the self-in-relation that is a powerful methodological tool for articulating the experiences of teachers and learners" (p.119). As a methodology, sharing our stories with the readers offer an ambiguous image of the ways we can learn through sharing and exchanging life experiences and personal stories. In that sense, exhibiting different interpretations of diaspora invite the readers to "critical and creative education" that correspond to still-screens and photographed portraits as visual life writing (McKerracher and Hasebe-Ludt, 2014, p. 120; Sinner 2015). In this study, life writing plays a significant role emphasizing that "personal matters and reflectivity notes" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005), as our stories mirror our thoughts, feelings, personal reflections, and interpretations. Thus, as a method, life writing in tandem with visual representations invites the viewers/readers to innovatively articulate the data to discover new forms of knowing, learning, and seeing (McKerracher and Hasebe-Ludt, 2014).

In the end, the writing of my own story and those of Maurice and Mireille enabled me summon the commonalties and highlight threads of relations within our stories. As such, I was able to analyze my story in the light of Maurice and Mireille's and compare my personal interpretations to theirs. Sharing personal reflections enabled each of us view personal history from different perspectives and guided us through the member check process to produce the final transcript of each story as we want to share it with the readers. Our written stories are parts of the performative process through which we became aware of our personal identities that are being

shared with the public. What we offer and what can be learned became the focal point of stories editing process.

Chapter 4

Personal Stories of Diaspora

Mireille's Story

Figure 14. Mireille Galanti

I would like to be seen as a citizen of the world, as I feel good having diverse origins because indeed Alexandria had a mixed population and was a cosmopolitan city. I belong to the fourth Egyptian generation in my family. My mother was born in Alexandria and my grandparents on both my father and mother sides were Alexandrians. Their parents were also born in Alexandria. The story begins when my great grandfather on my father's side arrived to Egypt as a refugee in the nineteenth century, escaping harsh persecutions of the Jews. He settled near Alexandria in a small village between Cairo and Alexandria and began buying small pieces of land to cultivate

cotton, as the land was very fertile. My father, Abramino as well as his brother and sisters were born in Alexandria and settled there as land owners. My mother and grandmother were originally Greek. My grandfather had Italian origins. They spoke Greek and Italian. And, as far as I know, my ancestors are from the region of Tuscany and from that small Greek island called Halkis. The legend running in the family about my great grandmother, Fanny, is that her father constructed his own boat and sailed across the Mediterranean to escape the persecution of the Jews in Greece. Because Alexandria is close to Greece, Fanny's father managed to reach Alexandria with his boat. When he finally arrived, he was so tired that he slept on the shore of Alexandria and an older man saw him and greeted him in his own family. The young man, the sailor, met Fanny, the old man's daughter and finally ended up marrying her. This is how my great grandfather started his family in Alexandria. My mother's father was originally from Italy and he was already established in Alexandria when he met my grandmother, Emilie. That is why, I think of Alexandria and Egypt as my home. Of course Québec and Canada are my home now, but my roots are deeply rooted in Egypt. I feel good speaking English, Italian, French and some Arabic. Because I studied in a French private school, I know the French culture. I therefore relate to different parts of the world; Greece, France, Italy, and Egypt.

I remember as a child I used to watch Egyptian weddings from the balcony of our home. Weddings were celebrated outside like public events. There was so much happiness in my neighborhood; watching the wedding tent and listening to music (Figure 15). I also remember films posters. However, I do not remember the names of the films as I would seldom see them. I was an observer though, sitting in the balcony, watching people passing by, street vendors selling local food, and girls and women in bright color dresses. This is how I learned about the culture of Egypt, through observation, however, I did not feel totally part of it and that I regret. I was very

young when Egypt looked like a multicultural society. It was a period of major turmoil. My school friends that I am in contact with now, are sad for Egypt's lost cosmopolitanism. I remember the grocer, the *"ba'al"* (Egyptian dialect for grocery man) he was Greek and the fruit vendor was Egyptian. We used to call him A'm Nour. The names of the streets were European, as they were either called after English or French names. The photographer I used to go to was Armenian and he used to take photos of birthday parties. My neighbors were Egyptians, Syrians, Greek, Armenians, and Italians.

Figure 15. Mireille remembering her childhood

My personal experience of Egyptian culture was made with my friends at school. I used to go to *Lycée Français d' Alexandrie (Mission Laïque Française)*. My school was a same-sex school, but some classes would be mixed and this is how we would meet boys. There was no religion class in my school, so there was no distinction when it comes to religion. Religion was something we learned at home. Instead, we had morality classes. In 1960, the name of the school changed and became *Lycée la Liberté.* The French school program was replaced with the Egyptian program. As a result, the school curriculum changed in 1963. However, with my friends nothing had changed. We remained friends playing in the schoolyard. We used to dance

on American music, on rock and roll, on twist, and on the romantic Platters. We even dressed in the same way we saw in American movies, same tight waists and large skirts (Figure 16). There were social clubs in front of the sea; The Greek and the International clubs where people of higher social class would go. We didn't go to dancing clubs. We learned and practiced on our own. I had a beautiful surprise in the recent days; I had the opportunity to re-connect with some of my friends who are still living in Egypt.

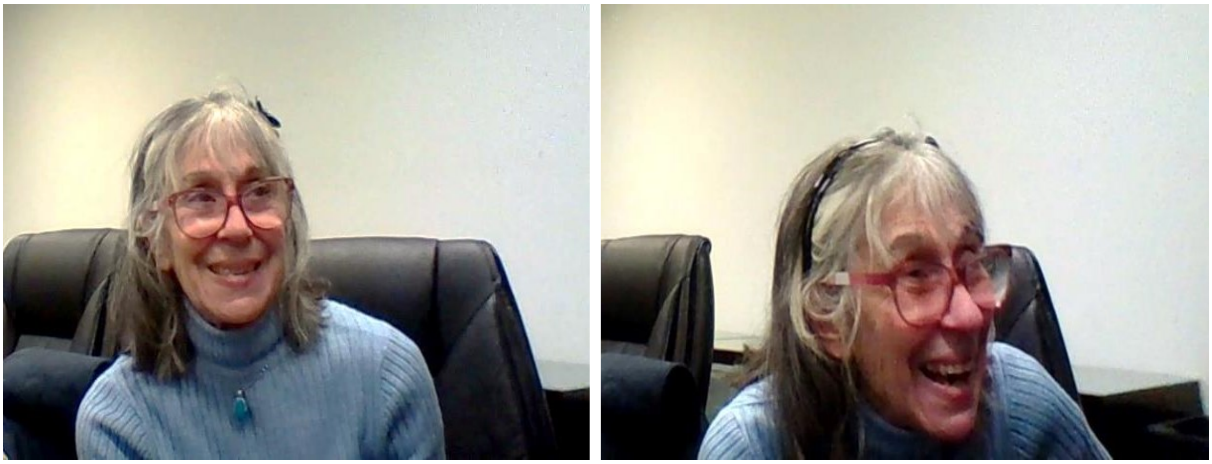

Figure 16. Mireille reflecting on her adolescent in Egypt

My home! Oh my God! I remember it because I went back three times, but anyway I will always remember the place where I was born and lived in. There was a central living room and then a long corridor with rooms on one side and then in the end there was another room with a balcony that gave out at the back of the street towards the sea. In the front, it was the city and the tramway that went back and forth. This is how I used to go to school and to the club. Inside, it was fresh, it was shady, and the floors were all covered with marble. As a child, I remember that everyone was there, my neighbors, my cousins, and friends. However, at twelve years old, I felt that life was beginning to change, as houses and apartments were beginning to be empty because people were leaving and it was becoming very sad, as we were expected to leave too. In 1956,

there was a major exodus from Alexandria and that was very palpable, very visible because the cosmopolitan reality was fading away. At school students were leaving one by one. So what I lived, what I experienced was the end of the cosmopolitan era, it was like the end, *comme la fin d'une belle étoile.*

I used to listen to the radio in 1956 and I understood what was happening and I remember quite well the blackouts. I lived during the 1956 war, we had to turn off the lights and we had to stick blue paper on the windows. At that time, I felt that something going to happen. I was twelve, my parents were divorcing and it was a difficult time. I remember I used to go to the *sotouh'* (Egyptian dialect for rooftop) and I would see the sky at night, the beautiful sky full of stars and then there were all these raids from airplanes coming up from the sea and bombarding the coasts of Alexandria. I was very sorry that I was going to leave my friends (Figure 17). We remained during that time because my sister and I were minors and we were under the guardianship of both my father and my mother as they were divorcing. While divorcing there were some legal problems, so we had to remain in Egypt with our mother. From 1960 to 1965 I used to go to school and socialize with my friends. In 1965, I became 20 and my sister was older, so it was possible to leave Egypt with our mother.

Figure 17. Mirellie describing the scene she witnessed of the 1956 war against Egypt

The uprooting began before the actual departure. It didn't happen suddenly, it began slowly when other people were leaving and everyone was asking us "when are you leaving?" We used to call the departure, *départ définitif,* so we had time to know that separation with our country was made gradually. It wasn't abrupt, except for some people. Many Jews were forced to leave. We weren't, but it was inevitable that we had to leave. I was 18 when I used to go to *Sporting Club*, at that time there were so many people leaving the country, but we were delayed because my parents were divorcing and things had to be settled before my mother could leave. I remember there was an Egyptian young man who once asked me "why are you leaving? Why are you leaving your country?" I remember saying "We have to leave" and he said "You can get married here in Egypt". However, the reality was that I had to leave and that was it. I was going with what my parents had then decided. Still, I was torn and I felt that I belonged there, but I followed my family. People were leaving their furniture, many were selling their belongings. Otherwise it would be put on the sidewalk and this is how houses were empty even before people had left them. So, when I think of it now, when I became a bit more mature, I couldn't realize at that time how hard it was. It's only now that I think that the uprooting was difficult at that moment in my life before the actual departure and then after. Before, as I said, with people leaving and we were watching their houses being emptied, I was not thinking of my roots and the

generations that were established there. Only after we left, I asked my mother "What is your history, and your mother's history?" Maybe at that time it was easier to take a major step in my life when I felt innocently protected. In fact, I was protected by my own emotions, and I didn't know why I had to leave, why I couldn't stay? Emotionally, we protect ourselves sometimes, right? I also felt torn. Some people were telling me "Oh you have to go, and you have to get a new life." Other people were saying "Stay, you can get a new life here, why not?" It's only after we left, I felt nostalgic. My parents' divorce and the whole political conflict came about and that didn't make it easier for us. So, we left with my mother and my father arrived later in Canada. My grandmother was seventy when she left with us and she lived on till she was one hundred years old (see Figure. 18).

Figure 18. Mireille reflecting on her memories of fleeing Egypt

So for eight years towards the end we knew we had to leave, but we didn't know where. I remember we used to take the globe and search where we are going; South America, Italy because our mother was Italian, or North America? Because we were educated in French, we said, ah, maybe Canada would be okay because Quebec is French and we had friends here who were encouraging us to settle here. So we finally decided in favor of Montreal. We travelled by boat from Alexandria to Naples and then to Genoa where we took another boat to Canada. My father remained for two years. We left Alexandria in June, 1965 and we went to Italy and we

stayed there for a while before leaving to Canada. My grandmother, my uncle, my mother and my sister, we all left together. So, we stayed in Italy and then we all made up our minds. I think the final decision was made in Italy. We took an Italian boat to come here. It took nine days to arrive to Canada. Now that I'm talking about it, I feel sympathy with today's refugees who are leaving everything behind. Of course, we were lucky, I mean when I compare myself to the refugees, but the split was hard. We had to sell our furniture because we needed money to buy tickets, so gradually we had less and less. My grandmother, felt torn because she was leaving much more than us. She was leaving her brother who died in Egypt. She was looking back when the boat was leaving Alexandria towards Europe. I think she was crying. She lived there for 70 years and lived in Montreal until she was a 100 years old. She was born in 1889, so I think she felt the trauma and the separation, but she said "I am with my family" (see Figure 19).

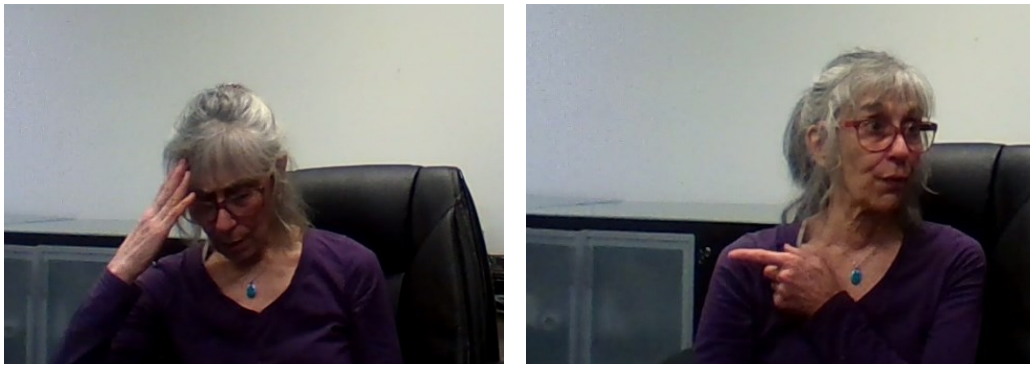

Figure 19. Mireille remembering her journey to Italy

When we moved to Montreal, I remember Place Ville Marie that was being built in 1965. I was surprised to see women wearing similar fashion. What was interesting to me was the consciousness of Quebecers, their patriotism. I liked this idea that they wanted to be recognized for who they were, as French people. They were getting out from a period of major, almost colonial suppression. I immediately identified with them because I understood their need to be

recognized as a nation. By going to university two years later, I made Quebecois friends who made me somehow feel at home because we were speaking the same language, we were studying the same subjects, and I participated in many demonstrations. In Quebec in the sixties, it was the birth of the *Parti Quebecois*, a wave of patriotism. I got a feeling that I belonged to Quebec (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Mireille reenacting her memories of being a Canadian immigrant

When I began my Master's degree, my thesis supervisor, Francois Gagnon, helped me integrate, so I was happy to be here. What tied me to Alexandria were the sweet memories I have preciously preserved till today. I could understand that Egypt needed to be itself. It was an awakening call for the people in Egypt. Although my father and my grandmother on my father's side were very well integrated, I was not because I could not speak Arabic as well as they did and this I regret today. I was lucky enough to go to university and I was lucky to finish my high

school in Egypt. In Montreal, I spent two years working, I became independent then I was lucky to continue my education. I felt that I was going ahead and constructing things on my own which helped me integrate.

When my mother died, that was in 1992; I immediately felt that I had to go to Egypt to compensate for my loss. It was my birth country, so there was a relationship between my mother who I lost and the city I was born in, so it was like going back to my mother, in Alexandria. I decided to go back. I felt that going back to Alexandria, I could feel my family, and remember the life that I had. I went back with my son who was nine years old and my sister. When we arrived to Cairo, we took a taxi to Alexandria and then we went to *Hotel Metropole*, and of course I went to see my house. The family who still lives in the apartment used to be our neighbors. They were Egyptians with Italian origin. It was beautiful. The three times I went to visit were beautiful. I was reconnected to the point that all my life from the moment I left to the moment I went back just disappeared, like nothing, it became a very short time, it just condensed, yeah, strangely (see Figure 21).

Figure 19. Mireille reflecting on her feelings about visiting Egypt for the first time since her departure

Maybe childhood does this. The emotions you have during childhood are so intense. The emotions are so deeply rooted in you. So when the airplane landed in Cairo, I felt that I was going back home. I went to the school where I spent a lot of my time. One memory that comes to me now: before we fled Alexandria, I went to my school for a last visit and there were renovations in the school building and I picked a piece that fell off one of the walls with a part of the school name carved on it, I still have it among other things I kept all these years. We took many clothes before leaving, we used to knit many, very thick woolen sweaters, because we were going to Europe and then to Canada. After we moved to Canada, my grandmother kept some of her Egyptian and Italian traditions, especially the food. I can't cook Egyptian food, but sometimes we go to restaurants. I miss that certainly. I miss the smells of "*camun"* (cumin) and the odor of the sea; for instance, sometimes when it rains it reminds me of the smell of the sea, like yesterday it rained in Montreal, I took a deep breath and I sensed the dampness, yeah, and I was back there, in Alexandria, it's like my mother related to a deeper place, I miss that very much.

