Diasporic Orchestrations

A Database Narrative of Australian and Bulgarian Cultural Entanglements

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ABSTRACT

As a research undertaking conducted in a multimodal and multiplatform environment, this research project experiments with media and semiotic resources whose potential for producing cultural knowledge often remains underutilized and underappreciated. By challenging conventional ways of doing research that rest exclusively on the medium of written language and testing novel means of presenting and disseminating research data, the study casts light on the unexplored and underrated capacity of the moving image and new media technologies in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The research study consists of a digital component in the form of an online interactive environment populated with multimedia content and an exegesis that provides cues on how the former should be comprehended and, at the same time, further elaborates on what the digital outcome of the study has only alluded.[*] Complementing each other, the creative and the analytical parts of the study are arbitrarily structured through rhizomatic zigzag lines with no obvious beginning and end. This fabric or hypertextual formation has to be (re)discovered anew every time the viewer or the reader engages with either of the two components.

Furthermore, designed and performed as an experimental (qualitative) research, this project showcases innovative ways for conceptualizing particular socio-cultural phenomena. As soon as the reader or viewer starts (re)configuring the plenitude of fragments (i. e., engaging with the project's written and digital textual units), s/he is confronted with a rather different paradigm for conducting interdisciplinary research – one that operates through inverted structures and privileges *experimentation* as an indispensable procedure for generating cultural knowledge. Thus, rather than posing research questions, collating and interpreting data, and, eventually, suggesting

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[*] This thesis crisscrosses different theoretical and creative domains, which makes it difficult to be categorized in terms of traditional demarcations of academic fields and disciplines. Each of the project's two components – the exegesis and the online audio-visual product – is simultaneously creative and analytical; they both create database narratives and, at the same time, analyze the terms of their creation.

To view the digital outcome of the study, please visit http://diasporic.tv/.

The agreed percentage split between the project's two components is as follows – 40% for its digital part and 60% for the analytical or written component.

possible solutions to the problem under investigation, the structure of this project is ambiguous and always in a process of becoming. The research questions are being raised and formulated gradually in the mind of the reader as the project's outcome is thoroughly explored. In addition, throughout the whole study, the collected research data (in the form of narratives of self-representation generated through a series of video interviews) evades comprehensive analysis and interpretation, which automatically precludes the possibility of drawing convenient generalizations and offering more or less manageable classifications. Instead the interview data is continuously being de- and re-contextualized and, thus, treated like any other semiotic resource utilized in the project. In this line of thoughts, the research study should be regarded first and foremost as a novel form of self-expression[*] brought forward through the creative practices of experimentation and improvisation with the semiotic means the author has had at his disposal.
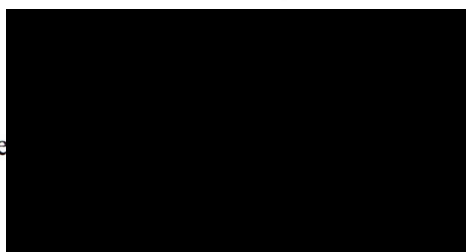
Both the creative and the analytical components of the research project feature excessive fragmentation and low degree of temporal and contingent coherence. The constructed written, verbal, audio-visual and digital texts are loosely arranged, constantly crisscross each other and unfold in a more or less random manner; nevertheless they are still able to maintain a common thematic line. The co-existence of multiple supple fields of signification, multilayered perspectives and diverse number of ways for engaging with the project's outcome generate a rather plastic structure of crystalline texts that organically intertwines with the main theme of the work – (diasporic) identity formation in the context of global interconnectedness and incessant virtual and physical mobility. Within this research study, the diasporic is envisaged as a dynamic field of cumulative and contingent attachments to a diverse number of cultural territories.

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[*] Here, it should be noted that this expressive form hinges hugely upon the constructed interviewees' stories and yet neither does it strive to meticulously document them, nor does it attempt to thoroughly interpret the stories showcased online. Adeptly manipulated and orchestrated with conspicuous indifference to the related actualities, the interviewees' narratives of self-representation are refashioned semiotically and become gradually interwoven into the rhizomatic fabric of authorial intentions and dispositions.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration (by performance / exhibition)

"I, *Krasimir Krastev*, declare that the PhD exegesis entitled *Diasporic Orchestrations (A Database Narrative of Australian and Bulgarian Cultural Entanglements)* should be at least 20,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work".

Signature █████████████ Date *15. 10. 2012*

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[04] THE WANDERER

> *Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities.*
> *(Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 24)*

In one of his latest works, Lev Manovich (2008) raises the intriguing idea that culture has become increasingly softwarized since the production, distribution, and reception of cultural texts is being gradually monopolized by emerging software techniques and computer applications. [1] According to Manovich (2008: 9-22) computational media has decisively replaced earlier media technologies becoming the new engine for both the creation and the access of cultural artifacts. However, one should bear in mind that the phenomenon of "software culture" is first and foremost a characteristic feature of Western societies that excludes large portions of the world. Moreover, even if we consider the Western world, it seems more appropriate to talk about a trend toward softwarization that accommodates a plenitude of local nuances and policies for software implementation rather than merging this diversity onto a single structure of a common culture.

Reshaping our cultural landscape(s), digital media has massive implications for how we live our everyday lives – an impact whose gravity we are still assessing. Nonetheless we have already experienced similar changes through the invention of the printing press, electricity, fast food and so forth; and yet we do not define culture exclusively on the basis of such innovations e.g., 'electricity culture' or 'car culture', to mention some of them. In other words, software cannot be the single source or the new center of cultural production and reception.

A socio-cultural environment offers a specific set of representational techniques and methods. Despite being a rather versatile and plastic tool, software is

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[1] Because of its online distribution, the work is referred to as a 'softbook' and Manovich claims that its content will be periodically updated and fixed taking into consideration comments and suggestions from the readers. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how exactly other people's contribution will be acknowledged i.e., who had what ideas.

just one among many other resources for cultural expression. It may be the prevailing cultural signifier of our time but, at the same time, software has its limitations and restrictions as well. It is because of this limited nature to represent certain aspects of the surrounding world that software could never replace or take over already existing media – on the contrary, it depends too much on prior media technologies and to a certain degree owns its existence to them. Manovich (2008: 14) rightly acknowledges that software "re-adjusts and re-shapes everything to which it is applied to" but there is nothing dramatic in this fact as every representational resource has the capacity to modify the immediate socio-cultural environment in which it is being utilized.

At the same time, drawing hugely on the theoretical work of earlier computer scientists - Alan Kay, Ted Nelson, Douglas Englebardt, to mention just a few names, Manovich (2008: 23; 59-79; 83) describes computational (meta)media as an umbrella "whose content is a wide range of already existing and not-yet-invented media". This fundamental and continuous condition of extendibility is what makes new media unique and different from earlier technologies of communication and cultural expression. However, a second and updated edition of a book featuring a detailed index and a wide range of visualizations (that have not been included in the earlier version) may easily fit this requirement for extendibility. The new edition provides novel forms of interaction between reader and cultural object, between different media, and, consequently, may offer new insights and perspectives on the subject matter.

Yet Manovich (2008: 25) differentiates multimedia from metamedia or hybrid media regarding them as two distinct stages "in the history of human semiosis and communication" – the former combines different media that coexist independently of each other whereas the latter merges media technologies into novel and fascinating "species of media" (Ibid., 75). According to Manovich, in any multimedia object the content of the featured mediums "appears next to each other" (Ibid.) whereas their autonomy remains intact. In contrast, hybrid media fuses previous media technologies into something different and new.

However what should be emphasized in this case is the fact that media content – regardless of whether we talk about multi- or meta-media, is always in a process of interaction as being perceived by the user. Furthermore, the suggested extensibility of new media may open new possibilities for cultural expression but does not necessarily imply richer content or greater signifying potential of the texts being generated. In

other words, a multimedia object may provide a much richer in meaning form of cultural expression in comparison to its meta-media counterpart. The transition from multimedia to metamedia may have opened new possibilities for cultural production but they cannot be realized by computer applications alone.

Manovich (2008: 77-78) illustrates the innovative nature of the media hybrid by referring to a digital cultural heritage project developed by ART+COM.[2] The project allows the user to explore a multilayered virtual world of Berlin as developing through time. In addition, the constructed 3D space is populated with many film fragments that reveal selected moments from the town's history. Manovich considers this bringing together of the medium of film and 3D computer graphics as morphing of different media languages whereby a third media form is produced featuring new and distinct properties. Thus, the film fragment may have become a 3D object of interaction but its visual content can still be viewed in a conventional way. Here it is worth posing the question of to what extent these visual fragments can be regarded as film in the first place. Manovich (2008: 75) writes that the media hybrid brings together the "most fundamental assumptions of different [already existing] media forms". Nonetheless, in the case of the cultural heritage project it seems that the excessive fragmentation and transformation into an object to be manipulated with have deprived film from its characteristic feature of evoking emotive and ideative statements in the mind of an audience through a gradually unfolding storyline.

Let us look at another example that clearer illustrates the false conception of the superiority of the hybrid in comparison to its constituents – a 3D virtual reading room containing rich collection of manuscripts on early medieval history of Europe. "Unbundled from their physical bases" (Ibid., 78), the different media forms are translated into software that gives rise to a new hybrid. However, because of this detachment of the written text from its material support, the virtual reader is prevented from experiencing the interaction with the documents in full – for instance, it becomes impossible for him/her, as an inhabitant of this virtual space, to acquire a sense of smell or touch of the manuscripts.

Both examples highlight the fact that computational media simply renders existing media technologies *different*. It does not always extend their fundamental qualities - neither does it necessarily give rise to richer and superior media forms. In

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[2] 'The Invisible Shape of Things Past' project can be viewed at
http://www.artcom.de/en/projects/project/detail/the-invisible-shape-of-things-past/.

regard to this project's creative component, digital media will be considered as a dynamic platform of possibilities for exploring, representing and envisaging aspects of the surrounding world in novel and unthinkable before ways. Nonetheless we should keep in mind that this virtual platform may showcase new possibilities for imag(in)ing the world but, at the same time, it may also impose constraints on our actions and ways of thinking.

The new media object (Ryan 2004a: 331) that this project constructs can be seen as a collection of multimedia items (database) upon which the user is able to perform certain operations. This manipulation of the object's content is being enacted through the execution of previously developed and embedded set of algorithms that allow the user to engage with the online video fragments in specific ways. Traversing the online environment, the user becomes familiar with the semantic value of the featured material and by working out patterns of connection between the fragments, s/he customizes the online content into distinct narrative trajectories. In other words, the user interacts with the digital object whereby the latter is capable of both accepting input from him/her and initiating a response by changing its content.

This interactivity of computational media is often presented as its "truly distinctive, and fundamental" property (Ryan 2004b: 238; Montfort 2007: 172-189). The interface of the generated digital object comprises of a main media window where the user can view the video data, a paradigmatic set of four preview options and an interactive timeline.[3] A click on any of the available preview clips will automatically load that fragment in the main media window and, at the same time, generate a new paradigm of visual links to choose from in order to continue the started trajectory. (Below we will see how this dynamic change of the media content has been assigned signifying potential.)

We should make it clear here that interactivity or the possibility to interact with and, thus, refashion the content of a medium is not something essentially new and unique that has been introduced with the emerging digital technologies. Let us take as an example the structure of this written work that accompanies the new media object. It consists of five parts or textual units with rather unclear and equivocal reading path. And since there is more than one trajectory of approaching the textual units, we can think of the work as a database including distinct textual items that

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[3] Use the space bar to pause the currently playing clip – press it again in order to resume playing. For more information on Korsakow software please visit http://korsakow.org/.

allows for multiple practices of reading. Not only can different readers engage with the work in a number of ways, they could also switch between the provided options for navigating through the work. For instance, as reading the work one may consider following the actual numbering of the textual units or may want to move between the parts on the basis of their vertical composition in space; then, continue exploring the work in compliance with the respective page numbers and, eventually, having seen that there is more than one way of engaging with the text, the reader may decide to design a reading path of his/her own. We can call the sum of all possible reading trajectories a hypernarrative that allows for both preset and custom made i.e., established by the reader, ways of navigating through the textual environment of the database. The most skeptic readers would probably disapprove by saying that whatever reading path is privileged, its actual implementation would be unlikely to alter the content of the written medium. Rather it would seem that the textual arrangements remain somehow static and fixed, not being able to respond to the reader's input i.e., the choices for proceeding through the hypernarrative structure. The reader's input may not result in any changes of the textual environment but it does influence and shape the steady unfolding of the narrative text. Here, we should think of the five textual constituents of the database as offering different perspectives on a common subject matter. Each perspective has the potential to modify its predecessor enriching it in meaning and, thus, contributing to the emergence of a dynamic textual structure. Technically speaking the five fragments remain unchanged regardless of the reader's interactions with the ensemble. However, figuratively, they undergo a continuous process of transformation within the consciousness of the reader.

Similar modes of interaction can be observed in any other media technologies but it is computational media with its capacity to handle and organize vast amount of information into databases and to grant creative agency to the users that has taken the notion of interactivity a step further. In his work on the language of computational media, Manovich (2001: 218-286; 2005) considers database as the most significant and abundant software component that rules over the ever-expanding territory of the digital. Determining the properties of database, Manovich has set it in opposition to narrative whereby both terms are examined as 'natural enemies' that compete for making meaning out of the world and for giving material form to our lived experience. Furthermore, database is described both as a 'cultural form' or 'creative impulse' and as a list of loosely related items that is not capable of rendering its content in a

meaningful order. This controversy does not blur the meaning of the concept; on the contrary, it makes it richer since database becomes both creative and created. Manovich observes that as a mere catalogue of aspects of the world, database decisively refuse to impose any order upon its constituents. Its structuring and organizing into meaningful narrative strings comes only a posteriori, as a consequence from the user's interaction with the database content. At the same time, it seems that Manovich ignores the fact that database is already a structured and ordered object. It exists as a representation of specific aspects of the world drawn into established set of relationships. In other words, the distinct elements are being framed and defined as belonging to a common organizational structure on the basis of their communicability. In this case, narrative meaning becomes inherent to the database – it is already embedded in it and takes the form of a generalized narrative image that is gradually unfolding in space and time as the user navigates through the interactive material.

Further elaborating on the relationship between database and narrative, Manovich (2001: 237-241) points out that cinema provides the intersection between the two terms. Here, the author refers to Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera (1929)* in order to illustrate how the film narrative is constructed from purposefully arranged video fragments taken from a database of audio-visual material accumulated throughout the shooting phase. However, the gradual emergence of narrative from an initially compiled database is not a feature characteristic just of cinema but can be observed in any other field of human activity.

Narrative pertains to database in the same manner as syntagm relates to paradigm – they are bound together in a reciprocal relationship whereby each term presupposes the existence of the other. Moreover, this unity and interdependence of the two terms is reiterated by Marsha Kinder (2003)[4]. She defines database narrative as any *medium-independent* structure that works through processes of selection and combination where selection leads towards combination and combination itself opens room for new selection. For instance, the narrative structure of a story hinges on the selection of narrative material that may belong to different databases such as sets of events, characters, actions, settings, sound and so forth. Once chosen the narrative elements are ordered syntagmatically in a sequence that constitute the storyline of that

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[4] See also Responses to Ed Folsom's "Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of Archives" in Freedman et al. 2007.

narrative. In its turn, each narrative combination may raise questions on the pertinence of the elements selected or directly challenge the choices being made for its (re)constitution. Therefore, a syntagmatic combination may set in motion new processes of selection and, subsequently, generate novel or reconfigured forms of narrative combinations.

In regard to the digital outcome of the study, as soon as the computer application utilized for the project is launched, the user is confronted with the necessity of deciding how to commence a narrative trajectory through the database. S/he has to select a starting clip of the available options, which change every time the software is loaded. The eight preview clips to be chosen from showcase the participants in the study and regardless of the dynamically changing interface, there is always a preview option for each participant.[5] Traversing the interactive online environment, the user constructs his/her own threads of narration by clicking on preferred preview options. However, it seems that although having thematic coherence i.e., all audio-video fragments revolve around the theme of identity formation in a context of cultural estrangement[6], the emerging visual syntagm lacks narrative coherence. By moving from one video clip to another one, the user switches between different participants that tell different stories. Thus, rather than proceeding through *one* consistent and organized storyline in which each subsequent segment logically conforms with the previous one, the user performs *multiple* zigzag movements that lack a single and unified direction of narration akin to narrative jamming.

In order to cast some additional light on the user's experience of narrative jamming (Abbott 2008: 10), we will refer to an example taken from the early theatrical work of Sergei Eisenstein. At the beginning of the 20s, Eisenstein works as a designer for the Proletcult Workers Theater and this is the time when he starts experimenting with different compositional techniques that will later become known as montage of attractions. In a theatrical adaptation of the Jack London story *"The Mexican"*, Eisenstein has decided to put into practice rather unconventional design techniques reconsidering the whole idea of theatrical action (Mitry 1997: 136-138).

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[5] Before encountering the first paradigm of narrative fragments, the user is given brief information about the study saying that the project includes nine participants. Then, s/he is presented with eight preview clips featuring the different interviewees. However, the ninth participant, the researcher himself, is missing. A preview clip of him appears only after a line of narration has been initiated.
[6] For more details on the theoretical framework of the project see *The Stranger*.

He puts a boxing ring in the middle of the auditorium, surrounded by spectators and, thus, creates two distinct centers of attraction – a stage where the psychological or primary action unfolds and a ring that features a secondary and dramatic action.[7] However, the effect of this double staging has taken a rather unexpected form and it is completely the opposite of what Eisenstein has aimed to achieve. Rather than generating a unified mental image reflecting the overall theme of the work i.e., the revolutionary struggle of Mexicans, Eisenstein's unconventional design of the theatrical space has dissipated the spectators' interest into more than one direction. In other words, the audience has been requested to simultaneously attend to two distinct centers of action. By constantly switching their attention from the stage to the boxing ring, the spectators have been caught somewhere in-between the separate fields of view not being able to follow or experience in full any of the two events. In the final analysis, this continuous changing of the focus has ruined the dramatic action of the performance and somewhat weakens or obscures the thematic line of the work.

In our case, the state of residing in indeterminacy or experiencing the tension between distinct and simultaneous narrative fragments of self-expression has been purposefully contrived as integrative part of the project's thematic wholeness. The user navigates through the database content as if assembling a jigsaw puzzle – attending to one video fragment at a time but unable to continue or develop the started story into a multi-clip sequence. The personal accounts of each participant have been organized along two narrative strings, one in Bulgarian and another one in (Australian) English. In turn, each narrative line in English or Bulgarian is segmented into at least two separate parts that the user cannot see in a row. [8] Therefore, the user will have to explore the online material through multiple and disconnected increments across a dynamic field of fragmentation and linking. In order to proceed through the

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[7] The outcome of the secondary action, the boxing fight, is connected to the primary event, the revolutionary movement of Mexican Youth, in such a way as a win on the boxing stage will further the Mexican revolution by accumulating more funds for the purchase of rifles (Goodwin 1993: 25).

[8] Initially the video interview data has been organized into 21 two and a half minute clips. In turn, each movie fragment has been comprised of alternating sequences of horizontal long shots and vertical close-ups; the latter includes a close-up of the participant while narrating their lived experience or a close-up of the researcher as watching/editing given movie fragment in Final Cut Pro. In addition, the overall composition of the clips have followed the formula $A(x) + B(y) + A(x/2) + B(2y) + A(x/4)$, where 'A' and 'B' stand for two different storylines intertwined and realized through the alternation of respectively horizontal and vertical frames; 'x' and 'y' indicate the duration of the narrative fragments inserted into two distinct metric formations – furthermore, this has been synchronized with the movement of the animated background. Eventually, some compromises (further fragmentation of the video clips, removal of the vertical shots and so forth) have been made in order to better fit the clips both technically and conceptually with the interactive environment of the digital medium. For more details on the design and composition of the visual narratives see *The Tourist*.

various parts of a particular personal account, the user has to switch to a different participant and look for available options to continue the commenced narrative string within the paradigm of clips pertaining to the newly opened narrative thread. This constant deferral of creating a coherent narrative structure by cutting through multiple lines of narration has transformed the story into an element of its own construction. To put it differently, the storyline is being provided by the changing dynamics of traversal across the online interactive environment.