Now that I am getting to know Facebook, I am in contact with my former friends in Egypt and in Alexandria and we meet now online. It is possible now. I still have a family in Alexandria. Yeah, I have discovered, recently, one year ago, that my grandmother from my father's side had a sister who remained in Egypt and married an Egyptian man. She made a family, and now a young man of twenty years old, who came to Canada to study Dentistry called me and said I know AAHA "*Amicale Alexandrie Hier et Aujourd'hui"*, and I saw your name, we are cousins, and he said, 'We have to meet' and we actually met. His mother lives Toronto, but his grandmother is in Alexandria and she is my cousin. Sometimes there are huge blowups of things in my mind that I want to write about, maybe my son would be interested in reading them

one day. Many people were expelled, they were forced leave, and even if they weren't expelled I do not think there was any way or any possibility of remaining. Yeah, I think Egypt had to go through that stage to re-appropriate its past. Now technology facilitates the connections and communication between people around the globe, I become able to keep in touch with my old friends in Egypt and stay updated with all the events in homeland. I think that Egypt is moving forward and I honor that. The heritage I have received from Egypt is one of tolerance, of greetings and hospitality and a deep sense of love and concern for others (see Figure 22).

Figure 22. Mireille reflecting on her story

Maurice's Story

Figure 23: Maurice Elia

I was born in Alexandria, the 25th of October, 1944, which was once changed when I moved to Lebanon and they made a mistake in my passport and they put December instead of October, as the months are set differently between Egypt and Lebanon. I'm a Scorpio and very proud to be. In my family there is one child, and it's me. My parents were married in 1932, in July and I didn't know exactly if I was their child first of all, and if I was wanted, or if I was desired just because I was born twelve years after their marriage, a child of ten years old thinks about these things. There was such a distance, maybe they didn't want me, but everybody around me were

telling me, “Your parents really wanted you, they were dying to have you and finally you came!” So I was a desired child and I believed them. Did I have any choice! My parents were very social, especially my mother, she was very intellectual, and she used to attend literary groups involving writers of all nationalities in Alexandria. My mother cared about what we had in Alexandria at the time that was called the *bibliotheque mobile,* which was a mobile library, a man who would tour the city with many books and people would borrow and exchange books with him. French was the main language. However, my mother knew Arabic, also Spanish, and English. She was more open to people than my father who had a life that could be considered busy or crazy. I say this because my father used to tell me all the time, “I can do anything, I can work doing this and that, I can be a printer, I can be a director, I can work in a school,”, and he would use his fingers to count (see Figure 24). However, all those jobs he had done were not his choice. They were jobs that he did because he couldn’t keep his job when he had one. He didn’t have a sense of responsibility, and the rest of my family always told him, “You have to save money, you have a son, you cannot go on like this!”, so that’s my father. My mother was born in Alexandria like me.

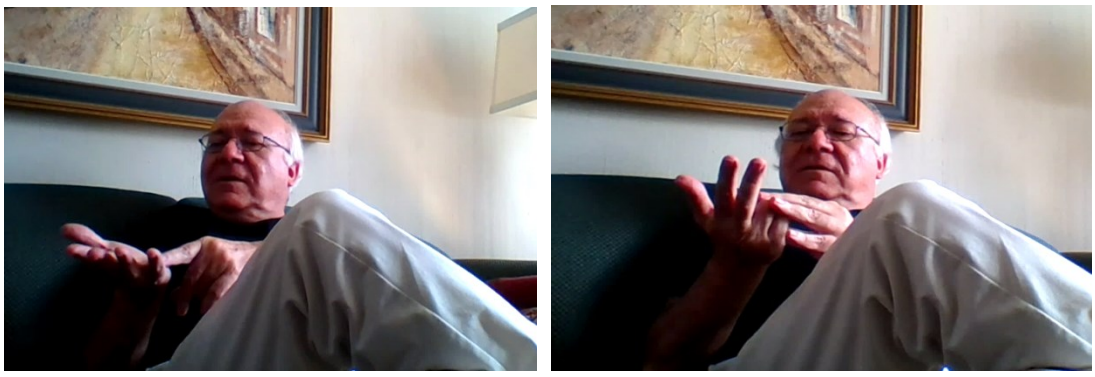

Figure 20. Maurice imitating his father

My father is a Lebanese man, he was born in Beirut in 1907, and he used to travel to Alexandria to visit his uncle, so he left his family in Beirut every summer and went to spend it in Egypt as a playboy. When he was 18 he stayed in Egypt for good, and this is where and how he met my mother. He spoke better Arabic better than my mother and myself. I had an advantage concerning Arabic. I had Fatt'heyya who I consider is my second mother. She practically participated in my education. Fatt'heyya was with us for all my life in Egypt which means twelve years. In fact she left when I was ten, as she got married, but she kept in touch with us all the time. We attended her wedding and we went to the birth of her first child, wonderful boy and we danced and drank *sharbbat* (a very sweet drink), so Fatt'heyya had an impact on my life (see Figure 25).

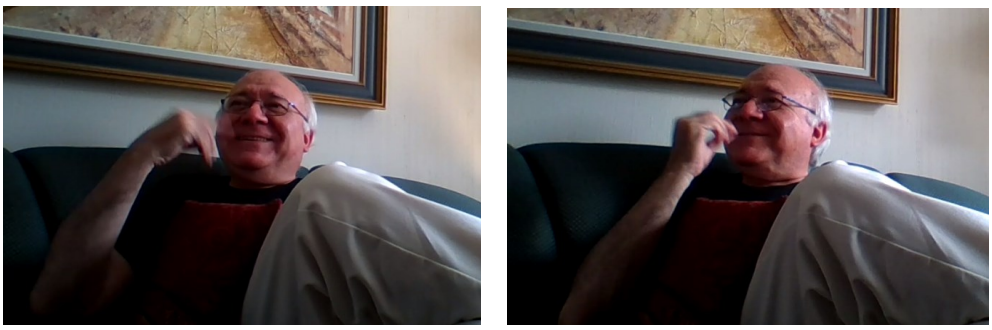

Figure 21. Maurice remembering Fatt'hyya

The main language at home was French. It was French with friends of my parents, and in my school. We were a small family, only the three of us that's all, but we tended to put Fatt'heyya with us all the time. Whenever my parents fought, my second mother, Fatt'heyya, would take me out, so I wouldn't to see the struggle and the battles the two of them had. We would go to the *corniche* (the sea side), and walk along the water, she would calm me down saying, "Look these things happen between couples". Fatt'heyya was found accidentally. I was still in my mother's belly when my parents were sitting in the balcony of our apartment which

was on the fourth floor and they saw a lady with a little girl aged twelve and it seemed like they were looking for work, so my mother told my father why don't you go downstairs and find out if the little girl would like to help me when I give birth. So he went and came back and said "everything is agreed upon and the girl's mother said yes". Two days later, Fatt'heyya came with her suitcase and she stayed with us. She used to go to visit her family once a week. So Fatt'heyya was in the apartment before me and then when I was born, she took care of me like she took care of her many brothers and sisters when they were born, so she knew a little bit more than my mother even though she was a young girl.

How our apartment looked like? Small in today's standards, not very small, we had a *salle à manger* like that, and *a salon*, I remember a little radio here, behind me there was a little shelf with a family of elephants made of fake ivory, and the kitchen was behind the two bedrooms. Fatt'heyya used to stay with me in my bedroom. She slept on the floor next to my bed, my friends kid me a lot when I tell that story; "That young and you already had a woman in your room", I was one month or two, she was with me all the time. I taught Fatt'heyya French (see Figure 26). It happened one night, I was probably eight or nine when I woke up sweating, and I was crying, and she said to me, "You will wake up your parents! What's the matter?" And I had that recitation that I had to study. It was a poetry that I had to memorize for school and I had totally forgotten about it. Even though it was two in the morning, she said to me "Bring your book and go to the kitchen. You are going to study it now." So she just listened as I was studying, and I had to explain to her what I was saying in French. I would say she learned French and she understood everything we were saying in the house, maybe not because of that event, but because she used to hear French all the time. Fatt'heyya was with us as a family member. You would think she was some kind of a slave to us, but she was a mother, she was a mom and

without her we were absolutely lost, especially me. She grew up until she was twenty she was with us, she came at twelve, and I left at twelve!

Figure 22. Maurice describing his home and childhood

We had also the movies, so when we went to the cinema. There were sometimes French movies, but it was mostly two movies, an American movie followed by an Egyptian movie. However, to make the program compact, the projectionist cut the American movie to the simplest expression. Maybe it lasted for an hour only. Why? Because after the *Entr' Acte*, we had the big Egyptian movie with all the singing and the tears and this has to be full! Practically all my life, since age eight, no earlier, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, I either went with my father or with Fatt'heyya (Figure 27). We fled Egypt in 1957. Forty years after I left Egypt, I went back in 1997 with my wife and two sons and I visited my home. I had a problem finding it, but we found it, not only we found it, but also we were allowed to go inside the apartment which

was empty at the time and the landlord was a Saudi man, very nice man and he said, “Would you like to see the apartment?” I said, “Yeah, but I cannot go in” and he said “I have the key! You were in apartment 8? Here is the key, go, there’s no one there and then come back up and we will have coffee”

Figure 23. Maurice storying his memories of Egyptian Cinema from his journals

School started when I was five or six, I don’t remember. There was a Jewish school, *Lycée de L’ Union Juive*. I wished to go on my own, by the tram, but my father used to take me in his little car, and bring me back. So when I was alone I took the tram, I was seven maybe or eight. The Lycée was on top of a hill, so I leave the tram stop, and go up the hill, and when I finish and I go down *Stanley Bay* and go to the beach on hot days in April, May or June (Figure 28). I was a good student, I had great marks. A friend of mine who lives now in New Jersey sent me a picture of the school, he said “This kid was an Armenian, this was a Moslem, and this one was a Christian.” So the majority were Jewish because that was the name of the school, but not completely Jewish among kids. French was the official language, all the subjects were in French, and we had English and Arabic classes too. I remember it wasn’t the right way teaching because I heard my parents talking about the Arabic teacher one time saying that this is not what our kid should learn, how come they are not taught the geography and the history of Egypt? It was mainly French content; there was Paris, and the Seine, and Renoir, Les Alpes, and all the

Louis kings, and Napoleon. It's true! How come we never had an excursion to Cairo? I saw Cairo and Nile for the first time in my life in 1997.

Figure 24. Maurice describing his every day journey to school

My parents' friends were Greeks, Italians, and Swiss who spoke French. Alexandria was an international city. I didn't see this kind of cities anywhere in the world where everybody was free to think what they wanted without killing each other. We were not kicked out. My father was going from one job to another. It wasn't a big deal. I know what happened. My grandfather, my father's father, was dying in Beirut, and my father's brothers were telling him, "look, everybody is leaving Egypt, so try to come as soon as possible, so you can see your father". My father was a little bit of the black sheep of the family, the guy who escaped, went to Egypt and had fun. I think we were pushed by this idea that we had to reach Beirut before my grandfather dies. However, we didn't make it there before he dies. At age twelve, I didn't know what was going on. I remember the director of my school signed papers of our final results and gave it to us in December of 1956 and this was strange because we used to receive these results in June by the end of the semester.

The Suez Canal War was in 1956. It was like this because the French and the English invaded Egypt, and Israel was with them so three countries, and that time the nationalization was

in its full bloom and all people who had businesses in cotton, like the Italians and the Greeks, started to take their belongings and leave. Many of the Italians and Greeks who were living in Alexandria had never gone to Greece or Italy in their lives. They were born from families from many years before. At the end of the Second World War, My father used to work with the British army and the Germans were practically at the doors of Egypt at the time. My father worked at *Le Mex*, he was in charge of a depot of wood, which was used to repair the boats that were destroyed in the city of Alexandria by the enemy. The Germans were not very far. They were already so very close. My mother used to say we were the only Jewish family who left our country to live in another Arab country. How come a smart man would do that? Well, it was my father's country, that's why we went there. We also went there because we were promised that my uncles would help us when we arrived and help my father find a job, which did not happen. They were not very nice. Four years after we arrived to Lebanon they left and they went to Israel and this is where they lived, and my cousins they are all there. I will not forgive them for treating my father that way. I was too young; I was twelve, twelve and a half.

We had nothing when we arrived in Lebanon. We were allowed 20 Egyptian pounds each when we were fleeing Egypt. We didn't want to sell with our stuff, so we gave it all to Fatt'heyya. God! She was crying, of course, I remember her with her and her husband saying "Why do you have to go?" The same thing happened in Lebanon in 1967. There were also some people who said to me, "Why do you have to go?" I was ready to adapt to Lebanon as my country. It was nothing against Egypt. It was just my age. I discovered Lebanon practically on the last year of the 10 years I spent there. I arrived to Lebanon when I was twelve and I left at 22. I was happy there; I was working for a newspaper as a film reviewer. I was hired at *Radio Liban* where I used to give film reviews twice a week. I was recognized and I became somebody

suddenly. However, someone said to me, “Look you’re Jewish, I know that you work at the *Journal le Soir* and you write articles every Wednesday and you use your real name, but here at the radio we have to change your name.” So I said “So, you are not going to allow me to use my real name?” he said “We would prefer not.” I said, “Does it mean that you are not hiring me?” he said “No, we will hire you, but we will change your name.” For me it didn’t matter, so they called me Thierry (see Figure 29).

Figure 29. Maurice storying his life experience in Lebanon

So I was Thierry for about two years. Every Thursday, I gave a film review at the radio. During 1965 and 1966, I was really implanted there, I liked the professors at the university and I liked people. I didn't want to leave. I had all I wanted; the radio, the university, and the magazine. Now, why did I have to go? The reason was not very different from when I left Egypt. There was no future for Jewish people. People were reluctant to hire Jewish people. Even the director at the magazine, an Armenian called Mr. Tosbath, a big guy with enormous hands, he said to me, “We like what you write, and we take you for what you do, and for who you are as a person. I will never put you out of the magazine, but if you want to go, go on your own” He made a party for me when I left, I was Thierry at that time (Figure 30).

Figure 25. Maurice remembering his life in Lebanon

Et Voilà! So during the 10 years I lived in Lebanon, one year was spent in Paris, from September 1964 to July 1965. The Jewish school sent me to France on one condition: I obtain a teaching degree and come back to Lebanon and I become a teacher at the school. I signed a three-year contract that was shortened to two years in 1967 after the Six Days War (a war between Egypt and Israel). Everybody wanted to leave Lebanon and the director said, “Okay you don’t have to finish three years, two years will do, so you can go.” When I was in Paris, friends and I were looking at a billboard at the university and we saw that there was someone from

Canada who had a lecture at the Canadian Embassy titled; *Pourquoi nous* avons *besoin de professeurs de français dans le province de Québec?* "Let's go!" I said to one of my friends, so we went. We arrived very early after drinking a few glasses of wine and there was no one so we fell asleep. When we woke up the place was still empty but everything had happened and we had brochures on our laps. So I woke him up and I said "Hey! we missed the whole thing so let's go home!" in the morning I looked at that paper: Why does the province of Québec needs French teachers from all over the world?, by Jean-François Dubois. So I found the Canadian Embassy and asked, "That man who did the talk last night, is he still around?" They said, "No, unfortunately he is taking the plane in two hours to go back to Montreal" I asked "Can I see him?" they said "Well if you rush a little and take the right metro you can see him". So I saw him at the moment he got into the taxi that was taking him to the airport. I jumped into the taxi with him. During the trip to the airport, he repeated the entire lecture that I missed the night before. And he explained to me how it works in Canada, what a school board is and how it is divided and yes they would take people who had my degrees. So when I came back to Lebanon, I told my parents about it and I said this seems to be interesting and then I put this paper aside and I forgot about it. Two years later, the 1967 war happened and everyone was leaving and my parents said to me, "Where's that old paper, the Canada brochure?" and this how everything started (Figure 31).

Figure 26. Maurice narrating the beginning of his journey to Canada

So, when I was coming to Canada I had saved $ 2000. But before putting a foot in Montreal, I stopped in France and England, and I ended up coming to Canada with $52 only. I come from a poor family, and I didn't know what to do because there were three Lebanese guys with whom I would share an apartment and I had to share the rent. I arrived in July, and I had a contract teaching in a partisan school board in September. How do I pay rent from July to September? I had to have money. So I found a job at Expo 67 in the Iranian pavilion where they hired me to wash glasses and I earned some money, payed the rent, and then I entered the school board and had my first paycheck. The Expo brought different people from the whole world to Montreal, with their ways of thinking, their dancing, and their food. 1967 and 1968 was a time of change, transformation, and freedom. There were Anti-Vietnam war marches, even though we were not in the United States. Prime Minister Trudeau opened his doors to all the deserters. My parents came after me. They were lucky. First of all, my father was 60 at the time he arrived and managed to find a job. He worked for seven years at the Emergency Department at the Jewish General hospital. He was much respected there and they made him a big party when he retired. My mother adapted even better than him, as she re-united with her old friends from Egypt who fled to Montreal, her Alexandrian life style continued. It was wonderful for her.