At the same time, in order to make sense of the multitude of narrative fragments, the user will have to maintain (an) additional line(s) of narration – that subsequently will develop further as the database is being traversed – to the one that s/he is actively attending to at a given moment. It is likely that, at the end, the user will find himself/herself spending more time between the margins of the individual stories rather than mindfully engaging with them. Here the concept of in-betweenness seems to be quite pertinent in explicating the intricate position of the user as *wanderer* who moves in a zigzag, constantly changing directions and obstinately refusing to follow a set course. However, instead of helping us to grasp the tentative and unresolved positioning of the user, 'in-betweenness' drives us towards disambiguation and fixed itineraries. Let us consider the following examples "traversing *between* the video fragments" and "traversing *among* the video fragments". Both statements suggest the existence of multiple fragments but the stories that they tell us are quite different. For instance, 'between' always refers to something particular and determined and, therefore, indicates an established set of relations (path) between these particularities. So when we say that the 'user traverses between the clips' we mean that s/he stays on that particular path between A and B following a route through the database. However, this is not exactly the case as there is no way that the user could know in advance the available options for navigating through the database. Moreover, s/he strives not to stay on a defined path but to explore a variety of possible trajectories across the database. Thus, if *'in-betweenness'* gives us an idea of a set itinerary surrounded by a multitude of narrative fragments, *'in-amongness'* indicates the presence of a dynamic structure of itineraries cutting across each other into what we can call a *multiplicity*. Wandering around the interactive online environment, the user moves among fragmented narratives of identity construction in exactly the same manner as s/he would travel through a dense forest of trees without a definite destination or purpose.

[03] THE ADVENTURER

> *An individual's interdisciplinary approach is based not just on a commitment to a particular method or theory but on a narrative – a story structured by a specific sequence of encounters and moves through a series of cultural and historical fields.*
>
> *(Kinder 2003: 94)*

Adventure is a structural form capable of realizing a diverse number of human experiences which do not have predetermined outcomes. This open-endedness has an enduring allure. Adventure exists independently of the experiential facts of life and most activities or events that we find ourselves drawn into may easily be regarded as adventurous (Simmel 1971: 187-199). However, in order to be acknowledged as adventure, a given action or a sequence of actions needs to fulfill two requirements: it has to be self-sufficient i.e., able to exist on its own as a meaningful structure with distinct beginning and end; and, furthermore, regardless of its self-contained character and semiotic autonomy, the experienced event should be able to conjoin with the continuous flow of life. The first condition ensures that adventure is differentiated from the mundane practices of everyday life where every element merely supplements the preceding one and disappears within the endless stream of routine activities. At the same time, in spite of its peculiarity adventure should be able to blend with other individual forms of experience and, hence, assist in the development of a molar line of experiential interconnections and contribute to the continuity of life.

In like manner, reading the multimodal text of this project, comprising of separate and disconnected textual units, can be considered as an adventurous undertaking. Although disparate and self-contained, the units still belong to the same textual ensemble. The research study consists of a creative component in the form of an interactive database narrative displayed online and an analytical part that both reflects back upon the production of the digital component and further elaborates on questions raised by the project's digital outcome. Both components of the project

share certain similarities in terms of design – moreover, the way they have been composed and the manner in which the user or reader approaches them resemble commencing an adventurous tour across a diverse field of scattered fragments. For instance, each part (textual unit) of this project's written component becomes an adventure through different domains of knowledge that the reader embarks on and accomplishes with no prior understanding of where the respective unit might take him/her. The structure of the whole written component is floating – in a way it mirrors the digital outcome of the study, and, thus, enables the reader to construct a reading path of his/her own. This sense of incongruity within a common thread of continuity is an essential feature of any type of adventurous undertaking. Reading the written (and the audio-visual) text(s) as an adventure proceeds through uneven and unanticipated steps across a winding course of engagement with the work as a whole. The dynamic interorientation of the textual elements indicates a high degree of interactivity and creates a variety of hypertextual trajectories to follow.

Furthermore, each step reveals a specific viewpoint on the research endeavor – it can be initiated and accomplished independently of the others, sustains a sense of inner unity and is capable of standing on its own without additional support from the outside. However, the sequential ordering of the disconnected parts amounts to a line of perception that accommodates different perspectives on the same subject matter. Furthermore, the sum of all textual components amounts to a multitude of partial and disconnected viewpoints but, at the same time, it may also evolve into a rhizomatic multiplicity that, apart from the text and its constituents, includes the researcher, the participants in the study, the user/reader of the project's outcome, and the object/subject under investigation. These categories are fluid – they are rendered ambiguous throughout the study and, therefore, continuously interpenetrate each other.

Both, the creative and the analytical, components of the research project feature excessive fragmentation and low degree of temporal and contingent coherence. The constructed narrative texts (written or digital) are loosely structured but still able to maintain a common thematic line. The co-existence of multiple supple fields of signification, multilayered perspectives and diverse number of ways for engaging with the project's outcome generate a rather plastic structure of crystalline texts that organically intertwines with the main theme of the work – identity formation in the time of global interconnectedness and incessant virtual and physical mobility.

The practice of crystallization seen here as "a messy, multigenre, paradigm-spanning approach" (Ellingson 2009: xii) informs the theoretical and the methodological framework of the project. Criss-crossing multiple fields of study, crystallization experiments with novel means of investigating the surrounding world but readily acknowledges the partial and constructed character of its representational and interpretative capacities. Refracting a particular socio-cultural phenomenon through the crystals of disparate epistemic perspectives, the research study simultaneously provides us with disconnected narrative constructions and problematizes the terms of their process of construction; it unveils the positionality of the researcher and eagerly exposes its own artificial character; empowers the user/reader with the capacity to manage and intervene in the process of text construction; breaks down the tripartite division between direct and immediate reality, represented and mediated reality, and subjectivity and motivation of the representer by fostering multimodal textual assemblages that contain aspects of each of the three systems.

As a research undertaking conducted in a multimodal and multiplatform environment, the project experiments with media and semiotic resources whose potential for producing cultural knowledge often remains underutilized and underappreciated. By challenging conventional ways of doing research that rest exclusively on the medium of written language and testing novel means of presenting and disseminating research data, this study casts light on the unexplored and underrated capacity of the moving image and new media technologies in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. In fact, the virtual spaces of networked media are saturated with various examples of online research but in many cases these undertakings are merely digitized versions of an already accomplished project that have made less or no use of the digital except for disseminating collated research data and, thus, only improving its accessibility (Coover 2004).

The material outcome of the project utilizes new media technologies in order to reconsider and further conceptualize the problem of having multiple and contingent attachments to various, both virtual and physical, cultural territories. Although the project has privileged specific forms of connection to just two cultural formations (Australian and Bulgarian), it could easily be extended towards other more or less contiguous cultural segmentarities and, thus, accommodate a diverse number of attachments.

As a new media object, the digital component of the study features an interactive database narrative comprising of nearly 60 short (i.e., between 10 and 40 seconds) media fragments that are selected from a series of initially conducted video interviews. All movie clips within the online interactive environment revolve around biographical particulars taken from the everyday life of eight participants, between 18 and 35 years old living in Australia for at least 5 years. Initially the study has focused on people of mixed heritage born in Australia with one parent Bulgarian and the other one of non-Bulgarian background. However, it has proved difficult to get in contact with and recruit such individuals partly due to the fact that the Bulgarian community in Melbourne is one of the smallest, comprising of approximately 1500 people, and its members often do not attend regular social activities. Moreover, the nature of the project meant that participants had to invest considerable time and provide different levels of input which proved challenging.

Four of the interviewees were born in Australia and the other four either have left Bulgaria at a very early age or have been living in Melbourne for some time. Of those participants born in Australia one is of mixed ethnic origin (Bulgarian mother and German father) while the other three have Bulgarian background. The ninth participant in the project is the researcher himself. His interviews have been conducted at the end of the study and provide partial and ambiguous accounts of the researcher's experience as residing in Australia but still living in Bulgaria.[*]

The audio-visual recordings have been carried out in a TV studio environment throughout several interview sessions. Once the data has been collated and edited the participants have been brought back in the Studio to review the already compiled story clips. Then the raw interview data have been captured into Final Cut Pro for further editing and compression. The design and composition of the clips are done in such a way as to trigger in the mind of the user a pre-established idea or feeling that corresponds to the main thematic line of the project and is discussed in detail throughout the written part of the work. Eventually all narrative fragments have been imported into Korsakow, tagged in order to enter into more or less random and temporal narrative trajectories, and uploaded online.

As proceeding through the individual stories of the participants, traversing the database environment, and engaging with the written component of the study, the

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[*] For more details on the equivocal role of the researcher as both interviewer and interviewee see *The Stranger* and *The Tourist*.

user/reader can orchestrate the diverse and fragmented parts of the project and, at the same time, experience the creative tension of their simultaneous juxtaposition and interpenetration; s/he embarks on an adventure whose ultimate destination remains vague and unattainable.

[05] TRAVELLING KIT

Software

Ableton Live 8.2.6

Adobe PhotoShop CS3

Compressor 3.5.3

Fetch 5.6

Final Cut Pro 7.0.3

Jubler 4.6.1

Korsakow 5.0.6

Motion 4.0.3

Soundtrack Pro 3.0.1

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[02] THE TOURIST

> *Seeing is insufficient:*
> *something has to happen to that depiction,*
> *it has to undergo some process in our mind*
> *[in order to become image].*
>
> *(Eisenstein 2010b:300)*

Being a major representational form of human experience, narrative is often determined in relation to the semiotic potential of language and, thus, it ascertains the dominant role of verbal and written speech in most areas of public communication. This fact does not render narrative as a unimodal representation but simply points out the privileged position of language in constructing and interpreting narrative texts. In other words, narrative meaning, unfolding through a comprehensible storyline and embedded in particular cultural context(s), may be realized by a variety of resources such as words, dance, images, sound, gaze, gestures and the entire spectrum of non verbal communication modes. However, these do not always exist independently of spoken or written language and often reiterate or provide some fine nuances to what has already been said or written. Non verbal means of communication, due to their perceived subservient and supplementary role in different practices of meaning making, has remained highly underrated and not sufficiently analyzed (Baldry and Thibault 2005). Along with verbal and written representational modes, this research project has privileged and utilized a specific set of audio-visual semiotic resources and cinematographic techniques. As interacting with each other, both verbal and non verbal modes of communication take part in the construction of cultural (hyper)text(s).

In this way, meaning can never be under the control of just one semiotic resource (Kress 2009; Cope and Kalantzis 2000). In a multimodal ensemble meaning is distributed not necessarily in an even manner among the variety of preferred semiotic resources. This raises the question of the semiotic reach of each resource and, most importantly, emphasizes their partial and limited potential for realizing the meaning of the text on their own. As an accomplished semiotic entity, the text emerges from the interaction of the selected modes within the ensemble whereby

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different patterns of relationships may be formed (contradiction, extension, (re)contextualization, (de)contextualization and many more).

Visual meaning-making resources have always received exceptional attention in the filed of culture and communication but in recent years this interest in the different affordances of image has extended significantly. Due to the proliferation of new media technologies the practice of visual consumption has been transformed into an increasingly widespread and favored activity (Lash and Urry 1996: 259-75). Consuming visual signs can be regarded as a specific form of tourism that nevertheless requires certain interpretative skills as one travels across physical and/or virtual landscapes of images. Living in a world of high-speed technologies and incessant flow of visual signs, we have started to act as tourists traversing global networks of imagery and anxiously awaiting yet another spectacle for visual consumption. Furthermore, this overwhelming abundance of visual materials has significant impact on the concept of literacy and suggests that other reading skills should be fostered in order to interpretatively engage with a given textual construct (Baker 2010; Coiro et al. 2008). Throughout this part of the study we will analyze how visual semiotic resources have been employed in order to acquire symbolic meaning that contributes to and further enriches the project's thematic line of identity construction in conditions of accelerated globalization as well as digital and virtual interconnectivity.

Although the generated database narrative of fragmented interview texts can not be regarded as a film, it does produce, to a certain degree, salient cinematic and film effects upon the consciousness of its audience. The cinematic (revealing) aspect of the work confronts the spectator with an imaged reality whereas its filmic (suggestive) impression guide the spectator towards a pre-established conception i.e., the main theme of the work, realized through the aesthetic organization of both visual and verbal material. The two aspects depend on each other – what is gradually been revealed also suggests an idea that nonetheless remains foreign to the things revealed. In other words, going back to the title of this part, the tourist, as mainly preoccupied with the visible content of images, will have to confront and acknowledge their elusive and often invisible nature as texts demanding not contemplation but attentive reading and interpretation.

At first glance, it seems that the meaning of the generated narrative texts comes exclusively from the flow of verbal associations as one explores the video

materials in the database. Thus, meaning is given to us in the form of straightforward and 'direct' verbal signification of which the visual remains merely a vehicle. In this sense, one could easily follow the stories even if they keep their eyes closed and just listen to the audio material provided. According to Mitry (1997: 369), words are already significant and the meaning, to which they refer, is inherent in them. In contrast, what a film image signifies is always in a process of becoming as it is being charged with external and circumstantial meaning, one that is not attached to the image but acquired gradually through tense interplay with other images. Determined by a constant mobility of interlinked images, film does not work through ready-made signification but creates its own one by imbuing filmed objects and events with symbolic meaning. And since verbal expressions are transparent and self-sufficient semiotic entities that the spectator could simply register or assimilate without any further semiotic work, they are of less importance to film expression (Mitry 1997: 49-59; 2000: 151-170).

However, this is not always the case. Mitry ignores the fact that a verbal statement rather than having purely informative and documentary character may trigger associations that go beyond its concrete content. A metaphor is never a sum of its constituent parts but creates an image transcending the depicted reality. For instance, one of the participants in this study tells a story of attending an eagerly expected film premier that usually occurs once in every four years.[1] Apparently the anxiously anticipated event has turned out to be a huge disappointment and the narrator poses the question of whether one should keep watching the poor performance of the actors or simply leave the cinema venue. It seems that the awkward situation of having to watch a *guilty displeasure show* i.e., being rather embarrassed to admit that one does not enjoy the performance as after all they have paid for the ticket, can not be resolved through either of the suggested options. The interviewee mentions that even after having left the venue, he still "can not get the stupid movie out of [his] head".

Obviously here the story, mediated through verbal language serves as support for a secondary signification that transcends the represented events but, at the same time, it can only be accomplished within the context of the given situational constants (Shklovsky 1981: 87; 1988: 180). Thus, the plain exposition of events opens up an

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[1] See clips 'INVITE', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=12664 , 'ANTICIPATE', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=12683 and 'COLLAPSING', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=12702.

associative link of incongruence with reality that is not represented in the story. Here the verbal statements can be seen as functionally equivalent to film images as they have gained purely circumstantial meaning throughout the act of narration while retaining their concrete semantic aspects within the storyline. Being detached from their immediate field of signification, the interviewee's statements have been transformed into stimuli for further semiotic activity. 'The film premier' becomes national assembly elections that take place every four years, 'the immense dissatisfaction with the movie' stands for deep disillusionment with the political situation in Bulgaria[2] and 'the leaving of the cinema venue' indicates an act of migration.

As the story proceeds, the verbal signs acquire temporary symbolic values and become loaded with information that originates outside the reach of their semantic frames. The new signification is specific for the given context – that is to say it cannot exist outside the described situation since the associative link between 'film premier' as a verbal signifier and 'national assembly elections' as its signified will not be any longer feasible. The story reaches its climax when the interviewee highlights the two possibilities for resolving the situation – either staying or leaving. At that moment, we see that the participant is no longer sitting on the couch reviewing the content of the clip but has moved towards the margins of the frame. Throwing hasty glances over his shoulders at the monitor, neither has he left the media studio nor is he actively engaging with the played content of the clip. Instead the participant has been drawn into the liminal position of being both present and absent refusing to accept either of the outlined options and, thus, leaving the situation unresolved. His position is one of ambiguity and uncertainty.

In this example, the verbal text and the moving image have been organically fused into the polyphonic structure of cultural estrangement[3]. Both lines run parallel to each other realizing distinct and independent signifying trajectories. Yet the meaning of the whole text takes the form of *transversal* that intersects the relative

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[2] Any story told in English refers to the interviewee's connection to Bulgaria and Bulgarian culture whereas those narratives related in Bulgarian discern an attachment to Australia and Australian culture.
[3] The theme of cultural estrangement has been discursively framed in *The Stranger*. It provides the broader theoretical framework within which the problem of identity formation in conditions of global interconnectedness is investigated. In this part, the process of identity construction will be reconsidered from a different perspective taking into consideration the visual design and composition of the project's digital outcome.

discreteness of the lines and integrating them into a symbolic structure of authorial intentions, it opens up new areas of knowledge.

Verbal expression retains its role as primary signifier unless it is discursively interlocked with the visual components of the image. Within this project the relationship between image and word varies and enters different rhythmic patterns as one proceeds throughout the database material. The above discussed example works as an audio-visual metaphor that provides material for further thought and, hence, turns aside from the purely denotative approach towards the narrative text. In other clips, for instance, the introduction of marginalized customary flow of speech (a conversation over the phone)[4] illustrates a descriptive digression from the everyday constants represented through verbal narration and drives the attention of the spectator towards merely formal features of both verbal and visual composition. The same effect of diversion away from the verbal signifier of the story has been reproduced by the interviewee through the act of turning down the volume of the reviewed clip so that she does not get distracted while reading a newspaper article.[5]

In the last two examples, the interviewees' verbal stories have been rendered inefficient by means of narrative discourse that formalizes the factual content of the story into an image gradually filled in with extra-narrative associations. To paraphrase Mitry (1997: 366), the represented story has become victim of its own representation since the imaged reality, though represented and similar to its actual referent, is nevertheless different from it as an aesthetically[6] structured form of representation.

Reality becomes an element of its own narration. Mitry elaborates on the significance of this statement through the concept of the image as *analogon*. The image is defined as "mechanical impression of a personal vision of a given object" (Ibid., 29). The first part of this definition ('mechanical impression') considers the image to be an objective and concrete reproduction of reality as we actually see it – what we see in the viewfinder of a camera is identical to the objects being seen. Therefore, image as representation stands for the object represented (i.e., it is true to its referent) and by the virtue of this fact it signifies nothing more that what the object itself is capable of signifying. Caught up within its denotative representation, the

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[4] See clip 'SPOMNYANE' ('remembering'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=4139.
[5] See clip 'BUILDING', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=207.
[6] Mitry (1997: 45-46) considers what he calls a 'symbolic signification' as conditioned purely by the aesthetics of the represented object i.e., the effect of being represented as imaged reality framed and compositionally organized in accordance with the author's expressive purpose.

object or the event depicted merely narrates and obtains no other value than that of documenting its own existence; it reveals itself as an imaged reality seen though a window. It is in this sense that the imaged reality first and foremost represents itself as a fact before being able to acquire any signifying potential that is to become a sign. At this level of 'direct' or 'transparent' signification, as Mitry calls it (1997: 366-69), what we are presented with and what that representation means for us are being perceived instantaneously and it seems without recourse to any interpretative activity.[7]

Mitry (2000: 16) acknowledges the fact that the minimum requirement for the existence of any signifying structure is the presence of two interrelated terms but he completely disregards the supportive role of the code that conditions the relationship between a signified and a signifier. And since all communication is coded, meaning and signification can never be transparent or perceived only by means of contemplation. Characterized by different degrees of transparency, but never absolutely transparent, the semiotic code frames the meaning of an object within a specific context of signification. If the relationship between signifier and signified is taken for granted, it is due to the fact that we are already familiar with the meaning of the object before being able to see it and, as a result, perception may take precedence over interpretation.

Let us consider the following visual syntagm. A long shot of a man (taken from the back so we can not really see his face) who picks up an umbrella as leaving his house followed by a close-up of the wet umbrella being folded while the man looks for a vacant seat on a red double-decker bus. One can only make sense of this sequence if s/he knows what an umbrella is. If the spectator has no prior knowledge of it, then, the hand-held object with a slightly pointed end could be interpreted as anything else but a portable device for protection from the elements of the weather.