Every time people asked me, “Where are you from?” I don’t know exactly how to answer. Where do I come from? Well, literally I just arrived from Lebanon, “Ah you are from Lebanon,. You were born there, right? I would say, “No, I was born in Egypt” and they would say “Ah so you were born in Egypt? I said, No, I’m from Lebanon, I just arrived from Lebanon.” “Well, what is your country?” I would say, “My country, er…. I would say Lebanon. I’m a young adult, and I started my university studies there.” And they would say “But how about the county you were born?” me; “Yeah, there’s that too. My childhood is Egyptian and my adolescent years are Lebanese.” That’s how I perceived myself, and my dual identities. I never had an Egyptian passport you know that. So I had a Lebanese passport and then a Canadian passport. So in the papers, I was Lebanese even if I was born in Egypt, even though my mother was Egyptian.

On the day I took the Canadian Citizenship exam. The judge said to me “You came here five years ago. Where did you come from?” I said “I came from Lebanon?” he said “Ah, I see here on the paper, Alexandria, Egypt. Why are you telling me Lebanon?” I said, “Well I was born there but you are asking me where I came from and I came from Lebanon” He didn’t ask me that famous question of what is the name of the Prime Minister of Canada? Or what is the capital of Canada? Instead, he said “What is the rank of Canada in the production of copper?” I said, “I don’t know.” So he said “Well, you are going to come back to me in three months. You are going to take a brochure when you leave and you are going to study it before you come back here.” And, I called my mother, and I said, “Mom, the first exam in my life that I have failed happened today.” Incredible and I think it was that little scribble between where you were born and where are you coming from (see Figure 32).

Figure 27. Maurice reenacting memories of his citizenship exam

I went back to Egypt when my parents died, I wanted to know the way they were living and I did some research about their life. Egypt was in my mind when I buried them. I wrote a book based on information my parents and their friends told me. They had just died so it was like owing them attribute. That book was dedicated to them. In the beginning you will see *pour Edith et pour Michel*. That's their names. Then Mr. Mahamoud, the director of Alexandria Library, called me, and he said, "Look you are from Egypt. I understand you are a writer. I am the director of the library of Alexandria, and I would like if you send us your book and other books you have written about Egypt?" So I sent him the book, and he was very nice. He kept corresponding with me with letters and then he wrote to me, "When will you honor us with your presence in Egypt again?" This is how I went back, through my writing. Would I had decided to go on my own, probably, I was missing Egypt, and the more I talk about it, the more I become

emotional. Well, it's been a long journey, rich, and lucky, all those different steps in my life could have gone wrong. Some of them went wrong, but very few, like in anybody's life. I compare my life to life at the movies. Everybody said to me, "Okay, one day you will have to write your own story, it's like a movie." But every life is a movie. Every person can make a movie of his/her life. I was lucky meeting people of different origin. See Clint Eastwood is in the picture. I saw his movie maybe an hour before the press conference. I learned a lot from Clint Eastwood. He went deeply into the complexities of the story. He made me see things I haven't seen. So we meet people, we open ourselves to them, and you learn more. This is how we change our opinions about things. I was born in Egypt am I from Egypt or was I just born in Egypt? No, I am from Egypt. If I was born in it, that means I am from there. This is my native land. Nothing can contradict that. It's written on my passport I had forgotten it and there was a nice woman who came to remind me that this is where I came from (Figure 33).

Figure 28. Maurice holding a photograph of himself sitting next to Clint Eastwood at the 1984 Montreal Film Festival

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

In this study I undertook a year of data collection through multiple individualized meetings, video-recorded interviews, still-screens, and photo sessions, to generate diverse forms of data. The experimental research process generated fluid and organic visual and written narrations of Maurice, Mireille and my life experiences of diaspora. The data analysis required a return to the "larger rhetorical" structure of multidimensional inquiry (Creswell, 2012, p. 223). In that sense, the process of data collection and data analysis were in close relation to highlight extracted themes from each story (Riessman, 2008). Furthermore, the video-recorded interviews highlighted aspects of performance through facial and physical gestures, expressive sounds, and repetitive expressions (Creswell, 2013).

I started the analysis process by organizing the multiple forms of data: transcribed interviews, still-screens, field notes, and photographs. Throughout reading and organizing the data, I created a short list, or "lean coding" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184) six categories that cover Maurice's, Mireille's, and my story. These six categories were expanded to ten as I read through the data. The explored categories are linked to and guided by the main research questions: How do the visual arts, specifically photography, inform the ways we perform storytelling and self-reflections of diaspora? Why is it significant to document the stories of Egyptian Jewish experience in Canada? Why are their experiences pedagogically significant to art education? As such, I started looking for code segments that describe the information in our stories and develop themes that may or may not inform theoretical approaches and historical notions that were discussed in the first two chapters. Member checking played a significant role, keeping me close to the research data and providing me with a deeper understanding to our stories. In that sense,

Maurice and Mireille not only reviewed their transcribed interviews, but they were also encouraged to contribute with their critical views and interpretations to fill in any missing information, which helped me understand the extracted codes and develop meaningful themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

The data analysis process aligned the evaluation and assessment of the methodological approaches of generating the data. Consequently, the data evaluation criteria were a mélange of methodological perspective, postmodern interpretive framework, and interpretive standards (Creswell, 2013, pp. 255-259). Throughout the research process, I was mainly guided by the core research questions. As such, the examination of the ways video-recorded interviews and photography inform and capture the performativity of the narration process was driving the data collection and analysis. Moreover, the analysis process highlights the technical aspects of the data collection in relation to the narratives' subject of diaspora. For example, writing our stories aimed to examine the correlation between the theoretical research lens and our personal lived experiences (p. 255). The research emerged within a "postmodern framework" (p. 256) and cast a spotlight on the epistemological approach of data gathering as Creswell suggests. Thus, our stories display our stances towards sociopolitical and cultural factors that influenced our lived experiences. By telling their personal stories of diaspora and sharing their identities as sources of information, Maurice and Mireille raised social awareness and arguably promoted multicultural values.

Over the past year, I worked collaboratively with Maurice and Mireille to establish reciprocal trust and appreciation of our lived experiences, which enabled us to deepen our understanding of our personal stories and encouraged us to share reflections and interpretations. While analyzing my data, I focused on the four criteria of "interpretive standards" (Creswell,

2013, p. 257): 1) substantive contribution, as our stories display personal understanding of social and cultural experiences of diaspora within and outside of Egypt and through becoming Canadian citizens; 2) aesthetic merit, as I am examining the ways still-screens and photographed portraits provide conceptual interpretations of the written narratives; 3) reflexivity, since interweaving my personal story with a theoretical approach enabled me to highlight my bias and rationale; furthermore, through applying the same methodological approach of telling my story as Maurice and Mireille, I held myself accountable to the standards of the research; and 4) impact, as the research process developed more in-depth questions around the relatedness of the Egyptian Jews diaspora as the research subject to the lived experiences of immigrants in Canada and the role of art educators as agents of social change.

Extracted themes generated from the data sources represent common ideas that are discussed from different perspectives through our stories (see Appendix). In that sense, I am comparing our personal interpretations to each theme in relation to visual representations that highlight the performativity of telling our stories (Creswell, 2013). Multiple reads of our transcribed interviews drew relations to the research literature and created paths of new interpretations and alternative meanings (Leavy, 2015). As such, the literature is considered as contextualized data that brings different voices into the research. The interpretation of both written and visual data offers an abstract and metaphorical lens that extends the readers/viewers' understanding beyond the direct meanings of the codes and themes (Creswell, 2013). In addition, still-screens and photographed portraits are visual information backing the written text and written stories. While the written stories represent the least abstract narrations of our lived experiences in diaspora, the visual data represents the most abstract narrations of reflective

moments on specific events, a key tension from which to draw interpretations in this case (Creswell, 2013).

Validation of Analysis

Following Creswell's (2013) qualitative study validation strategies to document the accuracy of this research, I applied the following criteria to my data-gathering and the process of analysis:

1. Prolonged Engagement: The time I have invested constructing bonds of trust and respect with Maurice and Mireille over the past year fulfills the standards of this strategy. I approached the research participants with respect and understanding for their needs, schedules, and locations. Interviews were organized and planned according to their convenience in order to insure their comfort and well-being. Our long-term contact enabled me to make "decisions about what is salient and relevant to the purpose of the study and of interest for focus" (Creswell, 2013, p. 251).
2. Clarifying Researcher Bias: I have interwoven my personal life experience of diaspora with the historical background of the research and theoretical approaches. In that sense, my story reflects my world's views in conjunction with those of the research subjects and provides the readers transparency as I compare my life experience of diaspora to Maurice and Mireille's through the process of data analysis.
3. Member Checking: All transcribed interviews, along with the resulting stories, were sent to Maurice and Mireille for member checks. Following this strategy also involved sending the participants data analysis, still-screens, photographed portraits, and conclusions so that they could judge the accuracy and credibility of my interpretations.

4. Rich and Thick Description: Our narrated life experiences provide detailed and coherent descriptions of major events that influenced phase transitions of diaspora, immigration, and citizenship Video-recorded interviews represent animated documentations of series of momentous and life changing events. From the videos, we worked together to create still images. Still-screens are visual illustrations that highlight the intermediate performativity of each one of us through our facial expression and body movement. Photographed portraits are visual representations of individual identities.

In composing the stories of Maurice, Mireille, and myself, I focused on how the stories are being told and events are being remembered. Riessman's (2008) thematic, dialogic/performance, and visual analysis methods guided me through the process of identification of the diverse research data in conjunction with the research questions. Thematic analysis kept our stories intact while writing them in a chronological order that brings the individualized life experience to the core of the research and highlights the epiphanies that emerged through the interviews and field notes, in addition to informing us from the context of the theoretical literature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Performance analysis kept the main research question under the spotlight throughout the analysis process, thus I focused on Maurice, Mireille, and myself as characters, not only narrators, which relates the performance analysis criteria to methodological approaches (Leavy, 2015; School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012). Furthermore, dialogic/performance analysis views our stories as social artifacts that discuss sociopolitical and cultural aspects from personal and individualized perspectives that emphasize the intersectionality with the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural notions discussed in the first chapter. Since photography and still-screens play a

significant role as visual and performative representations, visual analysis enabled me to integrate text and images to examine how personal identities are composed and performed individually (Riessman, 2008; School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012).

The formal analysis process began with conscientious examination of my own, Maurice's, and Mireille's stories for further confirmation of the primary categories "supported by text" (Creswell, 2013, p. 195). Themes were then developed representing the commonalities of our stories (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008; Leavy, 2015). The chronological order of our stories was facilitated by life writing as the stories were composed from direct verbatim quotes to represent the voice of each one of us (Leavy, 2015). I started writing Maurice's and Mireille's stories without changing their language of expression. However, I organized the events in a coherent order to create a sequence to each story (Harvey et al., 2000). The process of re-storying the stories enabled Maurice and Mireille to reflect on their narrated life experiences. In that sense, the re-storying process enabled Maurice and Mireille to create meaningful interpretations and construct relations between their past and present (2000). Our stories represent visual and written autobiographies that frame the *métissage* of the Egyptian heritage that influenced our life experiences. Writing my personal story braided with historical and sociopolitical aspects that influenced me as an individual enabled me to underline common themes between my experience of diaspora and that of Maurice and Mireille. *Métissage* as a French synonym to the word "mix" refers to the Egyptian linguistic and ethnic nature and links it to the Canadian multicultural context as our present common ground. Furthermore, still-screens and photographed portraits alongside written stories create a *métissage* of life experiences (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009). In this way, our photographs taken in different spaces

and geographies represent metaphorical representations of the fluidity of our memories of historical events (Sinner, 2015).

Throughout their stories, Maurice and Mireille used three different languages during the narration process. Although the interviews were done in English, Maurice and Mireille used French and Arabic terms during the process of remembering. They also highlighted language as a crucial aspect for cultural inclusion and personal identification. Jones (2001) explains the intersectionality between the "visual perspective and the narrative perspective" as the visualization process through which the researcher creatively constructs the participants' stories. As such, Jones's framework informs my data analysis process through which I am using still-screens to highlight the nonverbal clues of both Maurice and Mireille during the narration process, which also examines their physical and visual impressions as a form of performance. Our autobiographies are communicated as short stories bound with theories to create tone, scenes, and characters through situating each one of us in particular settings that evoke memory and emotion (Leavy, 2015). For example, I wore one of my mother's dresses during my personal interview, while Maurice chose to have his interview in a room in his home where he keeps several sentimental objects that connect him to his family and youth. On the other hand, Mireille picked the Egyptian Jewish Association conference room as a natural setting that brings the Egyptian Jewish identity to the forefront of her story.

Emergent meanings

My analysis is an ongoing process of comparing the interview processes, member checking, still-screens, photographed portraits, and written stories (see Chapter 3, Methodology). I maintained a close relationship to that data, and I have developed an intimate and nuanced understanding of the data throughout the process of this study, which provided me with deep interpretation of the

subtle differences of the participants' life experiences of diaspora. Furthermore, member checks resulted in the emergence of possible themes and subthemes; this involved the return to the written stories and the development of a thematic matrix (see Appendix B). A thematic matrix is an organized systematic representation of the generated data, highlighting key themes, and coinciding subthemes (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). Creswell explains that the thematic matrix provides "naturalistic generalization" that allows the readers and the researcher to expand their learning and understanding of the exhibited cases. Through comparing our three stories to each other, a spiral analysis of the key themes produced more distinct themes, which developed subthemes. Themes and subthemes were identified through our stories and visuals in the thematic matrix and became the base of my data analysis. Although there were many possibilities of developed themes, I focused on specific themes that correspond with the research questions and aims. Our stories reveal personal aspects of the individualized life experiences of diaspora in conjunction with sociopolitical and cultural issues that influence immigrants' experiences of cultural transition and transformation today. The chosen themes and subthemes I developed are:

1. Family background - subthemes: plurality, cosmopolitanism; cultural values.
2. Education and professional life – subthemes: social exclusion; alienation; sense of belonging
3. Immigration – subthemes: cultural transition and transformation; geographies of the self; self-identification.

Following Creswell's (2013) narrative and within-case analysis, the emergent interpretations focused on the larger meanings and general features of our stories in relation to theories. I analyzed each story for themes and subthemes and compared these themes across our stories in

cross-case analysis (p. 296) (see Appendix B). Therefore, the presented interpretations of the data represent the plurality of perspectives that display still-screens and photographed portraits as visual documentations of storying as a platform of performance (see Chapter 3, methodology).

Theme: Family background

Maurice, Mireille, and myself each had two interviews, one hour each. The first sets of interviews were designed to cover our family background and childhood memories. The second set focused on the process of leaving Egypt and placing ourselves in different cultural settings. Each set of interviews was guided by a list of questions to help us maintain the remembering and the narration process within the same content (see Appendix A). Subthemes were developed to further articulate the unfolded variable aspects of family background. Our stories represented different experiences within different contexts; however the remembered events of each story corresponded to the sociopolitical aspects and historical notions discussed in the first chapter. Furthermore, through discussing member checks, I wrote my observations on Maurice and Mireille's comments that enabled me to draw shades of relatedness between my life experience and theirs.

Subthemes: plurality, cosmopolitanism, and cultural values

These subthemes of plurality, cosmopolitanism, and cultural values drew relational lines between Maurice and Mireille's stories, as they both were born Alexandrians of different ethnicities and languages. Pluralism was a cultural trait identified with the cosmopolitan society in which both Mireille and Maurice grew up. While Maurice and Mireille's stories represent vivid memories of the Egyptian culture during the early years of the nationalist wave, my story represent different cultural values that align with the singular society in which I grew up. The Egyptian cultural transformation during the mid-1950s to late 1960s that Maurice and Mireille's stories represent

cast a spotlight on the political aspects that influenced the radical shift from multiculturalism to nationalism. My story represents the ever-growing gap between the Egyptian heritage and its contemporary culture, which mirrors blurry images of its lost pluralism.

Mireille's pluralism is implanted in her family background. Born in Alexandria to a family with diverse ethnicities that had been deeply rooted in Egypt since the nineteenth century, Mireille describes herself as "a citizen of the world." Pluralism manifests itself in Mireille's story as she reflects on the languages in which she can express herself: Italian, French, Greek, and some Egyptian dialect, the same languages that were practiced in her household before and after fleeing Egypt. Pluralism continued to be an essential part of Mireille's life experience after her exodus from Egypt and moving to Canada:

> That is why, I think of Alexandria and Egypt as my home. Of course, Québec and Canada are my home now, but my roots are deeply rooted in Egypt. I feel good speaking English, Italian, French and some Arabic. Because I studied in a French private school, I know the French culture. I therefore relate to different parts of the world: Greece, France, Italy, and Egypt.