For the purpose of extending our analysis on the ambiguous nature of the moving image and, thus, casting light on the importance of the project's visual composition, we will add a few more shots to the above suggested sequence. A close-up shot taken from behind shows the lower part of the passenger's body; the man holds his umbrella with the pointed end facing the camera. He moves towards the front of the bus queuing to get off the overcrowded vehicle. Just by the door he drops

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[7] Mitry (2000: 108) outlines his idea of direct signification by stating "nothing has a priori signification – be it structure or form – except for those [filmed] objects and their direct meaning".

his umbrella and as picking it up he pokes its shiny edge at the back of an incoming commuter' s thigh and flees in a taxi.[8]

Although the commuter is facing the camera, his face remains in the out-of-the-field[9] and what we see is only a hand reaching towards the jabbed right thigh. The bus scene is then replaced by a long shot of a spacious banquet hall with red carpets on the floor and massive white marble busts of prominent communist pioneers chaotically positioned around the hall. The hall is full of natural light, furnished in warm pastel colors and permeated with lightness and discretion, which dramatically contrasts with the dull and tense scene in the crowded bus. White and black as dominant colors in respectively the long shot and the close-up have been charged with symbolic meaning – white begins to indicate the abuse of power, the brutality and oppression of the communist leaders whereas black stands for the resolute, free-spirited, and invincible character of the dissident.[10]

The long shot shows a long table covered with a white linen tablecloth and lavish displays of food. Around the table, split into small groups, formally dressed men engage in phatic communication anxiously awaiting the servant, standing at the other side of the table, to start serving the food. The servant, whose face we cannot see, holds a sharp shiny knife. With a gallant swing of his hand, the blade flashes through the air and the very next moment we see it plunged into the tender, fatty shoulder area of a slow-roasted piglet, the long expected aliment to nourish the feverish body of the socialist state. Thrilled by the carving skills of the servant, the gathered men become louder and bolder as talking to each other. Prudence and calmness have evolved into unrestrained excitement and elation from the attended performance. Next to follow in the visual sequence is a close-up of the commuter's pale and weary face. He feels drowsy and weak – his mouth is dry, his pupils shrink, his breathing rate slows down. He lets the small briefcase plummet onto the laminated

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[8] This is a reference to the poison-tip umbrella assassination of the Bulgarian writer, broadcaster and dissident Georgi Markov organized and conducted by the Bulgarian Secret Police with the active support of KGB. Markov died in London early in September 1978 three days after he had been shot with a poisonous pellet. Recently Scotland Yard has reopened the case.

The visual sequence provided above is contrived by the researcher as a mere illustration of the ideative capacities of the moving image. The montage technique here will serve as an example for developing a specific compositional devise that this project has utilized in order to organize and shape its visual outcome.

[9] What is not seen or understood (Deleuze 1986: 16).

[10] In like manner Eisenstein exploits the thematic significance of white and black in *Alexander Nevsky (1938)*. In the scene of the 'Battle on Ice' the Russians soldiers are in black whereas the Teutonic knights are dressed in white, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXr0m7SaGvs.

bus floor. Last, a close-up of the pretentious men in the banquet hall grotesquely eating pieces of the carved meat while vigorously talking and gesticulating towards each other.

Here if we confine ourselves to the iconic or narrative connotation of the represented events, we will most probably miss the meaning of their representation taken as a whole. The image as representation signifies more than the objects and events being represented. The significance of the visual syntagm can be fully grasped only if we consider it in close relation to the second part of our initial definition of the moving image as "a personal vision of a given object".

Being an accurate and faithful reproduction of reality, the image is nevertheless different from it and always adds something other than what it represents. It is subject to the personal vision of its maker and the expressive purpose that it is meant to realize. It is because of this personal component that the image bears witness of a certain degree of intentionality that makes it an instrument for acquiring new forms of knowledge. What matters in the visual sequence provided above is not the situational constants of the two scenes, but the way the shots are being interlaced into an organic whole that awakens into the mind of the audience a pre-established idea and drives the spectator towards an extraneous, plastic signification. Therefore, the bus incident and the banquet occurrence, although being an object of representation similar to direct reality, are nonetheless made subject capable of evoking ideas that transcend the replicated reality. Both events are rendered unreal and subjective, deprived of perceptible content and eventually transformed into an aesthetic structural form infused with new associative meaning (Mitry 1997; 2000: 48-50).

The image is always in a process of becoming something different from what it shows, extending its signification beyond the realm of pure iconic and narrative continuity. Eisenstein (2010b: 11-59) further illustrates this by differentiating depiction as mainly dealing with the raw visual data (e.g., the umbrella, the dissident, the roasted piglet and so on) from image seen as processual form that modifies the data into an instrument of mediation. It is by means of montage or juxtaposing the framed signifying elements that depiction is being elevated into the category of symbolic image. Eisenstein (2010b) develops the compositional methods of montage throughout his entire working life but what can be highlighted as its essence has remained virtually unchanged. For him the practice of montage consists of transposing an initially established theme into a chain of visual associations whose

sequential and simultaneous unfolding summons in the consciousness of an attending audience the same theme but in the form of mental image (Eisenstein 2000a: 45-47).

Each shot of the above outlined visual sequence contains an element of attraction[11] or accent capable of generating a visual impact upon the consciousness of the spectator. The image is perceived first and foremost through its accent, which eventually may rule out certain situational constants from being actively attended. As the spectator proceeds through the sequence of shots, the retained impression from the first image is superimposed over an impression made by the attraction of the succeeding image. The collision between the two, what Eisenstein calls a montage of attractions, manifests the author's relation to the depicted phenomenon – as he is the one responsible for the composition of the visual data – and gives rise to a thematic expression that is not inherent in the represented material.

Let us illustrate this through the scenes of the gruesome bus incident and the exuberant banquet gathering. What catches the eye of the spectator while watching the first shot is the shiny pointing end of the umbrella and the subsequent almost elusive stinging of the dissident's thigh. Here what seems not to be pertinent to the spectator's interest may even remain unregistered into their consciousness, for instance the fact that the pellet is discharged into the right thigh of the man and so forth. Although the shot is framed within a certain space of actions, it never exists as an absolutely closed system. Each image pertains to an out-of-field component that is both visible and invisible. It is visible by virtue of the transition of the image into a larger or different set of visual elements whereby the close-up of the grim and rainy bus scene is replaced with the long shot of a high-spirited gathering. However, it is also invisible in relation to the belonging of the shot to an organic and expressive thread imbued with authorial intentionality and carrying the thematic significance of the sequence as a whole (Deleuze 1986: 13-19).

Then, the spectator is confronted by the scene of the banquet in which their attention has been attracted by the glistering blade of the servant's knife and the entertaining carving of the roasted piglet. The collision of the two attractions, as being perceived and superimposed one over the other, exceeds the signifying potential of both shots taken separately. Their juxtaposition generates a sense of movement or an act of leap into a qualitatively new condition. The two scenes are being merged into a

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[11] Eisenstein (2010b: 40-41) defines attraction as "any demonstrable act that is known and proven to exercise an effect on the attention of the audience".

generalized image of the brutality and the corrupt, unscrupulous behavior of the communist government officials. This motion through collision of attractions does not come to us as natural or physical instance of movement but evolves in our perception as an indirect image of movement that realizes the expressive purposes of the author (Eisenstein 1963: 150-179; 1987: 10-38; 2010b: 327-400).

Visual perception through a constant *ex stasis* i.e., departing from one condition in order to enter into another one, qualitatively different from and opposing to the first condition, arises not only between discrete shots within a common visual sequence but could also originate from the interplay of signifying components belonging to a single image. For instance, within the long shot of the banquet hall we see the men conversing in a reserved and undemonstrative manner that suddenly evolves, through the carving of the piglet, into a burst of raw, unrestrained emotions with explicit physiological implications of pleasure and amusement.

The sequence of imposed images of movement through which the author communicates ideas or suggests a particular vision of the represented events determines the pathetic composition of the discussed visual work. Eisenstein develops this pathetic principle of passing over into a new physical or emotional state as the main methodological tool that governs the compositional effectiveness of any sequence of moving images.[12] In regard to this project, we will use Eisenstein's idea of the pathetic – illustrated in great detail through the example of the umbrella assassination, as a base for developing a specific compositional device that organizes and structures the gathered interview data imbuing it with certain film qualities.

Let us consider the following example.[13] The seated man gradually stood up (or the standing man slowly sat down). Both instances suggest a pathetic interval from one physical condition into another one. However, if one takes a picture of the man as standing up or sitting down, the image will depict the man in a somewhat ambiguous position – neither does he stand up nor he sits down. Rather than establishing a transition between discrete conditions, the image retains the potential of both physical

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[12] Two of the most cited examples of pathetic jump in Eisenstein's work refer to the tense alternation of doubt and hope of whether the milk will thicken or not thicken from the scene with the cream separator in *Old and New (1929),* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHYblUMHfDA; and the squeezed fingers of a hand into a tight fist through which the mourning of the death of the sailor Vakulinchuk evolves into the theme of rage and strong revolutionary sentiment in *Battleship Potemkin (1925),* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skc4htesM1U.

[13] Please refer to clips 'DISAPPOINT', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=31046; 'КОПАЕНЕ' ('kopaene' meaning 'digging'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=7437; 'ЗАЯЖДАНЕ' ('zayazhdane' meaning 'teasing'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=12850.

states that exist simultaneously in it. Furthermore, their coexistence renders the image difficult for interpretation. We will call this ambiguous structure *schizoid*. Whereas the pathetic form of composition implies evolution from a previously existing quality into a new one, the schizoid always pertains to involutionary forms of development. Each schizoid structure rests upon simultaneity of multiple (more than one) and contrasting components. The degree of their incongruence may vary and, thus, may indicate different levels of tension between the constituents. The schizoid is a-centered and fluid structure that lacks resolution and does not strive to reach a point of disambiguation. It has no other purpose than realizing itself as a structure of synchronicity and multiplicity. A square can extend itself at any moment in either vertical or horizontal direction giving rise to a new geometric figure. Therefore, the image of movement we form in our consciousness through the juxtaposition of a square and rectangular can be regarded as pathetic. In contract, what the schizoid takes into account is not the outcome of the suggested movement, but the tense interplay of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines that conditions the emergence of an image of movement.

In this project, the schizoid principle of multiplicity, simultaneity and tension has been put into practice as compositional method for structuring the visual material of the interviews. Both long shot compositions feature instances of schizoid forms of organization that organically weave with the project's main theme of becoming stranger.

The interview shot depicts the participant sitting on the right[14] side of a couch while narrating instances of actual lived experience. We know that the video data has been gathered throughout a set of interview sessions but, nevertheless, we cannot see the interviewer. We can only suggest that he is located somewhere on the left side of the media studio as most participants often look briefly in that direction while relating their personal accounts. In addition, the empty seat on the left side of the couch illustrates this fact. Thus, the interviewer is absent as he is not actually being represented but also present through the compositional structure of the visual data in which he has been positioned on the 'given', 'already known' side of the frame.

If we turn down the volume of an interview fragment and ignore the few instances of body movement in it, the image starts to behave as a still. In this case, it

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[14] Right is the side of key and unfamiliar information, the one to which the audience should pay attention (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 179-187).

seems that the animated background remains the only source of physical activity. The background is colored in cyan and indicates a lingering feeling of elusiveness and equivocalness. Moreover, it is unmodulated color that does not reflect the essential quality of things (e.g., 'grass is green', 'sky is blue' and so forth) but implies a certain degree of specificity and refers to a particular condition (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 234-235). The image background features multiple vertical lines made of three distinct nuances of cyan. Although their movement may slow down or speed up i.e., they have been rendered with different speed of animation, the verticals intersect the confined space of the horizontal frame.

It seems that the background in the interview shot is the most elaborated component and because of that it reverses the entire composition of the image by imposing its own prominence upon the two foreground objects (the couch and the participant). The animated background detracts and distances from the verbal narration of the interview and directs the attention towards the visual design of the image; it indicates that the constructed images exist as essentially legible textual arrangements.

A wide angle of shooting establishes a set of relationships between the objects represented and it is within this relational structure that the objects themselves acquire the capacity to signify. In the interview shots we see that all participants are positioned in the middle of the frame but, in addition, we can also state that they are sitting on the right side of the couch and in relation to the position of the couch within the shot, we can further say that the interviewees are occupying the left half of the framed space. The ambiguity of the participants' location within the interview shot can be regarded as a schizoid construct capable of accommodating different and opposing elements and whose signifying capacity arises from the tension between these elements. Although each of the three location aspects may be distinguished as separate components capable of describing the interviewee's position on their own, the overall location of the participant comes as an intricate interconnection of the depicted aspects.

In the review shot, the participant, occupying the left side of the frame, is given the opportunity to comment on the researcher's work displayed on a desktop screen, which, in turn, is positioned on the right side of the image. The interviewee's position as potential commentator and editor of the compiled clips is further indicated by the low angle of shooting. Here, in contrast to the interview shot, the horizontal

perspective of the image is oblique according to which the spectator views the objects of contemplation from a more detached position.

If we go back to the interview image, we could establish a more or less conspicuous pattern of visual interaction between the participant and the-out-of-reach that stands for the interviewer. The visual pattern is structured through a gaze vector emanating from the depicted participant and extending outside the limited space of the frame. We can call this visual composition a non-transactive structure as it features an actor (the interviewee) and a vector (eye line) but is deprived of 'goal' that is an object to which the vector points (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 48-68; Baldry and Thibault 2005: 200-202). On the other hand, the review shot exhibits all three components of a transactional structure that organizes the vectorial relationship between the interviewee and the object of interaction, the desktop display. However, this is not really the case since the participants do everything else but engaging actively with the played clips on the computer monitor. The pseudo-transactional character of this visual composition downplays the salience of the object being attended to (both the display and the verbal narratives) and diverts the attention towards the actual actions and behavior of the interviewee as they are watching the clips.

We see that all participants perform activities not directly related, in most of the cases, to their verbal narratives. At first glance, their actions (reading, doing crosswords, tying a shoelace, talking on the phone, counting coins and so forth) are structured into visual narratives that lack any prominent instances of disruption. Yet all database clips bear evidence of discontinuity that breaks down the alleged coherence of the visual structure and imposes narrative gaps between disparate visual fragments. To mention some of these instances, as doing the crosswords, the interviewee holds the pen in her right hand and then, in the subsequent shot, she is writing with her left hand. In another narrative fragment, the participant reaches down and undoes his left shoelace in order to tightly fasten it but after a while we see that he is actually tying his other shoelace. In a different clip, the interviewee takes out of her bag a book that she starts reading in the next shot – however what she is reading is not the book taken out of the bag. The same person, in another video fragment, is flipping through the pages of a newspaper. If we pay close attention, we will see that she turns over a page colored in blue (possibly filled in with an advertisement) but right in the next shot in which she continues to flip through the newspaper we notice

the same blue page that the interviewee has just turned over and begin to wonder which of the two shots actually comes first.[15]

All participants show a lack of interest in the presented visual data. Their reluctance to attend to the researcher's work evolves into an anxious waiting for the end of the interview session. This time spent in waiting until being able to leave is interminable (Mitry 2000: 203) and the participants experience its whole weight since there is nothing that could possibly catch their attention. However, the notion of time gets destroyed or at least its perception and weight disappears as the participants gradually become involved in various activities whose only purpose is to ease the passing of time and handle the overwhelming feeling of boredom. The participants' disinclination to actually participate in the review sessions of the compiled media product enables the spectator to reenact their state of boredom at the very same time when they are trying to engage with the verbal content of movie clips. Therefore, the spectator is given the rather creative role of bringing together two different and contrasting psychic conditions (boredom and interest) into the ambiguous structure of the schizoid.

In one media fragment[16], the interviewee's unwillingness to engage with the visual work of the interviewer takes an extreme form. He nervously checks his train ticket and all of a sudden starts counting his change indicating that after all he may need to purchase a new ticket on his way back. Having counted the coins, he leaves overhastily without waiting till the end of the review session. As this visual narrative unfolds, we witness the construction of another story about coins realized through the medium of verbal language. The two stories are rather different. In the visual narrative, the coins are represented as means of exchange whereby one may come into possession of various goods and ideas. They are impersonal and cultural artifacts – the coins belong and pertain to a particular cultural formation (e.g., in Australia, for instance, one cannot buy a train ticket with Bulgarian coins). However, in the verbal

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[15] See clips 'SURPRISING', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=302 and 'HOSPITALIZE', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=321; 'PAYING', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=31008; 'ИМАНЕ' ('having'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=4196 and 'DEFINING', http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=4177; and 'СЪНУВАНЕ' ('dreaming'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=1424.
These instances of disjunctive editing, to a certain extent, reproduce the effect of excessive segmentation of the participants' verbal narratives but, at the same time, they showcase the increasingly fragmented, multiple and heterogeneous nature of our identities that we relentlessly endeavor to piece together into a fabricated thread of false continuity.
[16] Refer to clips 'SABIRANE' ('collecting'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=7378 and 'KOPAENE' ('digging'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=7437.

story, coins first and foremost refer to the individual whose possession they are, not to a specific culture; here they can tell a story about that individual or re-enact the circumstances of their finding. The two stories exist simultaneously, parallel to each other and cannot be subsumed under a single, unifying narrative structure. Neither can they be described as distinct points along a common interval of pathos i.e., as separate components in transition from one to another.

The same schizoid principle of composition can be found in the juxtaposition of the interviewees' speech seen as an instance of measured or rhythmic time and the ambient drone sound that serves as an example of unmeasured and continuous time. The former divides the flow of human speech into alternating measures perceived as having equal duration whereas the latter does not indicate any sense of periodicity and lacks a beginning and an end (van Leeuwen 1985; 1999). Initially the drone sound has been generated by taking samples of the interviewee's speech and, then, freezing or extending them to infinity. However, the produced sound effect has not blended quite well with the verbal narrative and, consequently, has been replaced with the current drone sound created in Ableton Live.

The schizoid principle of structuring the image components has been analyzed here as a major compositional devise of the project's outcome. It transforms the visual content of the clips into a generalized image that, in turn, reflects the author's relation to the depicted phenomenon of identity construction within the context of cultural estrangement. The coexisting constituents of the schizoid structure resemble the multiple rhythmic lines within a piece of polyphonic music. Each line is being played apart and maintains relative independence from the rest. However, the ensemble of their intricate relationships provides the cross-rhythmic fabric from which the music emerges. In order to enjoy and hear the music properly, the listener should attend to more than one rhythmic line simultaneously. If the separate rhythms are being heard as a single one or a certain line of expression is given more prominence at the expense of another, then, the polyrhythmic tension i.e., the collision between the constituents of the ensemble attenuates and, as a result, the music becomes dull (Chernoff 1979: 46-67; 95-98).

In a like manner, the spectator of the database fragments can appreciate and rediscover the schizoid composition of the project's audio-visual material if they are capable of maintaining a second line of expression in addition to the one they have already engaged with. Both expressions coexist and work together, yet they remain

separate and distinct. Rather than trying to merge them into a single structure of signification, the spectator has to perceive their tangled and dynamic relationships. The tense interplay between vertical and horizontal, (Australian) English and Bulgarian, reluctance (boredom) and willingness (interest) to explore the audio-visual data, the rhythmic flow of human speech and the continuous sound of the drone, taken together with the equivocal position of the interviewees within the interview shot aesthetically reiterates the project's thematic line of maintaining multiple and simultaneous forms of cultural attachment.

[01] THE STRANGER

We have crossed the border but we are still here.
(Angelopoulos 2001: 109)

Narrative is often considered as a universal and pervasive mechanism for apprehending the world around us (Herman, Jahn and Ryan: 2005). In this thesis, as considering the creative component of the project i.e., the fragmented movie clips presented in an interactive online environment, we will adopt a rather limited perspective on narrative as a verbal representation of an event or a sequence of events (Abbott 2008: 10) recounted by interviewed participants. In this way, the generated movie fragments will be examined first as narrative constructions realized through the expressive potential of spoken language. For the time being, we will deliberately put aside all non-verbal meanings of narrative, as far as it is possible, and will be mainly concerned with its verbal modality. It should be emphasized that narrative always works as a multimodal representation. The meaning of a narrative text is being constituted in the process of interaction between the various semiotic modes that have conditioned its formation. Narrative meaning realized through using different modalities cannot be broken down into smaller and distinct units that are then gradually taken in independently of each other. Such an endeavor can only be justified if, after having been determined and analyzed, the distinct semiotic statements are brought back into the ensemble of narrative meaning.

Narrative imposes a specific causal topology over discrete instances of lived experience or, to put it in other words, it creates an imaginative mesh of interrelations whose linear proceedings endow with meaning any set of events and actions (Herman 2009: 18-19; Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005: 231-235). These orderings are by no means absolute and natural. A certain interlinking between two or more events or states of affairs can be regarded as essential only insofar as it renders them

meaningful in a *particular* moment. In a different time, the motive for narration may change giving rise to a new narrative sequence of the same events. It is this particularity that constitutes narrative as both partial and complete form of representation – partial and selective in relation to the events represented and complete in respect to the narrator's interests fully realized within the narrative text.

The interests and perspective of the narrator are shaped by his or her respective socio-cultural position and the characteristics of the social environment in which the act of narration takes place. In the context of this study, both the researcher and the participant provide accounts or evaluations of lived experiences while occupying distinct positions determined by the discursive practice of interviewing. Any prospective changes to the narrator's motivation or perspective instantaneously destabilizes the narrative text and makes it susceptible to some sort of reconstruction capable of accommodating the changing needs of the narrator. For instance, the absence of audio-visual equipment or simply the replacement of the researcher with another one (e.g. a female interviewer) may have a significant effect on the narratives produced. This change involves the introduction of new particularities, re-articulation of old ones from a different perspective or the altering of the initial chronological sequence. Thus, since our social positioning and interests do fluctuate over time, we are continuously reshaping the representational resources at our disposal (including narratives) in order to address the challenges of the present. In other words, we are drawn into a constant process of semiosis that transforms the semiotic landscape of socially available resources by adding new material or remaking already existent ones. This repository is culturally specific and always subject to socio-historical contexts.