Mireille's family heritage mirrors the pluralism of her personal life experience. During the narration process, she was very keen to story the history of her ancestors and how her family was constructed and rooted in Alexandria, Egypt:

> The story begins when my great grandfather on my father's side arrived to Egypt as a refugee in the nineteenth century, escaping harsh persecutions of the Jews. He settled near Alexandria in a small village between Cairo and Alexandria and began buying small pieces of land to cultivate cotton, as the land was very fertile. My father, Abramino, as well as his brother and sisters, were born in Alexandria

> and settled there as land owners. My mother and grandmother were originally Greek. My grandfather had Italian origins. They spoke Greek and Italian. And, as far as I know, my ancestors are from the region of Tuscany and from that small Greek island called Halkis (see Figure 34).

The video-recorded interview captured the passion with which Mireille was telling her story. Speaking of her family background and the diversity of her origins in tandem with growing up in Alexandria highlighted the process of remembering and the shifting to different geographies: Canada, Egypt, Italy, and Greece. Still-screens provide close-up photographs that depict Mireille's facial and physical engagements as the main subject. As the videos provided organic and fluid visual data accompanied with the narrated stories, still-screens presented visual documentations of the repeated facts in Mireille's story. For example, Mireille reflected on the different languages she speaks several times during the first interview. The above still-screens document the moments in which Mireille related her language skills to her family's pluralism.

Figure 29. Mireille speaking about her family background

Maurice's family background reflects a different cultural fabric than Mireille's. Growing up as an only child in a small family made Maurice experience pluralism within a different context. Fatt'hyya, Maurice's babysitter, was the main source of diversity in his early childhood. To Maurice, Fatt'hyya was a motherly figure who was also only twelve years older than him. The relationship between Maurice and Fatt'hyya provided Maurice with companionship from a different ethnic and cultural background. Although French was the principal language of the family, Fatt'hyya's permanent presence in the house added a sense of pluralism, as she was not only a babysitter, but also a close and trusted family member as described by Maurice:

> We were small family, only the three of us that's all, but we tended to put Fatt'heyya with us all the time. Whenever my parents fought, my second mother, Fatt'heyya, would take me out, so I wouldn't to see the struggle and the battles the two of them had. We would go to the *corniche* (the sea side), and walk along the water, she would calm me down saying, "Look these things happen between couples.

The only time when Maurice referred to language was when he was talking about his mother who spoke several languages and was involved in several intellectual activities in Alexandria. However, visual culture played a significant role in Maurice's life. As a child Maurice was deeply interested in films and mentioned the fact that he used to go to the movie theater once a week either with Fatt'hyya or with his father:

> We had also the movies, so when we went to the cinema, there were sometimes French movies, but it was mostly two movies, an American movie followed by an Egyptian movie. However, to make the program compact, the projectionist cut the

> American movie to the simplest expression. Maybe it lasted for an hour only. Why? Because after the *Entr' Acte*, we had the big Egyptian movie with all the singing and the tears and this has to be full! Practically all my life, since age eight, no earlier, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, I either went with my father or with Fatt'heyya.

Maurice kept journals about each movie he went to watch since he was a child until he became an adult. The passion he developed for cinema became an essential part of his identity as an adult, as he used to write film reviews in French in a Lebanese newspaper when he lived in Lebanon. And then when he moved to Montreal, Maurice worked for the National Film Board. The cinema mirrored the Egyptian visual culture that Maurice grew up in. He was reflecting on music, Egyptian actors and actresses who represented the cosmopolitan fabric of the society, and it differed from what he used to watch in American movies that were misrepresented accounts of Egypt at that time. While speaking about his movie outings, Maurice became very expressive. He became more emotionally and physically involved and started to draw lines between three different geographies: Egypt, Lebanon, and Montreal. Unlike Mireille, Maurice did not repeat notion. Instead, he moved from one phase to another in a very organized order. Only when he wanted to highlight a specific event he would go back in time and refer to a memory that he had previously storied. For example, when he spoke about his career at the National Film Board, he referred to his passion for films that started while he was a child in Egypt and then developed into writing film reviews in Lebanon, and then became a life-long career in Montreal (Figure 35).

Maurice chose to have the interview held in his office located in his house. Maurice's office contained several sentimental objects: his journals that he kept for decades, photographs of his

parents and himself as a child, and a small pharaonic souvenir that he bought from Egypt in 1997 when he went to visit for the first time since his exodus. The materiality of this space was essential to telling his story, and the resulting still-screens played a significant role in capturing rare moments of Maurice reenacting events that influenced his life.

Figure 30. Maurice speaking about his passion for films and how it started during his early childhood

During this interview, Maurice shared some of his journals with me while gazing in the camera in a gesture of acknowledging his audience, then continued the process of remembering and shifting between geographies, eras, and personalities. Still-screens as independent photographs reflect Maurice's position as a storyteller. However, these photographs depict Maurice performing parts of his memories though his body movement and facial expressions that complement the narrated events.

My family background represents a contrasting image to Maurice and Mireille's. Pluralism was a cultural quality that I learned about from my parents' photographs and stories.

Furthermore, the Egyptian visual culture kept traces from its demolished cosmopolitanism. Architecture and old media were common components of the Egyptian modern culture that I was consistently relating to my parents' stories and reflections about Egypt's lost pluralism. For me, meeting Maurice and Mireille is considered an exploration of my heritage and historic identity. Although my parents' vivid memories and detailed stories backed visual and cultural segments of cosmopolitan Egypt that remain untouched until today, I was not able to personally experience Egyptian pluralism until I met with Maurice and Mireille. Sharing our stories and reflections constructed feelings of relatedness and appreciation, and encouraged us to further our identity exploration *ensemble* as a team. Maurice and Mireille represent part of my extended heritage that I could not access while living in Egypt (Figure 36).

Figure 31. Ranya reflecting on her family background and cultural experience growing up in Egypt

Theme: education, professional and social life

This theme covers major aspects the influenced our life experiences of diaspora. The remembering and reenacting process around this theme took more dynamic manoeuvers that required deeper reflections. The narrated events became in-depth explorations of the individualized visions of life achievements and gained social and professional skills. Furthermore, narrating our educational and professional experiences exhibited our varied senses of alienation we developed through different phases of our lives and the ways we overcame these obstacles as we grew up and moved to different geographies.

Subthemes: Social exclusion, alienation, and sense of belonging

These subthemes represent social life experiences that were influenced by political factors. Each one of us had different interpretations to each subtheme. Personal stories revealed aspects of alienation within and outside homeland. Consequently, our stories unfold the ways we experienced diaspora and the journeys of establishing new roots in Canada as immigrants and then as Canadian citizens.

Mireille's French education in Alexandria contributed to her pluralist experience as an Alexandrian with a diverse ethnic background. However, as French was the official language at school and Italian was the principle language at home, Mireille grew up lacking the Egyptian component in her education. Mireille reflects on several notions that bring the Egyptian culture to the core of her life experience as missed learning opportunities that she regrets now as an adult:

> Although my father and my grandmother on my father's side were very well integrated, I was not because I could not speak Arabic as well as they did and this I regret today.

Mireille's social life was mainly influenced by her education. Her friends were classmates who received the same education, and social activities had western and European cultural traits, Mireille stated:

> We used to dance to American music, to rock and roll, to the twist, and to the romantic Platters. We even dressed in the same way we saw in American movies, same tight waists and large skirts. There were social clubs in front of the sea, the Greek and the international clubs where people of higher social class would go. We didn't go to dancing clubs; we learned and practiced on our own.

Mireille's lived experience in Alexandria was limited to what was available to her age. As a high school student, she received French education, which made her familiar with the French culture. Mireille storied how the French school curriculum was changed in 1963 to become an Egyptian curriculum, as a primary result of the nationalist wave that was on the rise at the time. However, Mireille graduated from high school before the curriculum change occurred (Figure 37).

Figure 32. Mireille remembering her high school experience

School was very important to Mireille on both academic and social levels. In the above still-screens, Mireille was trying to specify in what year the school name and curriculum was changed. The images depicts her facial experssions as she was explaining some of the consequences of the nationalist wave that influenced her as an individual. Two years after she arrived with her family in Montreal, Mireille continued her education at the Montreal University after working for two years, which enabled her to gain a sense of independence. As a young woman at the age of twenty, Mireille was willing to adapt to the new culture she had placed herself in:

> By going to university two years later, I made Quebecois friends who made me somehow feel at home because we were speaking the same language, we were studying the same subjects, and I participated in many demonstrations. In Quebec in the sixties, it was the birth of the *Parti Quebecois*, a wave of patriotism. I got a feeling that I belonged to Quebec.

As an immigrant, university education provided Mireille with a social life and enabled her to construct friendships with individuals of her age. Furthermore, being enrolled in an educational setting enabled Mireille to develop a sense of belonging and relatedness (see Figure 38).

Figure 33. Mireille reflecting on her experience as a university student

In that sense, education was a means of social inclusion that facilitated Mireille's cultural transmission and enabled her to develop a sense of belonging. Mireille's story reveals shades of resemblance between her cultural milieu in Alexandria and Montreal's cultural environment during the late 1960s. Growing up in a multiethnic family in a cosmopolitan city, and attending a school where French was the dominant culture and language, helped Mireille to adapt to Montreal. Furthermore, moving to Montreal at a young age and starting professional and academic experiences for the first time in her life provided Mireille with new opportunities for growth and learning.

During the narration process, Mireille was shifting back and forth in time. Her facial expressions and physical gestures mirrored how she felt during described events. While storying her experience as a university student, Mireille went back in time to when she was a young woman in her early twenties facing a new world and new challenges of becoming. Higher education contiued to play role in Mireille's social life:

> When I began my Master's degree, my thesis supervisor, François Gagnon, helped me integrate, so I was happy to be here. What tied me to Alexandria were the sweet memories I have preciously preserved until today.

Mireille had two different educational expereinces. The first was in Alexandria when Mireille was a high school student and her social life was then limited to her school friends. The second was when she moved to Montreal, had a job, and became a university student. Thus, Mireille became aware of who she wanted to become, which was translated into post-graduate studies. Thus education facilitated Mireille's cultural transion and harnessed her identity transformation. As Mireille was reflecting on her jurney as an immigrant, her physical gestures mirrored the

remembering process of going back and forth in time. Moreover, still-screens depicts moments of muteness as part of recaling memories and specifying events (Figure 39).

Figure 39. Mireille storying her post-graduate education experience

Maurice has limited memories of his elementary school in Egypt, as he fled the country with his parents to Lebanon at the age of twelve. What seemed to be more important to Maurice was the geography that led to his school:

> School started when I was five or six, I don't remember, there was a Jewish school, *Lycée de l' Union Juive*. I wished to go on my own, by the tram, but my father used to take me in his little car and bring me back. So when I was alone I took the tram, I was seven maybe or eight. The Lycée was on top of a hill, so I leave the tram stop, and go up the hill, and when I finish and I go down *Stanley Bay* and go to the beach on hot days in April, May, or June. I was a good student. I had great marks.

It was interesting to notice that Maurice became more expressive when he described places. He was very keen to describe the paths that led to his school and the nature of the city in which he lived. Alexandria holds a special place in Maurice's memory. Although he left the city at a young age, he still has vivid memories of how the city looked when he was young (Figure 40).

Figure 34. Maurice describing the road to his school

The ten years Mauirce spent in Lebanon after he fled Egypt were the starting point of his journey as a young adult. Maurice had a busy and active life in Lebanon. While he was a university student, in addition to film reviews, he had a radio broadcast in which he spoke about one movie twice a week. Like Mireille, education and professional life granted Maurice social activities and enabled him to construct a sense of belonging. However, unlike Mireille, Maurice's social inclusion came with a price:

> I was happy there; I was working for a newspaper as a film reviewer. I was hired at *Radio Liban* where I used to give film reviews twice a week. I was recognized and I became somebody suddenly; however, someone said to me, "Look, you're Jewish; I know that you work at the *Journal le Soir* and you write articles every Wednesday and you use your real name, but here at the radio we have to change your name".

This incident highlights the hardship of Maurice's life expereinces as a young man. In order to continue doing the job he was most passionate about, Maurice had to work under a given name to hide his religious identity. Fleeing Egypt to another Arab country, Lebnanon, continued to posit Maurice and his family in the same political conflict that they were experiencing in Alexandria. Maurice mentioned the fact the the Lebanease were reluctant to hire Jewish people during the 1960s. When the 1967 war occurred, Maurice and his family faced the harsh reality that they must leave again. As such this incident exhibits sense of alienation as part of Maurice expereince of diaspora (Figure 41).

Figure 35. Maurice narrating his journey to leave Lebanon

When they moved to Canada in 1967, Maurice experienced immersion with different sociopolitical and cultural contexts:

> The Expo 67 brought different people from the whole world to Montreal, with their ways of thinking, their dancing, and their food. 1967 and 1968 was a time of change,

> transformation, and freedom. There were anti-Vietnam War marches, even though we were not in the United States; Prime Minister Trudeau opened his doors to all the deserters.

Predictably, Maurice narrated a different life experience than Mireille's in Montreal despite both arriving in 1967. While Mireille reflected on her university education and her endorsement of the Quebec patriotic wave, Maurice narrated his first work experience in Montreal at the Expo 67, through which he was able to experience a different cultural milieu. In that sense, both Mireille and Maurice exhibited the ways that they were locating themselves as newcomers in the new society, mapping geographies of self in the process. Social immersion was a result of different educational and professional approaches that mirrored the sociopolitical landscape of Montreal during that time in comparison and contrast with Egypt's. However, Maurice's educational background uncovers the multilayered personal experiences he experienced at a very young age before his arrival to Canada:

> When I was in Paris, friends and I were looking at a billboard at the university, and we saw that there was someone from Canada who had a lecture at the Canadian Embassy entitled *Pourquoi nous avons besoin de professeurs de français dans le province de Québec?* "Let's go!" I said to one of my friends and so we went.

While in Paris for a year to obtain a teaching degree, Maurice coincidently attended a lecture representing the possibility of immigrating to Canada and becoming a school teacher, something that Maurice related to and was eager to learn more about. This lecture was a turning point in Maurice's personal and professional life. Two years after he came back from Paris to Lebanon, the 1967 war occurred and he decided that it was the time to immigrate to Canada.

Unlike Mireille's immigration experience, Maurice's decision was based on what he learned about Canada in an official lecture held in the Canadian embassy in Paris (Figure 42).

Figure 36. Maurice narrating the story of the lecture at the Canadian Embassy

In contrast to Mireille and Maurice, my education in Egypt was influenced by traditional and historic educational concepts (See Chapter 1). I was very lucky to receive a tuition-free university degree, as granted by the government for all Egyptian citizens. However, when I had the chance to be enrolled in a different academic milieu at the American University in Cairo, which is a private educational institution, I was exposed to different learning opportunities that revealed varied possibilities for my future. Throughout this experience, I became aware of the vitality of multiculturalism as a cultural and educational value that provides individuals with a deeper understanding of academic content (Figure 43).

There was almost no room for creativity or self-reflection that could have enabled us as students to expand our practice and think of art projects as arts research instead of just

being technical observers. We were trained to be observers and draw what we saw in detail. Hyper realistic drawings were the only indicator of our abilities to maintain high grades and achieve the recognition of faculty members. The teacher/student relationship was constructed on a hierarchical basis; as students we were required to conform to direct instructions and never question our practice. We were recognized as students only, not as students/artists.

Figure 37. Ranya narrating her educational experience as a student in the Faculty of fine Arts in Egypt

Unlike Maurice and Mireille, social inclusion was not a factor in my education when I was in Egypt. In fact, it was the contrary. There was an ever-growing gap between the Egyptian heritage and the cultural settings in which I lived, and I was fully aware of this gap. In that sense, I lived in a different cultural and political milieu and my education at the Faculty of Fine Art in Cairo, Egypt enabled me to experience the limitations of learning in a singular society. On the

other hand, my learning experience in the American University in Cairo was a turning point in my academic and professional career as an artist:

> In 1999, I had a scholarship to the American University in Cairo to obtain a certificate in Contemporary Art Criticism in co-corporation with the University of Wisconsin. The seminars and workshops were held at the Townhouse Gallery in downtown Cairo, where I met and worked for the first time with artists from different parts of the world. The workshops provided educational courses in which we reflected on our practices as independent professional artists and developed new understandings of contemporary art movements. These workshops helped me reflect on my personal ideas and I was encouraged for the first time to try new approaches in printmaking.

Being exposed to different cultural settings freed me from traditional theoretical approaches that I was required to adapt in academic and professional life. This learning experience left me eager for more. As such, traveling was inevitable in order to discover new dimensions of the world and expand my worldview (Figure 44).