However, an adoption of new representational strategies suggests a change in social roles and positions, and could only serve the interests of a self[1] in flux. In spite of the fact that each interview clip includes just one participant at a time, it may foreground several subjects. In other words, the interviewee speaks (simultaneously) from multiple positions and constantly refashions his or her narrative representations. Here narrative works as semiotic material since it fulfills the three metafunctions that usually characterize a meaning-making resource: narrative is capable of constructing

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[1] Although the featured narrative fragments may refer to the individualized notion of self, this project will privilege the collective aspects of the self. In other words, the study will put the emphasis on the way the participants develop and implement simultaneous attachments to specific cultural-linguistic formations. However, collective forms of identity may be routed in history but, at the same time, they are fluid and do change over time. The concepts of self and identity will be regarded here not as unitary but contentious terms that evade any implications of wholeness.

distinct aspects of reality, it is able to convey the interaction or relationship between the narrator and the one for whom the narrative is intended, and last it has the capacity to produce meaningful and coherent, both internally and externally, textual arrangements (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 41-44).

The constructed narrative representations are focused on the interviewee's (diasporic) identity and the researcher's interest towards a specific aspect of the participant's reality. At the same time, the digital outcome of the research project can be regarded as a window upon the researcher's self, his perspective and understanding of the world that is under investigation. Furthermore, the researcher is interested in a particular socio-cultural phenomenon that his narrative representations strive to evoke. On the other hand, the participant's interest and perspective, partly predetermined through the framing capacities of the interviewer's inquiries, refer to just one small portion of his or her world. Here the act of framing or singling out ascribes to the chosen segment of reality a certain degree of rigidity that is constantly overridden by widening or narrowing the frame of focus. Thus, the object of study, both the participant's cultural attachments envisaged as diasporic orchestrations and the researcher's perspective on identity formation, is defined by an interest that drives their attention towards a segment of reality with which they feel engaged at that particular moment (Kress, 2009).

The interviewee's cultural entanglements are realized through a specific semiotic resource, that is (verbal) narratives, and contextualized within a set of cultural and communicational practices. The researcher, in turn, reshapes the semiotic material utilized and reproduced by the participant. He transforms it into building blocks for his own narrative expression implemented within a particular discourse of identity construction[2]. Thus, regardless of whether we consider the semiotic work done by researcher or participant, their narrative constructions are inevitably a product of design. Their actualization rests upon a set of choices between available semiotic material, discursive environment for rendering the expressions meaningful, and discrete social practices providing the interactional context for the act of expression. Design refers to the various decisions made throughout the process of representation so that a particular aspect of reality or a form of self-expression can come into being. Here we will define design as the conceptual side of expression and

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[2] The discourse of cultural estrangement will be introduced further on.

the expressive side of conception (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 1-24). Both researcher and participant, as designers of their (non-)verbal representations, are well aware of the semiotic potential of the resources available in the respective representational context and strive to match their partial and selective perception of the world to the most suitable means of expression. However, design is not about achieving an absolute and irrevocable match between means of expression and one's ideas or intentions. The link between the two is motivated and, therefore, subject to renegotiation. What seems to be fixed is the relationship between material and content within the context(s) of a specific act of designing.

Eventually, every representation undergoes a process of redesigning; it is being made anew according to different and ever changing sets of design options. For instance, the viewer of the online creative component in this project may redesign the researcher's work in a manner similar to the way the researcher has previously refashioned the participants' narrative representations i.e., by switching to another discursive environment, by enacting the researcher's construction in a different interactional context or by reconfiguring the ensemble of semiotic modes utilized by the researcher. This ceaseless reshaping of the semiotic landscape provides a rather fluctuating and kaleidoscopic perspective on identity. The access to new resources of meaning making or the remake of already existing ones opens up new possibilities for identity formation, expression and interpretation.

Being positioned in numerous ways within a socially constructed space, the interviewees (re)design their own identities by manipulating the semiotic material at their disposal (i.e., mainly through verbal language during the interview sessions and by non verbal communication when reviewing the finished product of the interviews). The participants make sense of themselves through articulating distinct engagements with the surrounding world, always attired in various material forms but in accordance with prevailing discourses of fashion. In this order of thoughts, identity construction should be seen as making some meaning easily perceived in the form of textual artifacts of which narrative is just one among many other possible articulations.

Let's consider the following statement "Being a Bulgarian, he often goes through the headlines of several Bulgarian e-editions". The subordinate clause indicates a belonging to or positioning into a particular socio-cultural semiosphere. The statement has been uttered from the currently occupied position of being Bulgarian. Clearly the interest in the individual's identity is partial and selective as

there is more to it than just 'being a Bulgarian'. Here 'being a Bulgarian' is merely a fraction of his identity, a motivated projection of inner necessity that is materialized through the expressive potential of language.

Language is usually regarded as the ultimate mode of meaning making capable of independently realizing segmented parts of one's identity in various textual arrangements. In each narrative fragment of the project, the act of speaking in Bulgarian or English manifests the interviewee's awareness of sharing a degree of sameness with imaginary others. Language gives the speaker a sense of grounding and belonging to a common socio-cultural community and unlocks a wide range of possible identifications with various aspects of that community or any other one. Identity is constituted *in* and *through* language and the showcased verbal narratives of self-construction exemplify this interwoven nexus between the two – for instance, the practice of speaking in Bulgarian indicates an explicit affiliation or engagement with the shaping of a certain cultural-linguistic space and, at the same time, it is through the act of speaking that identity is reaffirmed or constituted anew; in the latter case, even though the verbal narrative is in Bulgarian, it brings to view the participant's connection to another (non-Bulgarian) cultural formation.

However, being just a semiotic resource among many others, language has its affordances and limitations and cannot be the single carrier of meaning. Moreover, since the meaning of any textual unit becomes obvious through the interplay of preferred semiotic resources, language carries only a certain amount of the total informational load of the message. In the case of the aforementioned example, meaning could have been realized not merely by written language but also through layout, bolding (as providing additional emphasis on the fact of being Bulgarian), color and materials for writing, voice pitch or accent if the statement is read aloud.

As mentioned above, the act of design is an ongoing process due to the fact that the conjunctions between forms of expressions and meaning to be expressed have temporal and motivated character. They are based on the ever-changing interest of the designer [3]. If we go back to the aforesaid statement, we will see that it has been uttered in a particular moment of time, but more importantly 'being Bulgarian' is constructed as a specific desire for expressing the cultural aspects of the self. The very

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[3] Kress (2009) differentiates the roles of rhetor, designer, and interpreter in order to illustrate the different tasks that an individual undertakes throughout the process of semiotic construction. Any representation set in a communicational context hinges upon the rhetoric, design, and interpretative capacity of the interacting parties.

next moment the speaker (rhetor) i.e., the one who rearranges the social world by means of semiotic material and performs an identity pertinent to the moment of speaking, may change his or her interests and intentions. Consequently a new articulation of the same phenomenon (being a Bulgarian) will be made but this time it will be based on different criteria of "Bulgarian-ness". From the standpoint of being Bulgarian, the speaker has an access to a finite repository of representational resources to find the one that fully addresses his or her needs and intentions at the moment of articulation. Usually the range of semiotic choices varies according to the respective social position of the speaker and the discursive characteristics of the socio-cultural environment.

This plenitude of semiotic options for engaging with the world makes identity a multimodal construct. We express ourselves in a variety of ways, often simultaneously, by exploring the meaning making potential of our respective culture(s). Identity has always been a matter of multimodal formation but until recently this multimodality has received little or no attention mainly because of the dominant role of language as the single most important locus of identity construction (see Baldry and Thibault 2005; Jewitt 2009). Apart from its multimodal production, identity appears to have the characteristics of a rhizome. It originates from a multitude of points and, at the same time, belongs to neither of them. Identity is made everywhere and nowhere and in this sense is a function of movement. As soon as it appears on the stage of representation, it breaks through performing a leap of incongruence that reaches its climax in a new form of realization whether through the process of inner semiosis or the ceaseless interaction and engagement with others.

Identity is negotiated in acts of interplay with others but also with the self. Let's rethink the discursive statement mentioned previously but this time focus on its main clause, "he often goes through the headlines of several Bulgarian e-editions". The positionality of the individual manifests a desire to stay informed of the present political development of Bulgaria, which, in turn, has been materially realized through the practice of reading news on the Internet. It is through reading about Bulgaria that the individual can make sense of himself as Bulgarian. Here the self, 'being a Bulgarian', is shaped through the social (inter)action of reading online texts or, to put it differently, by engaging with a virtual cultural space. Text is a semiotic entity produced by others in order to serve as a prompt for interpretation, which, at a later stage, may or may not be articulated in a new message. Thus, text always

requires a response in the form of interpretation or articulation, or both. As interacting with the digital, the self becomes connected to a wider Bulgarian speaking/reading community that remains virtual and imaginary.

As far as the self is always being determined within some communicational context or interaction with itself or others, it is a (self-)relational concept. The identity of being Bulgarian functions as a mental construct that helps the individual to make his way in the world. It is best apprehended as an inward sign providing a sense of grounding whereby the individual reacts to and interacts with the surrounding world. However, identity never stagnates as a fixed and immutable construct imprisoned within the inner world of the individual. It enters the domain of social interactions and undergoes a transformative process of negotiation with social others (Kress 2000: 153-62; 2009: 94).

Narrative as representation is concerned with the self and its coming into being through the expressive potential of available semiotic resources. However, since narration usually occurs in a communicational context, narrative also foregrounds the role of the other in the process of self-expression. Thus, a narrative representation portrays the self in relation to others whereby the constructed verbal image of the self becomes enmeshed in a complex ensemble of relationships with social others. Let us illustrate this. The narrative representations of the speaker (participant) provide us with a fragmentary image of his/her self semiotically enclosed in a verbal message. The speaker reveals his/her self to another individual while interacting with them. This further engagement with the self-image of the participant may take rather different paths, from enthusiastic reaffirmation to more or less explicit forms of challenging behavior and abrupt negation. Acting as an interpreter, the other individual approaches the speaker's message from the position of their own interest at the moment of interaction and selects certain aspect(s) of that message as a prompt for interpretation. It is on the basis of this new aspect that the speaker's self-image is (re)negotiated. Eventually, having created a mental conception of the speaker's message, the interpreter may want to realize it through the semiotic resources that they carry with them. The new message contains evaluative feedback on the way the self-image of the speaker is perceived by others. This feedback may or may not be taken into consideration throughout the subsequent acts of the speaker's self-expression.