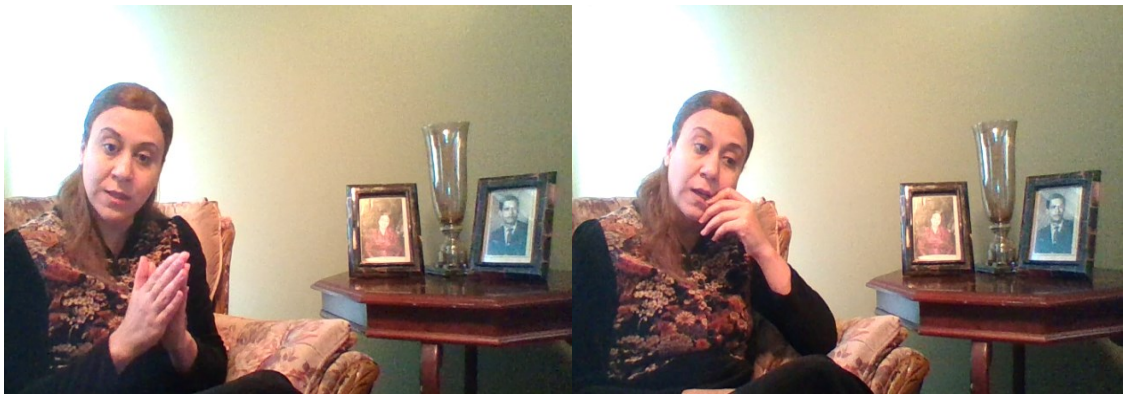

Figure 38. Ranya reflecting on her learning experience in the American University in Cairo

Theme: Immigration

This theme forms a common ground that gathers Maurice, Mireille, and me as immigrants from Egyptian roots who came to Canada for various reasons seeking a new life and new opportunities. It is an incredible coincidence that the three of us moved to Canada when we were in our early twenties as young adults with diverse life experiences, expectations, and challenges. Our stories exhibit the ways that immigration as a lived experience plays a major role in transforming immigrants' identities through cultural and geographical shifts.

Subthemes: cultural transition and transformation, geographies of self, and self-identification

These subthemes tighten our stories to the research theoretical perspectives and cast spotlight on the commonalities in our stories. As Canadian immigrants from Egyptian background, the three of us share similar geographies that represent our cosmopolitan heritage. Our narratives uncover strong relations between memories that still inhabiting us and self-perception. Additionally, Immigration as a life journey draws a parallel with diaspora and provides personal reflections of the processes of cultural transition and transformation.

Mireille's story highlights her experience of moving to Canada when she was twenty years old as a natural and soft cultural transition:

> When we moved to Montreal, I remember Place Ville Marie that was being built in 1965. I was surprised to see women wearing similar fashions. What was interesting to me was the consciousness of Quebecers, their patriotism; I liked this idea that they wanted to be recognized for who they were, as French people.

Of course, her French education contributed to her ability to adapt to the Quebec French culture. Furthermore, being enrolled in a university program expanded her opportunity for social inclusion and cultural adaptation, as she states:

> By going to university two years later, I made Quebecois friends who made me somehow feel at home because we were speaking the same language, we were studying the same subjects, and I participated in many demonstrations.

When Mireille left Egypt, she moved with her family for a short time to Italy until they decided to immigrate to Canada and live in Montreal. Because she grew up in a cosmopolitan city and within a diverse ethnic family, this cultural transition was favored. In that sense, Mireille did not experience any challenges. On the contrary, her story reflects her successful transition and transformation (Figure 45):

> When I began my Master's degree, my thesis supervisor, Francois Gagnon, helped me integrate, so I was happy to be here. What tied me to Alexandria were the sweet memories I have preciously preserved until today.

Figure 39. Mireille while storying her experience as an immigrant in Montreal

Although Mireille moved with her family to Montreal, she continued to feel nostalgic and this feeling was expressed in her story when she stated:

> Only after we left, I asked my mother, 'What is your history, and your mother's history?' Maybe at that time it was easier to take a major step in my life when I felt innocently protected. In fact, I was protected by my own emotions, and I didn't know why I had to leave, why I couldn't stay.

In that sense, her successful cultural transition and transformation did not demolish her emotional bonds with Alexandria as her homeland. Mireille further emphasized this idea when she storied her experience visiting Alexandria so many years after her exodus (Figure 46):

> When my mother died, that was in 1992, I immediately felt that I had to go to Egypt to compensate for my loss. It was my birth country, so there was a relationship between my mother who I lost and the city I was born in, so it was like going back to my mother, in Alexandria. I decided to go back. I felt that going back to Alexandria, I could feel my family, and remember the life that I had.

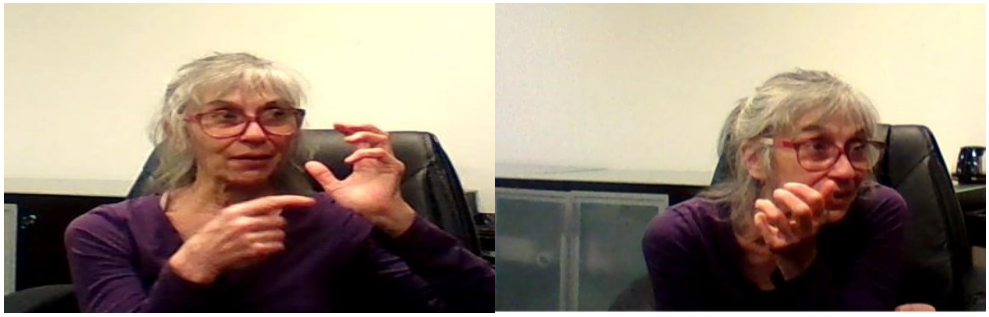

Figure 46. Mireille while describing her feelings when visited Egypt in 1993

Going back to Egypt to re-connect with her roots highlights the notion that immigration does demolish a degree of the inherited geographies of the self. Although Mireille's mother died and was buried in Montreal, Mireille's only way to compensate and to heal was by going back to Alexandria, the motherland where she and her mother were born. This moment was towards the end of Mireille's second interview. Although Mireille was very emotional and verbally

expressive during her interviews, these moments were even more intense for her as she was speaking about a discovery that she had made when she visited Egypt in 1993 (Figure 47):

> I went back with my son who was nine years old and my sister. When we arrived at Cairo, we took a taxi to Alexandria and then we went to *Hotel Metropole*, and of course I went to see my house. The family who still lives in the apartment used to be our neighbors. They were Egyptians of Italian origin. It was beautiful; the three times I went to visit were beautiful. I was reconnected to the point that all my life from the moment I left to the moment I went back just disappeared, like nothing, it became a very short time, it just condensed, yeah, strangely.

Figure 40. Mireille describes her visit to Alexandria in 1993

Maurice left Lebanon for Canada when he was twenty-two after finishing his university education in Beirut. Unlike Mireille, Maurice arrived in Montreal alone. His parents joined him later. Coming from a poor family, Maurice was supporting his parents and he had to find a job the moment he stepped foot in Montreal:

> I arrived in July, and I had a contract teaching in a partisan school board in September. How do I pay rent from July to September? I had to have money. So I found a job at Expo 67 in the Iranian pavilion where they hired me to wash glasses and I earned some money, paid the rent, and then I entered the school board and had my first pay cheque.

Expo 67 was an international exposition with many countries participating. Maurice was introduced to his first multicultural experience. Furthermore, it was late sixties when a new political culture took hold in Canada and Maurice related himself to this Canadian sociopolitical culture:

> The Expo 67 brought different people from the whole world to Montreal, with their ways of thinking, their dancing, and their food. 1967 and 1968 was a time of change, transformation, and freedom. There were anti-Vietnam War marches, even though we were not in the United States; Prime Minister Trudeau opened his doors to all the deserters. My parents came after me.

It was interesting to observe how Maurice and Mireille perceived their multilayered identities as immigrants from Egyptian roots. Whilst Mireille saw herself as a "citizen of the world" and reflected on the diverse ethnic origins that enriched her identity, Maurice found himself in a problematic position that he narrated with a great sense of sarcasm (Figure 48):

> Every time people asked me, "Where are you from?" I didn't know exactly how to answer. Where did I come from? Well, I had literally just arrived from Lebanon. "Ah, you are from Lebanon, and you were born there right?" I would say, "No, I was born in Egypt," and they would say "Ah, so you were born in Egypt?" I said, "No, I'm from Lebanon, I just arrived from Lebanon." "Well, what is your country?" I would say, "My country, er…. I would say Lebanon. I'm a young adult, and I started my university studies there." And they would say, "But how about the county where you were born?" Me, "Yeah, there's that too. My childhood is Egyptian and my adolescent years are Lebanese." That's how I perceived myself, and my dual identities.

Figure 41. Maurice reflecting on his duel identity

Mireille's personal experience with immigration reflects a smooth transformation that was facilitated by her constructive educational experience. However, Maurice's cultural and identity transition and transformation lasted a longer time. Throughout the narration process, Maurice became deeply reflective when he started to story his experience as an immigrant in Canada. Still-screens highlight the ways Maurice was not just narrating, but also performing the events he was remembering. In that sense, Maurice was performing other people's reactions and approaches towards him in specific moments. For example, when Maurice was reflecting on the day he took the Canadian citizenship exam, he went back in time to a different place, playing two roles: the role of the judge who was viewing his file and the principal role of himself responding to the judge's questions (Figure 49):

> On the day I took the Canadian Citizenship exam, the judge said to me, "You came here five years ago. Where did you come from?" I said, "I came from Lebanon?" He said, "Ah, I see here on the paper Alexandria, Egypt. Why are you telling me Lebanon?" I said, "Well I was born there but you are asking me where I came from and I came from

Lebanon." He didn't ask me that famous question of what is the name of the Prime Minister of Canada, or what is the capital of Canada. Instead, he said, "What is the rank of Canada in the production of copper?" I said, "I don't know." So he said, "Well, you are going to come back to me in three months. You are going to take a brochure when you leave and you are going to study it before you come back here." And, I called my mother, and I said, "Mom, the first exam in my life that I have failed happened today."

At that point, Maurice became very expressive and started to reenact his memories of Citizenship exam. During the reenacting process, Maurice was imitating the immigration judge with tone of voice, physical gesture and facial expression.

Figure 49. Maurice performing the process of his citizenship exam

As an immigrant, I experienced what both Mireille and Maurice went through, however, from a different perspective. Like Mireille, education played a significant role in providing me with opportunities for social and cultural immersion. Furthermore, being enrolled in a Canadian

educational institution enabled me to progress and expand my worldview, which in turn helped me to realize my individualistic identity as a human being, artist/teacher, and a researcher (Figure 50):

> Being a graduate student in the Visual Arts Education Department at Concordia University opened doors and encouraged my ability to think analytically and critically about personal experiences through the lens of an artist/teacher.

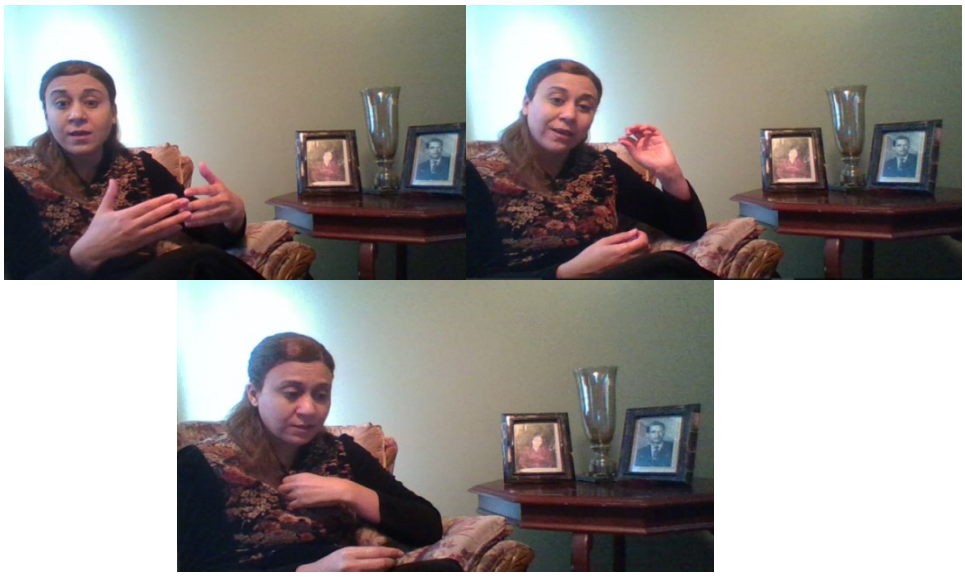

Figure 50. Ranya describing her experience with immigration

As I was narrating my experience of immigration, the term “diaspora” was taking on metaphorical meanings. Unlike Maurice and Mireille, I was not obliged to leave Egypt for political and/or religious reasons. However, it was the consistent feeling of yearning to becthat was urging me to travel and explore the unknown. The search for potentialities of self-realization is a common ground that brings my experience into a close relationship with those of Maurice and Mireille:

As a Canadian immigrant from an Egyptian background, I have experienced the feeling of being uprooted from my geographies of self, my stronghold, in my own way, fleeing Egypt for personal reasons. The pain I have experienced leaving my homeland and family to move to Canada alone in my early twenties remains with me still today and that affinity aligns my lived experiences in part with that of the Jews of Egypt who were forced to leave the country for both political and religious reasons. Although I was not forced by the law to flee my homeland, I still feel the pain of leaving something very precious for the unknown and the fear and challenge of relocating myself in different cultural settings.

Thus, being a student revealed several aspects of self-realization through which I rediscovered my capacities as an individual in tandem with my interests in social studies in conjunction with fine arts. In that sense, my education helped me to construct a sense of belonging to the new Canadian culture (Figure 51).

Figure 42. . Ranya speaking about her immigration to Canada

Like photographs on a dashboard reflecting street lights and reversed images on the windshield through the journeys of our lives, our performed photographic narratives connect past to present; highlighting "interstitial passage" between fixed historical notions and self-identification, and offering potentials of a "cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 4). In a cozy and friendly gathering, Maurice, Mireille, and I reflected on the research process and identified spaces and geographies that remained as living organs into our bodies, pulsing memories that run through our veins. Throughout remembering, narrating, and reenacting these memories, we remarked our personal progress and growth through which we became others (Bhabha, 2012; Sinner, 2015). Video recoded interviews, still-screens, and photographed portraits are visual documentations of the multiple identities and roles we perform through our lives (Tagg, 2009; Goffman, 1959). This study brings our voices together in a harmonious call for a better future, an envisaged approach to cross barriers of political conflicts and social norms (Bustle, 2003). Maurice and Mireille are old friends. They have been members in the same community for years. I was the outsider, the one who came from the past, to be situated in the present and given a privileged invitation of a lifelong friendship.

Mutuality was the fruit of success in this research process. Trust was earned through transparency, acceptance, and embracement of what started as differences and ended as multiplicity, diversity, and richness. Life experiences as accumulated lessons were revisited for further examination bound with theories and methods to form artful representations and represented a rhizomatic, holistic, and humanized learning experience. Bridging the personal to the public required developing a conscious understanding of the vulnerability of the human struggle. Holding myself accountable to the research process was achieved through sharing and

exposing my own vulnerability in parallel to Maurice's and Mireille's. Thus, in celebration of achieving all the above, Mireille, Maurice, and I regard ourselves as pioneers of sharing personal and diverse diasporas that embarked from the same sociopolitical and historical contexts. We want to draw the readers/viewers' attention to our common interpretation of this study, as it is the individual's responsibility to question and examine history in order to negotiate the future.

Chapter 6

The Educational Significance of Performed Narratives

Figure 43. Maurice, Ranya, and Mireille

My research objective was to examine storytelling of life experiences of diaspora as a platform for performance. The research question emerged from my own personal experience as a Canadian immigrant with Egyptian roots who grew up eager to deepen my understanding of Egypt's lost pluralistic identity. As an art educator and researcher, this research enabled me explore multiple media, including video-recorded interviews, still-screens, photography, and life writing, as means of constructing a rhizomatic learning experiment (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000). Our stories represent the diversity of our experiences on different levels and through different phases of our lives. Although Maurice and Mireille belong to the same generation and were born in the same city, their stories provided different, sometimes contrasting, insights into their lived experiences. My story added a third voice that offered a panoramic view to the Egyptian and

Canadian social and cultural landscapes through the lens of being an immigrant, artist/teacher, and researcher.

My story, along with those of Maurice and Mireille, holds educational significance to a greater audience who will construct knowledge through the intersectionality of our stories with theoretical approaches to the research. The generated and analyzed data reveal shades of commonalities and contrasts between our lived experiences. Thus the research processes invite the audience to further their knowledge through conceptual interpretation and appreciation. Through the art of visual life writing (Sinner, 2015; Lightfoot, 2008), my goal is to initiate an expanded conversation around accessibility to cultural heritage of the diverse Canadian population. As Canadian immigrants from Egyptian roots, Maurice, Mireille, and I represent a part of the Canadian multicultural textile. Our diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds unfold the multiplicity of our personal identities, thus, sharing our stories create bridges of understanding to the individualistic experiences of diaspora and the role of art educators as promotors of social inclusion (Safran, 1991; Green, 1999).

Through the first chapter, I was incisive to introduce the readers to the historical background of the political and cultural conflicts that caused the exodus of multiethnic communities from Egypt during the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. I have interwoven my story not as a witness, but as an Egyptian who lived and experienced the outcomes of the nationalist wave during the 1990s. This introduction enabled me to link my experience to Maurice and Mireille's through theoretical approaches that emphasized cultural hybridity as a means of understanding the complexity of the human identity (Bhabha, 2012). In that sense, still-screens and photographed portraits offer representations through which our characters, interviews' settings,

and actions stand for something beyond direct and simple representations (Tagg, 2009; Braid, 1996; Adams, 1994).

Our stories are narratives bound with theory to inform the educational goals of the research. Diaspora stories in art education hold the potential to raise awareness of social justice and the importance of perceiving cultural differences as a source of enrichment to society (Kuttner, 2015; McGee Banks, 2015). The data analysis (Creswell, 2013) informed educational strategies and complemented theoretical and philosophical assumptions of the research:

1) The contributions of our stories to provide deeper understanding of social, cultural, and professional challenges that immigrants encounter through their journey of cultural transmission and transformation (Dekker, 2001). Through the narration processes, Mireille, Maurice, and I storied the process of leaving Egypt in our early twenties and settling in Canada. The data analysis highlighted the role of education and professional life in helping us to integrate into Canadian culture. Social integration paved the way for cultural transmission and transformation, through which we developed our personalities and expanded our world views. This enabled us to reflect on our personal experiences within a multicultural context.
2) The aesthetics of still-screens and photographed portraits as literary and visual representations invite interpretive responses from the audience through the appreciation of shared lived experiences (White & Frois, 2013; White & Costantino, 2012; Tagg, 2009). Bowers (2013) explains that photography is a vital tool documenting the "muteness and/or mutability" in the lives of immigrants, thus, still-screens captured multiple sensory prompts: space, body movement, and sentimental items that linked the narrators' geographic presence to their memorized heritage.

Video-recorded interviews were the main source of visual and written data. While writing our stories from verbatim quotes, still-screens provided multilayered visual data that informed the stories and provided the viewers with visual representations of the narrators in the action of storying. As such, still-screens are contextualized data that bridge the images to the written texts and create deeper meaning as visual life writing (Braid, 1996; Worthen, 1995; Widen & Russel, 2003). In addition, they offer independent imageries as artworks in their own right and invite conceptual interpretations from the viewers (Sinner & Owen, 2011; Arsenault, 2012).

3) Self-exposure proved to be a means of reflectivity and transparency for Maurice, Mireille, and myself. Sharing our identities invites the viewers to create a rapport and make a smooth transition from general notions to the individuality of the lived experiences, and then to create connections between our experiences and those of others (Leavy, 2015). Thus, narrative inquiry as a theory and a methodology harnessed still-screens and photographed portraits as artful expressions. It also brought the humanitarian aspect to the forefront of the research and emphasized "the humanity of learning" and created a fluid and organic learning environment (Sinner, et al., 2015, p. 167; Denzin, 2006). Most importantly, still-screens and photographed portraits enabled Maurice and Mireille to recognize themselves as storytellers and revealed their intellectual skills as communicators transferring knowledge to a larger audience.

4) The emotional and intellectual impacts of storying experiences are revealed through the sensitivity and the vulnerability of verbal and nonverbal clues (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). My interviews' questions aimed to find responses to theoretical assumptions.

> Furthermore, video-recorded interviews revealed the nonverbal aspects of the interaction through the performativity of the narration process. As still-screens captured our immediate responses to each event, they also framed transitional moments that depict us remembering, reflecting, describing, and reenacting our feelings during specific events. In that sense, the narration process became progressive as we took part as characters, not just narrators, which invites the viewers to witness the reenacted events and link them to historical interpretations to create new meanings and knowledge (Jones &Stephenson, 2005; Schneider, 2011; School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, 2012).

Although the narration processes were semi-guided by my question lists, each one of us produced different elaborations. Thus, themes and subthemes revealed our conceptual interpretations of diaspora (Safran, 1991). While analyzing my data, I focused on two categories: first, how the stories were told (Riessman, 2008) which were directly related to still-screens as visual representations that highlighted the facial and physical engagement of each one of us as a form of performance; and secondly, what we remembered, the memories that are still inhabiting us and influencing our life experiences of diaspora (Sinner et al., 2015). Focusing on these two categories enabled me to braid my data to create consistent and meaningful interpretations of each theme and subtheme. Through maintaining a close relationship with Maurice and Mireille, member checks, and data reviews, I developed a deeper understanding of the importance of certain events in Maurice and Mireille's stories. These events became the focal points of my data analysis. In that sense, I was orchestrating the research process through artistic, literary, and visual forms of life writing (Leavy, 2015).

The data unfolded with thematic richness. However, I narrowed it down to family background, educational and professional life, and immigration. Each theme developed three subthemes that corresponded with our stories to cast a spotlight on the process of cultural transition and transformation in the lives of immigrants. While our stories exhibited diverse familial backgrounds, social, and cultural milieus, our immigration experiences represented shades of relatedness, as social inclusion and cultural transformation were achieved through educational and professional experiences. A sense of alienation was revealed in our stories through different perspectives: Mireille's story exhibited her sense of alienation while being in Alexandria, as her French education and dominant Italian heritage limited her chances of integration into Egyptian culture. This feeling of alienation disappeared when Mireille moved to Montreal. However, the struggle of being uprooting remained vivid in her memory. Maurice's sense of alienation was more abstract, as it was expressed indirectly through narrated events such as how he had to work under a given name in order to hide his religious identity. Unlike Mireille, Maurice's cultural transformation was achieved through a struggle of understanding and explaining his "duel identity" as he described that his early years of childhood were spent in Alexandria and his early years of youth were in Lebanon. My story represents a different type of alienation that was experienced through my realization of the ever-growing gap between the Egyptian contemporary monoculture and the pluralistic heritage that once enriched the country with a unique social structure. These findings of the data analysis exhibit the diverse nature of diaspora in modern societies as a conceptual problem of ethnic communities, immigrants, and aliens (Safran, 1991).

Travelling back and forth in time and geography was illustrated literary and visually. The process of reflectivity evoked emotional and physical responses, which created images that serve

as reflections of the narration process and linked our geographic presence to memories of lived experiences and personal identities (Sinner, 2015). As such, still-screens not only provide illustrative representations of the performativity of narration, but also invite the viewers to become part of the process of storying and the process of documentation (Schneider, 2011). As an art educator, I believe that images play a significant role in transferring knowledge and challenging preconceived ideas (Bustle, 2003). The *métissage* of our stories is represented through various methods and theories: 1) our memories' transitions between lived experiences in Egypt and Canada in different eras that highlight contrasting images of cultural and social settings (Sinner, 2015). The process of remembering evoked more memories that enriched the stories and revealed potential aspects of the research; 2) the diversity of our ethnicities that form the originality of our shared Egyptian heritage and emphasize the hybridity of our cultural experiences (Bhabha, 2012); moreover, our diverse backgrounds created metaphors and connections to the diversity of Canadian society; 3) the aesthetic of visual representations as conceptual artwork that encourage "enlightened cherishing" as a method of critique, personal interpretation, and a means of inspiration for a better world through the ability to visualize a "better order of things" (Barrett, 2006; Bustle, 2003, p. 8); 4) video-recorded interviews as a means of documenting the fluidity of the narration process and a source of still-screens as images that capture the intermediality of actions as intertextual and contextual data (Jones & Stephenson, 2005; Braid, 1996; Widen & Russel, 2003). In that sense, the interviews unfolded common visual and verbal repetitions of our stories and presented the emergence of new meanings and interpretations (Creswell, 2013; Leavy, 2015); 5) photographed portraits as representations of the self through the eyes of the narrators and the researcher combined. While still-screens represent the fluidity and spontaneity of our facial and physical reactions in tandem

with narrated events, our photographed portraits represent simple compositions that highlight the gained access and trust that I was offered by Maurice and Mireille (Adams 1994). Personal portraits emphasize the imputation of the research process that brought actions and words together into a unique and individualized, yet united layout that reflects the general through the particular and vice versa (Adams, 1994; Tagg, 2009).

In that sense, this study offers an opening to what I regard as an ongoing learning experiment that humanizes sociopolitical and cultural context. Maurice and Mireille's main concern was whether their personal stories are beneficial to other people. Sharing reflections of the research methods and philosophical approaches enabled them to see the importance of art education as an interdisciplinary medium of transferring knowledge. Thus, the three of us were engaged in an extended conversation around the aesthetic and ethics of our stories. What we offer to the readers/viewers are transparent reflections of both interpersonal and collaborative dialogues that culminate with pedagogic intent (Bustle, 2003). As such, there was no censorship, hierarchical authority, or preplanned scenario. Maurice and Mireille had complete ownership of their stories, as they reviewed their transcripts and images and were free to make corrections to certain parts. However, corrections did not change the main structure of their written stories. Instead, Maurice and Mireille's corrections made their stories more alive and realistic as they were keen on narrating the truth as they lived it. The final compositions of our stories are manifestations of "body, heart, mind, spirit, and imagination" (Sinner et al., 2015, p. 166).

Maurice and Mireille provided me with free and friendly access to the community of Jews from Egyptian roots in Montreal. Their generous invitations to social gatherings were coupled with a sincere desire to construct bridges and cross boundaries of historical and political barriers. As such, the learning process started before the actual process of the research. In fact,

social gatherings paved the way for all parties involved to construct a common ground as a starting point of the research. Introducing myself as a person, not as a scholar, and knowing Murices and Mireille as people who once lived in the same society that my parents lived in, demolished all feelings of alienation that I experienced previously, and gradually narrowed the gap of historical struggles. Consequently, my role had several valences: as a Canadian immigrant from Egyptian background, art educator, researcher, and social activist (Bustle, 2003). Through the research process, I realized that all previous qualities are deeply embodied in me as an evolution of my lived experiences. In response, I became more aware of the educational significance of my research.

Presenting narrative inquiry as a platform for performance provided me with unique potentialities for interpreting the data and the extracted educational values that aim to move beyond the status quo (Bustle, 2003; Leavy 2015). As real characters reenacting our personal history in diaspora and individualized journeys to social inclusion and identity identification, we offer the viewers/readers with opportunities of self-liberation from "ill-defined histories that dictate learning and shape the quality of our lives and the lives of others" (Bustle, 2003, p. 9). As such, learning not only refers to the academic curriculum that I discussed as part of my personal struggle (see chapter one), but it refers to all gained lessons from everyday life activities, the informal and nonformal learning that is underway in situations that affect us in various ways, as represented in Maurice and Mireille's stories.

In that sense, the term "performance" surfaces as the multifaceted roles we represent as individuals (Grey, 2003; School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, (2012); Schneider, 2011; Jones & Stephenson, 2005). Mireille's story represents her multi-ethnic and linguistic background that influenced her capacitates as a high school student dancing to

rock and roll songs while she was in Alexandria and later as a young female immigrant yearning for independence and education while holding nostalgic threads of her heritage in the folds of her heart. Although Maurice reflected on his struggle with his duel identity, his story unfolded his artistic identity as a film reviewer, which started with his passion for cinema as a child nurtured by his sitter Fatt'hyya. Maurice's storying process represented several frozen images of other individuals who played significant roles in his life: his parents, sitter, the Lebanese magazine director, and even the Canadian immigration judge. Maurice performed each of the previous characters as he remembers them through tone of voice, physical gesture, and facial expression. All these representations came together to represent Maurice as a person with a photographic memory and reenacting skills. While documenting my story, I was not aware of any personal aspects that my story was revealing; instead, I was simply involved in the process as a research participant. Only when I reviewed my video-recorded interviews did I start to observe the shifts I made during the narration process. As I was moving back and forth in geographies and time, identity progression was revealed through every narrated phase. While transcribing my interviews, I created a responsive dialogue with sociopolitical aspects that form common ground with Maurice and Mireille. However, as the researcher, I realized that my story is not limited to the narrated parts in the video-recorded interviews. In fact, I came to the conclusion that my personal story is accomplished through Maurice and Mireille's, as they represented both the objective and the rationale of my research that is mainly driven by my personal experience with diaspora and self-realization (Deleuze, 2001; Bochner & Rigges, 2014; Bhabha, 2012).

Our stories will continue to serve as entry points to a larger context and to provide personal perspectives of post-colonial societies and the understanding of cultural identity (Bhabha, 2012). I acknowledge the fact that narrated stories and extracted data could have been

exhibited and analyzed in multiple ways that would have disclosed the possibilities of different interpretations and inform performance as a methodology that invites the viewers to adapt new ways of thinking (Leavy, 2015). Through spiral data analysis (Creswell, 2013), I focused on comparing our stories to each other and highlighting responses to themes and subthemes. One of my main concerns was to be able to gather all tangled threads and create coherent and meaningful structure that informs visual representations and responds to the main research question. As such, this research is aligned with key concepts in visual art education and performance.

Reflecting on the outcomes of this research, there are six key concepts that have emerged during writing our stories and these concepts are waiting for further research as potential theories that may unfold deeper dimensions of diaspora as a humanitarian experience. These key concepts were embodied in our stories directly and indirectly. Some of them inform the theoretical approaches of this research and some others require theoretical and methodological expansion.

1) **Language as cultural barrier:** This concept emerged through our stories while reflecting on family background and educational experiences. Language referred to Maurice and Mireille's pluralistic background that reflects their multiethnic identities. However, it also mirrored gaps in their experiences of cultural inclusion while living in Egypt. Mireille's dominant European heritage and education created cultural barriers that blocked her from adopting the Egyptian culture as a language. Maurice had a unique experience fleeing Egypt to another Arab country. His French education dominated his social encounters and professional experiences. As such, while in Lebanon, Maurice's social inclusion was through a French cultural perspective rather than Lebanese or Egyptian. Growing up in a family that cherished Egypt's historical pluralistic culture

enabled me to develop critical views of the postmodern culture I experienced as a university student in the Faculty of Fine Arts in Egypt. In this sense, language as cultural barrier represents an abstract meaning that casts a spotlight upon my inability to adapt to the limitations of postmodern mono-cultural Egyptian society.

2) **Visual culture:** our stories exhibit varied images that depict the impact of visual culture as a factor of social inclusion and a means of learning. Narrating life experiences made personal and public geographies very visible to the readers. Family milieu, neighborhoods, and societal settings are all elements of visual culture that remained vivid in our memories. Maurice and Mireille lived the same era my parents did and their stories complemented my parents' stories about Egyptian visual culture during the 19050s and 1960s. However, both Maurice and Mireille made different geographical shifts in their lives before settling in Canada in the late 1960s. Their stories exhibit their personal observations of Canadian visual culture during that time, which highlights the individualistic perception of visual culture and in turn its conceptual influence on the progression of its individuals. My story represented a direct comparison and contrast between Egypt's visual culture before and after the nationalist wave, and how that reflected a disturbed image that contributed to my alienation within the stronghold of my homeland. Visual culture as a key concept also reflects on popular media that Maurice, Mireille, and I narrated differently. While Mireille reflected on the Americanized culture she experienced through music and films, Maurice explained that cinema played significant role in shaping his passion that developed into a career in the later stages of his life. I grew up with traces of Egypt's demolished cosmopolitanism, architecture,

popular media, and post cards that were all elements of visual culture that depict glimpses of Egyptian modern heritage before the nationalist wave.

3) **Political conflicts and contradictions:** The nationalist wave caused the exodus of thousands of multiethnic communities from Egypt, including the Egyptian Jews. Both Maurice and Mireille fled Egypt with their families to different countries as they realized they had no future in Egypt and that Egyptian society was undergoing a radical shift towards monocultural values that contradicted the multiplicity of its ancient and modern heritage. Maurice and Mireille migrated to Canada in the late 1960s. They both settled in Montreal during the Quiet Revolution. This notion reveals the irony of fleeing from a place experiencing a nationalist wave to another place undergoing a patriotic shift. However, social structures of Canadian and Egyptian societies during that time differed greatly. While Canada was and is still known for its pro-immigration policies, Egypt was a country struggling with a series of wars mainly concerned with its national security (Abadi, 2006; Amar, 2012). This historic coincidence provides political depth to the study and offers opportunities for expanded discussions around political maneuvers and their impacts on cultural and societal progression. Furthermore, it highlights the role of educational and professional institutions in providing their diverse population with needed opportunities for social inclusion and belonging as explained in Mireille and Maurice's stories.
4) **Religion versus ethnicity:** This study could easily be interpreted as ethnography, as it depicts the personal stories of three immigrants of Egyptian roots. Even Maurice and Mireille's stories can be viewed from this perspective, as both of them are Jewish expatriates who forcibly fled their stronghold for political and religious reasons.

However, as a researcher, I did not see our lived experiences from this angle. In regard to the nature of our ancient and modern Egyptian heritage that reflects the mixed blood of the Egyptian people, it is not possible to view Maurice and Mireille's religious identity as the main trait of their ethnicity. Both Maurice and Mireille have multilayered ethnicities, as described in their stories (see chapter 4). Their family heritages exhibit the rich and varied textile of their multiethnic background. In that sense, my research provides an opportunity for in-depth examination of the ways religions as core beliefs are not the only indicators of personal or communal traits. Moreover, the exploration of personal identity requires the understanding and acknowledgment of fixed and non-fixed factors that contribute to the construction of individuals' complex personal identity structure (Bhabha, 2012).

5) **National identity and immigration:** the nationalist wave aimed to determine Egypt's main trait as an Arab country, which was a political maneuver that reverberated in the lives of the peoples of Egypt. Against all odds, the Egyptian regime sought to demolish the cultural contributions of all multiethnic communities that had lived in Egypt through its modern history. The political shift towards nationalism shaped a life dilemma for Maurice and Mireille, whose identities were deeply rooted in Egypt and who were obliged to give up their Egyptian identity. Immigration to Canada paved the way for a new journey of constructing a national identity that fostered Maurice and Mireille's ethnical and linguistic multiplicity. In this regard, this study hosts personal nationality and immigration as key concepts that influenced Maurice and Mireille's life experiences. Additionally, this concept relates to my situation as an immigrant with dual citizenship.

The concept also invites personal interpretations of the ways immigrants and Canadian citizens perceive their national identity and how the Canadian citizen can be identified.

6) **Post-war societies and human struggle:** This concept provides an invitation to in-depth educational and social research studies about the implications of wars on human life experiences. Both Maurice and Mireille mentioned that they were lucky to immigrate to Canada. Mireille compared her situation with the current Syrian refugees' crisis and expressed her feelings of sympathy. In this regard, my research brings this concept as an unfolded conclusion that needs to be further examined in relation to diaspora and a personal, national, and international struggle. I believe that art education as an interdisciplinary field is a means of transferring knowledge of sociopolitical phenomena that influence humans and seeks ways of establishing a socially engaged learning environment. Thus, learning about post-war societies through multiple lenses enables researchers of multiple disciplines to construct detailed knowledge about the human condition and examine methods of research as potential solutions and/or services that aim for humanitarian goals.

In conclusion, I see this research as a progressive study that examines the validity of methodological and theoretical approaches, the aesthetics and coherency of the generated data, and the ways the data echoed the main research question. Video-recorded interviews as the main source of multiple forms of data provided Mireille, Maurice, and myself with self-empowerment as we were delivering personal perceptions of diaspora. Our personal reflections represented our stands as advocates of change and social awareness (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2003). My personal reflections informed my concerns as an art educator; I have come to the realization that our stories echoed what we are being exposed to through mass media, which exhibits the continuity

of human struggle. Thus, I see this research as an example of the expanded relationship between media, visual culture, and art education (Bustle, 2003), as Lucke (2001) states:

> Media studies focus on the critical deconstruction of media text such as print and imagery in popular magazines, TV programs and advertising, movies, billboards, and related forms of media representations (p. 1).

In that sense, I argue that our stories represent mirrored images of human struggle that we witness everyday through media. Thus, diaspora is a life experience that renews itself through different contexts and situations. However, it gathers individuals with all their diversities on a common ground of becoming other and realizing personal identities. Embracing voices, delivering messages of appreciation and recognition to each other experiences, and constructing bridges of empathy and solidarity is a humanitarian need to overcome the hardship of personal life experiences (Leavy 2015; Creswell, 2013; Sullivan, 2002).

Furthermore, this study reveals key concepts as emerged epiphanies that posit the human experience as the central content of the research process (Creswell, 2013). In this, I have come to realize that the educational significance of the study resides in offering dialectical and innovative data that evokes discussions of societal and humanitarian issues (Oliver & Lalik, 2001). The analyzed data revealed that social inclusion and identity realization were achieved through our emergence into educational and professional milieus, which tied the research aims to its findings. Interaction occurs through the exchange of worldview, values, and educational aims and praxis (Roenpagel, 2015); as our stories depict life experiences, they also reflect our worldviews and inherited and developed values, which represent humanitarian learning materials. From this perspective, I am convinced that personal worldview in conjunction with lived experiences shape

the infrastructure of the ways we learn and teach as a reciprocal process of exchanging and sharing.

Through this study, I advocate for photographed performed narratives as a mode and method of visual literacy that offer interesting materials of imagination and interpretive reflections, or as Bustle (2003) stated, "as objects or artifacts, individuals can return to them over and over again. They can share them with others, revisit them, and even translate or interpret them through language" (p. 33). Forsh (2001) argues that photography as performance is an experiment of social power through the visibility that is presented to the viewer. The power of our portraits is emphasized through the gaze and facial expressions and physical gestures. In addition, our photographed portraits highlight the relationship between the photographed and the photographer and provoke the viewers' emotions (Parsons, 2009; Forsh, 2001).

Beside visual illustrations, short biographies "explore interpersonal relationships, communication and identity" (Leavy, 2015, p. 55). Life stories contribute as narratives that address personal and public questions. As such, they blur the edges between art, life experiences, and public matters, and open doors for further questioning of traditional beliefs and presumptions (Creswell, 2013; Pearson, 2010; Barringer, 2010). Leggot (2004) explains that autobiographical narrative is a creation that requires reconstructing the past. Braid (1996) argues that the process of listening to and interpreting a narrative depends on the narrators' understanding of the narrated event, and that this understanding is manifested in the narrators' performance. As such, Braid considers storytelling as process of performance that enables the audience to follow the narrator and make meaningful interpretations of the story being narrated. While conducting video-recorded interviews with Maurice and Mireille, I recognized that our stories not only complemented each other, but also enabled us to relate to each other, as we were filling

emotional gaps that we developed through our journeys in diaspora. In that sense, diaspora as a life experience took a metaphoric dimension through which I perceived Maurice and Mireille as part of my missing heritage that I finally found and had access to. And in turn, I personified the return of Egyptian pluralism that both Maurice and Mireille lost through their journeys to Canada.

Our performed narratives provide me with rich mixed-media artwork for an exhibition. With the approval of Maurice and Mireille, I am planning to produce an exhibition of video-recorded interview installations in conjunction with printed still-screens and photographed materials. Video-recorded interviews depict sensor prompts of the characteristic settings of our interviews. For example, Mireille photographed portraits represent her wearing a sweater her grandmother wove before their exodus in preparation for the cold weather of Montreal. This sweater is one of several ones Mireille still keeps as a memory of her grandmother. Maurice's interviews depict him reflecting on the journals that he has kept since he was a child in Egypt. These journals date back to 1957 and were written by Maurice as reviews of films he attended on a regular basis with either Fatt'hyya or his father, in addition to a series of photographs depicting Maurice with Hollywood superstars like Clint Eastwood throughout his film career in Montreal. During my interview, I wore one of my mother's favorite dresses and my photographed portraits depict me sitting next to my parents' photographs as recognition of their role in educating me about my Egyptian heritage at a very young age, which reflects their legacy as Egyptians who valued their Egyptian cosmopolitan heritage.

The exhibition, which will be held in the Fofa Gallery at Concordia University in the fall of 2017, aims to expand the audience of the study and to take the research data from scholarly purposes to public space. Most importantly, the exhibition is an act of recognition and

appreciation of our life stories as vivid and metaphoric examples of the continual human struggle in diaspora. The exhibition is intended as manifestations of the self through personal history and the potentials of correlation-creation that relate the personal to the public. As an artist and researcher, the exhibition offers me the opportunity to express my gratitude to Maurice, Mireille, the Egyptian Jewish community in Montreal, and *amicale alexandrie hier et aujourd'hui*, who embraced me as an integral member of their heritage that they cherish. Through the exhibition, our performed photographic narratives mirror our existence in paralleled geographies, Egypt and Canada, through which we invite the viewers to join us through journeys in time and spaces to create new meanings and interpretations. Finally, I aim to use visual and recorded data as a panoramic landscape that characterizes us as storytellers/performers who are representing the hybridity of their multiethnic heritage and current multicultural identity.

In the Egyptian dialect, there is a traditional saying that expresses the hosts' gratitude for receiving guests. It is translated into English as "you have enlightened and honored us with your presence." As such, on behalf of Maurice and Mireille, I address the audience of this study with our deepest gratitude; for we believe that the essentiality of our performed photographic narratives lies in their contributions to constructing new ways of thinking that enlighten our perception of shared life experiences.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVEW QUESTIONS

"Performative Photographic Narratives: Stories of Egyptian Jewish Diaspora and Egypt's lost Cosmopolitan Identity"

1. Where were you born in Egypt?
2. What neighbourhood did you live in?
3. Do you still remember the name of your school? For how long did you go to school in Egypt?
4. What are your memories about the Egyptian visual culture during the time you were living in Egypt?
5. Can you describe your familial and social milieu in Egypt?
6. What language did you mainly speak at home?
7. How old were you in 1952 when the Egyptian revolution took place?
8. What expedited you to leave Egypt?
9. What year did you leave?
10. What made you choose Canada to move to?
11. Can you describe your social and economic conditions when you departed?
12. How would describe your journey from Egypt to Canada?
13. Have you met challenges living in a different social and cultural context?
14. Have you visited Egypt after your migration to Canada? If you did, can you describe your feelings during that visit?

15. Now with the advancement of telecommunications the world has become smaller, people around the world can connect and communicate in various ways. Do you see this as an efficient tool to reconnect with old friends or may be new friends form Egypt?

APPENDIX B –

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Theme #1	**Family Background**
Subthemes	Plurality, cosmopolitanism, and cultural values
Mireille	Mireille's pluralism is implanted in her family background. Born in Alexandria to a family with diverse ethnicities that had been deeply rooted in Egypt since the nineteenth century, Mireille represents herself as "a citizen of the world." Pluralism manifests itself in Mireille's story as she reflects on the languages in which she can express herself: Italian, French, Greek, and some Egyptian dialect, the same languages that were practiced in her household before and after fleeing Egypt. Pluralism continued to be an essential part of Mireille's life experience after her exodus from Egypt and moving to Canada: > That is why, I think of Alexandria and Egypt as my home. Of course, Québec and Canada are my home now, but my roots are deeply rooted in Egypt. I feel good speaking English, Italian, French and some Arabic. Because I studied in a French private school, I know the French culture. I therefore relate to different parts of the world: Greece, France, Italy, and Egypt. Mireille's family heritage mirrors the pluralism of her personal life experience; during the narration process, she was very keen to story the history of her ancestors and how her family was constructed and rooted in Alexandria, Egypt: The story begins when my great grandfather on my father's side arrived to Egypt as a refugee in the nineteenth century, escaping harsh persecutions of the Jews. He settled near Alexandria in a small village between Cairo and Alexandria and began buying small pieces of land to cultivate cotton, as the land was very fertile. My father, Abramino, as well as his brother and sisters, were born in Alexandria and settled there as land owners. My mother and grandmother were originally Greek. My grandfather had Italian origins. They spoke Greek and Italian. And, as far as I know, my ancestors are from the region of Tuscany and from that small Greek island called Halkis. The video-recorded interview captured the passion with which

	Mireille was telling her story. Speaking of her family background and the diversity of her origins in tandem with growing up in Alexandria highlighted the process of remembering and the shifting to different geographies: Canada, Egypt, Italy, and Greece. Still-screens provide close-up photographs that depict Mireille's facial and physical engagements as the main subject. As the videos provided organic and fluid visual data accompanied with the narrated stories, still-screens presented visual documentations of the repeated facts in Mireille's story; for example, Mireille reflected on the different languages she speaks with several times during the first interview. The above still-screens document the moments in which Mireille related her language skills to her family's pluralism.
Maurice	Maurice's family background reflects a different cultural fabric than Mireille's. Growing up as an only child in a small family that was limited to him and his parents made Maurice experience pluralism within a different context. Fatt'hya, Maurice's babysitter, was the main source of diversity in his early childhood. To Maurice, Fatt'hya was a motherly figure who was also only twelve years older than him. The relationship between Maurice and Fatt'hya provided Maurice with companionship from a different ethnic and cultural background. Although French was the principal language of the family, Fatt'hya's permanent presence in the house added a sense of pluralism, as she was not only a babysitter, but also a close and trusted family member as described by Maurice: > We were small family, only the three of us that's all, but we tended to put Fatt'heya with us all the time. Whenever my parents fought, my second mother, Fatt'heya, would take me out, so I wouldn't to see the struggle and the battles the two of them had. We would go to the *corniche* (the sea side), and walk along the water, she would calm me down saying, "Look these things happen between couples." The only time when Maurice referred to language was when he was talking about his mother who spoke several languages and was involved in several intellectual activities in Alexandria. However, visual culture played a significant role in Maurice's life; as a child Maurice was deeply interested in films and mentioned the fact that he used to go to the movie theater once a week either with Fatt'hya or with his father. > We had also the movies, so when we went to the cinema, there were sometimes French movies, but it was mostly two movies, an American movie followed by an Egyptian movie. However, to make the program compact, the projectionist cut the American movie to the simplest expression. Maybe it lasted for an hour only. Why? Because after the *Entr' Acte*, we had the

	big Egyptian movie with all the singing and the tears and this has to be full! Practically all my life, since age eight, no earlier, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, I either went with my father or with Fatt'heya. Maurice kept journals about each movie he went to watch since he was a child until he became an adult. The passion he developed for cinema became an essential part of his identity as an adult, as he used to write film reviews in French in a Lebanese newspaper when he lived in Lebanon, and then when he moved to Montreal, Maurice worked for the National Film Board. The cinema mirrored the Egyptian visual culture that Maurice grew up in; he was reflecting on music, Egyptian actors and actress who represented the cosmopolitan fabric of the society, and it differed from what he used to watch in American movies that were misrepresented at that time. While speaking about his movie outings, Maurice became very expressive; he became more emotionally and physically involved and started to draw lines between three different geographies: Egypt, Lebanon, and Montreal. Unlike Mireille, Maurice did not repeat notions; instead, he moved from one phase to another in a very organized order. Only when he wanted to highlight a specific event he would go back in time and refer to a memory that he had previously storied. For example, when he spoke about his career at the National Film Board, he referred to his passion for films that started while he was a child in Egypt and then developed into writing film reviews in Lebanon, and then became a life-long career in Montreal. Maurice chose to have the interview held in his office located in his house. Maurice's office contained several sentimental objects: his journals that he kept for decades, photographs of his parents and himself as a child, and a small pharaonic souvenir that he bought from Egypt in 1997 when he went to visit for the first time since his exodus. Still-screens played a significant role in capturing rare moments of Maurice reenacting events that influenced his life. During this interview, Maurice shared some of his journals with me while gazing in the camera in a gesture of acknowledging his audience, then continued the process of remembering and shifting between geographies, eras, and personalities. Still-screens as independent photographs reflect Maurice's position as a storyteller; however, these photographs depict Maurice performing parts of his memories though his body movement and facial expressions that complement the narrated events.
Ranya	My family background represents a contrasting image to Maurice and Mireille's. Pluralism was a cultural quality that I learned about from my parents' photographs and stories. Furthermore, the Egyptian visual culture kept traces from its demolished cosmopolitanism; architecture and old media

	were common components of the Egyptian modern culture that I was consistently relating to my parents' stories and reflections about Egypt's lost pluralism. For me, meeting Maurice and Mireille is considered an exploration of my heritage and historic identity. Although my parents' vivid memories and detailed stories backed visual and cultural segments of cosmopolitan Egypt that remain untouched until today, I was not able to personally experience Egyptian pluralism until I met with Maurice and Mireille. Sharing our stories and reflections constructed feelings of relatedness and appreciation, and encouraged us to further our identity exploration *ensemble* as a team. Maurice and Mireille represent part of my extended heritage that I could not access while living in Egypt.
Theme #2	**Education, professional and social life**
Subthemes	social exclusion; alienation; sense of belonging
Mireille	Mireille's French education in Alexandria contributed to her pluralist experience as an Alexandrian with a diverse ethnic background. However, as French was the official language at school and Italian was the principle language at home, Mireille grew up lacking the Egyptian component in her education. Mireille reflects on several notions that bring the Egyptian culture to the core of her life experience as missed learning opportunities that she regrets now as an adult: > Although my father and my grandmother on my father's side were very well integrated, I was not because I could not speak Arabic as well as they did and this I regret today. Mireille's social life was mainly influenced by her education. Her friends were classmates who received the same education, and social activities had western and European cultural traits, Mireille stated: > We used to dance to American music, to rock and roll, to the twist, and to the romantic Platters. We even dressed in the same way we saw in American movies, same tight waists and large skirts. There were social clubs in front of the sea, the Greek and the international clubs where people of higher social class would go. We didn't go to dancing clubs; we learned and practiced on our own. Mireille's lived experience in Alexandria was limited to what was available to her age. As a high school student, she received French education which made her familiar with the French culture. Mireille storied how the French school curriculum was changed in 1963 to become an Egyptian curriculum, as a

primary result of the nationalist wave that was on the rise at the time. However, Mireille graduated from high school before the curriculum change occurred.

School was very important to Mireille on both academic and social levels. In the above still-screens, Mireille was trying to specify in what year the school name and curriculum was changed. The images depicts her facial experssions as she was explaining some of the consequences of the nationalist wave that influenced her as an individual. Two years after she arrived with her family to Montreal, Mireille continued her education at the Montreal University after working for two years, which enabled her to gain a sense of independence. As a young woman at the age of twenty, Mireille was willing to adapt to the new culture she had replaced herself in:

> By going to university two years later, I made Quebecois friends who made me somehow feel at home because we were speaking the same language, we were studying the same subjects, and I participated in many demonstrations. In Quebec in the sixties, it was the birth of the *Parti Quebecois*, a wave of patriotism. I got a feeling that I belonged to Quebec.

As an immigrant, university education provided Mireille with a social life and enabled her to construct friendships with individuals of her age; furthermore, being enrolled in an educational setting enabled Mireille to develop a sense of belonging and relatedness.

In that sense, education was a means of social inclusion that facilitated Mireille's cultural transmission and enabled her to develop a sense of belonging. Mireille's story reveals shades of resemblance between her cultural milieu in Alexandria and Montreal's cultural environment during the late 1960s. Growing up in a multiethnic family in a cosmopolitan city, and attending a school where French was the dominant culture and language, helped Mireille to adapt to Montreal; furthermore, moving to Montreal at a young age and starting professional and academic experiences for the first time in her life provided Mireille with independence and new opportunities for growth and learning.

During the narration process, Mireille was shifting back and forth in time. Her facial expressions and physical gestures mirrored how she felt during described events. While storying her experience as a university student, Mireille went back in time to when she was a young woman in her early twenties facing a new world and new challenges of becoming. Higher education contiued to play role in Mireille's social life:

> When I began my Master's degree, my thesis supervisor, François Gagnon, helped me integrate, so I was happy to be here. What tied me to Alexandria were the sweet memories I have preciously preserved until today.

Mireille had two different educational expereinces; the first was in Alexandria

	when Mireille was a high school student and her social life was then limited to her school friends. The second was when she moved to Montreal, had a job, and became a university student. Education and professional life granted Mireille social inclusion, thus, Mireille became aware of who she wanted to become which was translated into post-graduate studies.
Maurice	Maurice has limited memories of his elementary school in Egypt, as he fled the country with his parents to Lebanon at the age of twelve. What seemed to be more important to Maurice was the geography that led to his school: School started when I was five or six, I don't remember, there was a Jewish school, *Lycée de l' Union Juive*. I wished to go on my own, by the tram, but my father used to take me in his little car and bring me back. So when I was alone I took the tram, I was seven maybe or eight. The Lycée was on top of a hill, so I leave the tram stop, and go up the hill, and when I finish and I go down *Stanley Bay* and go to the beach on hot days in April, May, or June. I was a good student. I had great marks. It was interesting to notice that Maurice became more experssive when he described places. He was very keen to describe the paths that led to his school and the nature of the city in which he lived. Alexandria holds a special place in Maurice's memory. Although he left the city at a young age, he still has vivid memories of how the city looked when he was young. The ten years Mauirce spent in Lebanon after he fled Egypt were the starting point of his journey as a young adult. Maurice had a busy and active life in Lebanon; while he was a university student, he wrote film reviews in a newspaper, and had a radio broadcast in which he spoke about one movie twice a week. Like Mireille, education and professional life granted Maurice social activities and enabled him to construct a sense of belonging. However, unlike Mireille, Maurice's social inclusion came with a price: I was happy there; I was working for a newspaper as a film reviewer. I was hired at *Radio Liban* where I used to give film reviews twice a week. I was recognized and I became somebody suddenly; however, someone said to me, "Look, you're Jewish; I know that you work at the *Journal le Soir* and you write articles every Wednesday and you use your real name, but here at the radio we have to change your name". This incident highlights the hardship of Maurice's life expereinces as a young man; in order to continue doing the job he was most passionate about, Maurice had to work under a given name to hide his religious identity. Fleeing Egypt to another Arab country, Lebnanon, continued to posit Maurice and his family in the same political conflict that they were experiencing in Alexandria. Maurice mentioned the fact the the Lebanease were reluctant to

	hire Jewish people during the 1960s. When the 1967 war occurred, Maurice and his family faced the harsh reality that they must leave again. As such this icident exhibits sense of alienation as part of Maurice expereince of diaspora When they moved to Canada in 1967, Maurice experienced immersion with different sociopolitical and cultural contexts: > The Expo 67 brought different people from the whole world to Montreal, with their ways of thinking, their dancing, and their food. 1967 and 1968 was a time of change, transformation, and freedom. There were anti-Vietnam War marches, even though we were not in the United States; Prime Minister Trudeau opened his doors to all the deserters. Maurice narrated a different life experience than Mireille's. Both Maurice and Mireille arrived in Montreal in 1967. While Mireille reflected on her university education and her endorsement of the Quebec patriotic wave, Maurice narrated his first work experience in Montreal at the Expo 67, through which he was able to experience a different cultural milieu. In that sense, both Mireille and Maurice exhibited the ways that they were locating themselves as newcomers in the new society. Social immersion was a result of different educational and professional approaches that mirrored the sociopolitical landscape of Montreal during that time in comparison and contrast with Egypt's. However, Maurice's educational background uncovers the multilayered personal experiences he experienced at a very young age before his arrival to Canada: > When I was in Paris, friends and I were looking at a billboard at the university, and we saw that there was someone from Canada who had a lecture at the Canadian Embassy entitled *Pourquoi nous avons besoin de professeurs de français dans le province de Québec?* "Let's go!" I said to one of my friends and so we went. While in Paris for a year to obtain a teaching degree, Maurice coincidently attended a lecture representing the possibility of immigrating to Canada and becoming a school teacher, something that Maurice related to and was eager to learn more about. This lecture was a turning point in Maurice's personal and professional life; two years after he came back from Paris to Lebanon, the 1967 war occurred and he decided that it was the time to immigrate to Canada. Unlike Mireille's immigration experience, Maurice's decision was based on what he learned about Canada in an official lecture held in the Canadian embassy in Paris.
Ranya	My education in Egypt was influenced by traditional and historic educational concepts (See Chapter 1). I was very lucky to receive a tuition-free university degree, as granted by the government for all Egyptian citizens. However, when I had the chance to be enrolled in a different academic milieu at the American University in Cairo, which is a private educational institution, I was exposed to different learning opportunities that revealed varied possibilities

	for my future. Throughout this experience, I became aware of the vitality of multiculturalism as a cultural and educational value that provides individuals with a deeper understanding of academic content. > There was almost no room for creativity or self-reflection that could have enabled us as students to expand our practice and think of art projects as arts research instead of just being technical observers. We were trained to be observers and draw what we saw in detail. Hyper realistic drawings were the only indicator of our abilities to maintain high grades and achieve the recognition of faculty members. The teacher/student relationship was constructed on a hierarchical basis; as students we were required to conform to direct instructions and never question our practice. We were recognized as students only, not as students/artists. Unlike Maurice and Mireille, social inclusion was not a factor in my education when I was in Egypt. In fact, it was the contrary. There was an ever-growing gap between the Egyptian heritage and the cultural settings in which I lived, and I was fully aware of this gap. In that sense, I lived in a different cultural and political milieu and my education at the faculty of fine art in Cairo, Egypt enabled me to experience the limitations of learning in a singular society. On the other hand, my learning experience in the American University in Cairo was a turning point in my academic and professional career as an artist: > In 1999, I had a scholarship to the American University in Cairo to obtain a certificate in Contemporary Art Criticism in co-corporation with the University of Wisconsin. The seminars and workshops were held at the Townhouse Gallery in downtown Cairo, where I met and worked for the first time with artists from different parts of the world. The workshops provided educational courses in which we reflected on our practices as independent professional artists and developed new understandings of contemporary art movements. These workshops helped me reflect on my personal ideas and I was encouraged for the first time to try new approaches in printmaking. Being exposed to different cultural settings freed me from traditional theoretical approaches that I was required to adapt in academic and professional life. This learning experience left me eager for more. As such, traveling was inevitable in order to discover new dimensions of the world and expand my worldview.
Theme #3	**Immigration**
Subthemes	cultural transition and transformation, and sense of belonging

Mireille	Mireille's story highlights her experience of moving to Canada when she was twenty years old as a natural and soft cultural transition: > When we moved to Montreal, I remember Place Ville Marie that was being built in 1965. I was surprised to see women wearing similar fashions. What was interesting to me was the consciousness of Quebecers, their patriotism; I liked this idea that they wanted to be recognized for who they were, as French people. Of course, her French education contributed to her ability to adapt to the Quebec French culture. Furthermore, being enrolled in a university program expanded her opportunity for social inclusion and cultural adaptation, as she states: > By going to university two years later, I made Quebecois friends who made me somehow feel at home because we were speaking the same language, we were studying the same subjects, and I participated in many demonstrations. When Mireille left Egypt, she moved with her family for a short time to Italy until they decided to immigrate to Canada and live in Montreal. Because she grew up in a cosmopolitan city and within a diverse ethnic family, cultural transition was natural and favored. In that sense, Mireille did not experience any challenges. On the contrary, her story reflects her successful transition and transformation: > When I began my Master's degree, my thesis supervisor, Francois Gagnon, helped me integrate, so I was happy to be here. What tied me to Alexandria were the sweet memories I have preciously preserved until today. Although Mireille moved with her family to Montreal, she continued to feel nostalgic and this feeling was expressed in her story when she stated: > Only after we left, I asked my mother, 'What is your history, and your mother's history?' Maybe at that time it was easier to take a major step in my life when I felt innocently protected. In fact, I was protected by my own emotions, and I didn't know why I had to leave, why I couldn't stay. In that sense, her successful cultural transition and transformation did not demolish her emotional bonds with Alexandria as her homeland. Mireille further emphasized this idea when she storied her experience visiting Alexandria so many years after her exodus: > When my mother died, that was in 1992, I immediately felt that I had to go to Egypt to compensate for my loss. It was my birth country, so there was a relationship between my mother who I lost and the city I was born in, so it was like going back to my mother, in Alexandria. I decided to go back. I felt that going back to Alexandria, I could feel my family, and remember the life that I had. Going back to Egypt to re-connect with her roots highlights the notion that

	immigration does demolish the inherited geographies of the self. Although Mireille's mother died and was buried in Montreal, Mireille's only way to compensate and to heal was by going back to Alexandria, the motherland where she and her mother were born. This moment was towards the end of Mireille's second interview. Although Mireille was very emotional and verbally expressive during her interviews, these moments were even more intense for her as she was speaking about a discovery that she had made when she visited Egypt in 1993: I went back with my son who was nine years old and my sister. When we arrived at Cairo, we took a taxi to Alexandria and then we went to *Hotel Metropole*, and of course I went to see my house. The family who still lives in the apartment used to be our neighbors. They were Egyptians of Italian origin. It was beautiful; the three times I went to visit were beautiful. I was reconnected to the point that all my life from the moment I left to the moment I went back just disappeared, like nothing, it became a very short time, it just condensed, yeah, strangely.
Maurice	Maurice left Lebanon for Canada when he was twenty-two after finishing his university education in Beirut. Unlike Mireille, Maurice arrived in Montreal alone; his parents joined him later. Coming from a poor family, Maurice was supporting his parents and he had to find a job the moment he stepped foot in Montreal: I arrived in July, and I had a contract teaching in a partisan school board in September. How do I pay rent from July to September? I had to have money. So I found a job at Expo 67 in the Iranian pavilion where they hired me to wash glasses and I earned some money, paid the rent, and then I entered the school board and had my first pay cheque. Expo 67 was an international exposition held in Montreal in 1967, the year Maurice arrived in Montreal. With many countries participating in the exposition, Maurice was introduced to his first multicultural experience; furthermore, it was late sixties when a new political culture took hold in Canada and Maurice related himself to this Canadian sociopolitical culture: The Expo 67 brought different people from the whole world to Montreal, with their ways of thinking, their dancing, and their food. 1967 and 1968 was a time of change, transformation, and freedom. There were anti-Vietnam War marches, even though we were not in the United States; Prime Minister Trudeau opened his doors to all the deserters. My parents came after me. It was interesting to observe how Maurice and Mireille perceived their

multilayered identities as immigrants from Egyptian roots. Whilst Mireille saw herself as a "citizen of the world" and reflected on the diverse ethnic origins that enriched her identity, Maurice found himself in a problematic position that he narrated with a great sense of sarcasm:

> Every time people asked me, "Where are you from?" I didn't know exactly how to answer. Where did I come from? Well, I had literally just arrived from Lebanon. "Ah, you are from Lebanon, and you were born there right?" I would say, "No, I was born in Egypt," and they would say "Ah, so you were born in Egypt?" I said, "No, I'm from Lebanon, I just arrived from Lebanon." "Well, what is your country?" I would say, "My country, er…. I would say Lebanon. I'm a young adult, and I started my university studies there." And they would say, "But how about the county where you were born?" Me, "Yeah, there's that too. My childhood is Egyptian and my adolescent years are Lebanese." That's how I perceived myself, and my dual identities.

Mireille's personal experience with immigration reflects a smooth transformation that was facilitated by her constructive educational experience; however, Maurice's cultural and identity transition and transformation lasted a longer time. Throughout the narration process, Maurice became deeply reflective when he started to story his experience as an immigrant in Canada. Still-screens highlight the ways Maurice was not just narrating, but also performing the events he was remembering. In that sense, Maurice was performing other people's reactions and approaches towards him in specific moments. For example, when Maurice was reflecting on the day he took the Canadian citizenship exam, he went back in time to a different place, playing two roles: the role of the judge who was viewing his file and the principal role of himself responding to the judge's questions:

> On the day I took the Canadian Citizenship exam, the judge said to me, "You came here five years ago. Where did you come from?" I said, "I came from Lebanon?" He said, "Ah, I see here on the paper Alexandria, Egypt. Why are you telling me Lebanon?" I said, "Well I was born there but you are asking me where I came from and I came from Lebanon." He didn't ask me that famous question of what is the name of the Prime Minister of Canada, or what is the capital of Canada. Instead, he said, "What is the rank of Canada in the production of copper?" I said, "I don't know." So he said, "Well, you are going to come back to me in three months. You are going to take a brochure when you leave and you are going to study it before you come back here." And, I called my mother, and I said, "Mom, the first exam in my life that I have failed happened today."

Ranya	As an immigrant, I experienced what both Mireille and Maurice went through, however, from a different perspective. Like Mireille, education played a significant role in providing me with opportunities for social and cultural immersion. Furthermore, being enrolled in a Canadian educational institution enabled me to progress and expand my worldview, which in turn helped me to realize my individualistic identity as a human being, artist/teacher, and a researcher: Being a graduate student in the Visual Arts Education Department at Concordia University opened doors and encouraged my ability to think analytically and critically about personal experiences through the lens of an artist/teacher As I was narrating my experience of immigration, the term "diaspora" was taking on metaphorical meanings. Unlike Maurice and Mireille, I was not obliged to leave Egypt for political and/or religious reasons; however, it was the consistent feeling of yearning to become that was urging me to travel and explore the unknown. The search for potentialities of self-realization is a common ground that brings my experience into a close relationship with those of Maurice and Mireille: As a Canadian immigrant from an Egyptian background, I have experienced the feeling of being uprooted from my geographies of self, my stronghold, in my own way, fleeing Egypt for personal reasons. The pain I have experienced leaving my homeland and family to move to Canada alone in my early twenties remains with me still today and that affinity aligns my lived experiences in part with that of the Jews of Egypt who were forced to leave the country for both political and religious reasons. Although I was not forced by the law to flee my homeland, I still feel the pain of leaving something very precious for the unknown and the fear and challenge of relocating myself in different cultural settings. Thus, being a student revealed several aspects of self-realization through which I rediscovered my capacities as an individual in tandem with my interests in social studies in conjunction with fine arts. In that sense, my education helped me to construct a sense of belonging to the new Canadian culture.