This multilayered making of the self-image can be observed in each narrative fragment of the project's digital outcome. As the online interactive environment is being traversed, the participants' self-image comes to the fore as a result of the way the interviewees identify themselves in terms of culture, language and ethnicity; the way their self-image is been perceived by others (the interviewer and the potential viewer are the social others who contribute to the formation of the participant's self-image); and last the way the interviewed individuals perceive how others see them (this may be embedded within the narrative itself or may refer to the way the participants consider and review the researcher's interpretative evaluation of their self-image). Here the social is represented twice as the self-image simultaneously points to the different positions and interests of the speaker and the interpreter (the other).

The featured narrative constructions are determined by both practices of representation and communication. The former frames and fixes meaning semiotically within established modes of expression, while the latter opens up the constructed message for further transformation and negotiation with others. However, both practices occur within a specific social context that structures the interaction and establishes certain relations of power between the interlocutors. For instance, in the genre of interview, interviewer and interviewee interact in accordance with a dynamic set of power relations. The interviewer poses questions while the interviewee answers them but the latter may also refuse to provide answers and, thus, make the interviewer modify their inquiries.

Genre establishes and maintains the social grid of communication and regulates the manifestation of power between the parties involved. Each genre ensures that meaning as being expressed semiotically in a given social context reflects the interpersonal relations between the interactors. Hence, modally shaped, the meaning of a text is further extended so as to accommodate the specifics of its social environment (Kress 2009: 113-14).

Genre usually relates to the 'how' of communication; how the interaction is organized into a specific and discursively informed communicational context (van Leeuwen 2005: 117-39). Its main concerns are the participants involved in the process of interaction and their relationships created throughout different power charged situations. The same narrative plot contextualized through two distinct genres e.g., a quiet and relaxed atmosphere between friends, and a tense interview session,

will bring about different relationships of power between the participants. Although the story may remain unchanged, it will unfold in contrasting social environments. The former scenario suggests a relation of relative equality between the parties whereas the latter situation will be inscribed within apparent power relations between interviewer and interviewee (Briggs 2001).

The concept of power is of paramount importance for both the production and the reception of the digital outcome of the project as a discursively constructed text. As producing a particular type of knowledge, the text bears traces of distinct discourses that the researcher has adopted in the process of its making. Therefore, the discursive framework of the project enables certain ways of seeing and envisaging its subject matter. It provides the necessary (though not compulsory) point of departure for engaging with the multimodal textual arrangements and prescribes more or less rigid creative and interpretative behavior, what Hodge and Kress (1988: 4-12; 266) have called *logonomic systems*. The two main discourses utilized in the study i.e., with regard to doing qualitative research (see Denzin and Lincoln 2005) and conceptualizing identity construction, intertwine in a two-faced text that can be approached simultaneously from multiple points of entry. Although they both contribute to the discursive meaning of the text, the viewer, and to a certain degree the interviewee while reviewing the researcher's composition, may privilege one way of thought or action over the other one.[4] At the same time, the researcher's preferred way of knowing or doing suppresses or completely disregards alternative epistemic practices for making sense of the social-cultural phenomenon under consideration. This fact exposes the contingent and circumstantial character of the discursive text generated. It emphasizes the artificial and constructed nature of the researcher's epistemic framework that has been imposed on the otherwise insignificant routine practices and instances of lived experience.

The discursive formation of the project entails a specific number of subject-positions that empower but also *subjugate* to a rigorous logonomic mechanism for the reception and production of meaningful texts. In this project, the subject will be treated as a provisional outcome or a becoming that gradually emerges from the process of subjectification. Due to its fluid positioning within the discourse, the subject will be constantly under construction. The discursive framework of the study

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[4] In which case their interpretation may differ from the meaning and the effects that the researcher has aimed to realize.

suggests four dynamically interlaced subject positions - 'author' that interviews and conducts the study, 'participant' that is being interviewed, 'user/viewer' that engages with the author's work, and 'stranger' as alternative to the prevailing notion of a hybrid performing translation. As the study proceeds, these positions will be examined gradually not as distinct entities inscribed with essential characteristics, but through their reciprocal relationships.

In this research project, power relations will be discussed and analyzed through the prism of textual and cultural positionality. The fluid positionings of author, participant and user within the text and the constantly changing cultural positionality of the interviewees give rise to different relations of power. The tense interplay of discrete discursive statements i.e., belonging to different discourses within the generated text, and the lack of clear-cut borderline between the individuals' socio-cultural positions, unsettle the categories of positionality and subjectivity. The subjects have attempted more or less successfully to subvert the rigidity of their respective discursive environment and to initiate changes in the distribution of power. It should be noted here that all acts of resistance and subversive behavior have been intentionally orchestrated by the researcher. In this way, the constant tension and fluctuations of the subject-positions become an integrative part of the discursive context of the project.

The position of the user as performing his/her own interpretation of the constructed narrative fragments and, at the same time, viewing the performed text requires special attention here.[5] The user is invited to witness and experience the phenomenon of diasporic identity formation but, at the same time, s/he is kept at a distance. Although accepted and acknowledged as a co-actor with distinctive interpretative potential, the user is treated as an outsider. The researcher's continuous withholding of information from the viewer and the imaginary social distance between the latter and the interviewee[6], seen here as an object of contemplation, prevent the viewer from close and intimate engagement with the narrative material. Therefore, the potential user is both the welcomed visitor of another place, which brings a sense of attachment to the place visited, and the mistrusted intruder that remains detached despite being present in the intruded place. Hence, within the

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[5] The prospective users cannot be subsumed under distinct audience categories, as suggested by Denzin (1997: 188) because the text may be considered simultaneously from different audience positions (professional, participatory, aesthetic and so forth).
[6] All visual fragments feature a long-shot composition that distantiates and depersonalizes.

discursive environment set by the researcher, being simultaneously close by and far away, the user acquires a rather ambiguous and liminal position.

Similar account can be provided for the subject-position of the researcher. He is the necessary intermediary between participant and user supplying the imaginative and interpretative mind of the former with (conceptualized and edited) instances of the participants' narrated experience. Moreover, the researcher takes the seat of the interviewee and, at the same time, he stays close to the user ensuring that their interpretative needs are taken into consideration i.e., making the modified interview narratives as transparent as possible so that further engagement with the text stays feasible.

Lastly, power manifests itself even within the semiotic landscape of the produced narrative material. The researcher's multimodal construction challenges the overwhelming power of language as a semiotic resource and redistributes the meaning-making capacity of the text among a broad range of both verbal and non-verbal modes. However, as far as the interpretation of the researcher's work is concerned, each of these semiotic modes may take more or less privileged position and attempt to realize the meaning potential of the text on its own.

As a discursive practice, interview prescribes a thoroughly composed and regularly monitored set of rules and actions for engaging with aspects of reality and producing knowledge out of their respective representations (Fontana and Frey 2005). Examining the methodological framework for doing qualitative research, Chase (2005: 695-727) states that the conventional way of conducting an interview as a neutral and unbiased endeavor for capturing objective data about reality has been eagerly taken out of the contemporary researcher's toolbox of methods and practices. What has been disposed of is the trivial conception that the object of study is completely accessible and merely awaiting to be examined and manipulated in various forms of scholarships. By no means does the interviewer have a direct access to the world of the interviewee and the latter can only be perceived through approximation. The researcher has been invited to momentarily witness the (re)construction of another place that is then mediated through the act of interview. As Denzin (2001: 833) vividly puts it, we live in a 'second-hand world', one that is already semiotically mediated for us and densely saturated with representations done by others. In other words, the immediate space we occupy throughout our lives becomes approachable only through its mediated counterpart in which we actually

live. Thus, any type of interaction with social others, regarded as a reciprocal exchange of representations, inevitably occurs on the plane of mediacy. This fact has significant implications on the nature of self-construction. We come to know ourselves in the communicational context of perceiving and evaluating *other* representations of the self. Hence, being a mediated and relational construct, the self is comprised of multiple interpretative and performative versions of the individual each of which is conditioned by a specific interactional situation. In regard to the study, the conducted interviews do not reveal an essential and unified self on the basis of some common criteria. On the contrary, they emphasize different, partial and often contradicting selves, various forms of self-expression and ways of being in a particular social context.

The mediated and fragmentary variants of the interviewee's self are realized in the process of conversing with the interviewer. This in turn has problematized the indisputable position of the researcher as observer contemplating the object of study from a safe distance. He is no longer invisible and has gradually become aware of his agentive role in the production of the interview text. At the same time, the researcher is not the only one responsible for the text generated. We can think of the interview session as a dynamic field of interactions between interviewer and interviewee whose ultimate goal is the construction of mutually accepted and shared understandings of a particular socio-cultural phenomenon. The interview is best seen as a negotiated accomplishment of the common semiotic task of bringing the self into being through the mode of verbal language.[7] It is a collaborative and intersubjective undertaking that gives special attention to the dialogic interaction between the parties involved. Instead of talking about the interviewee or the object of study from the distant point of uncommitted observer, the researcher talks to them and co-creates a negotiated version of the participant's self or that aspect of the world that is under consideration.

The dialogic nature of interview stipulates that the voices of researcher and participant run side by side in parallel lines towards the joint realization of a semiotic entity (utterance). Elaborating on the origin and evolution of language, Voloshinov and Bakhtin (1994: 58) characterize utterance as a bridge stretched between the self and the other. If one side of the bridge depends on the expressive capabilities of the speaker, the other hinges on the interpretative skills of the respective addressee. Thus,

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[7] However, the whole text of the collated interview data never takes the form of unimodal representation. It is an ensemble of dynamic and intricate interaction between distinct semiotic modes.

an utterance belongs simultaneously to the speaker and the addressee. It is a product of their reciprocal relationships and, consequently, neither individual could claim it as a creation of their own.

A two-sided text, by its very own nature, is an extraterritorial construct colored with nuances of both difference and similarity. Not only does it work through ruptures and fissures that validate difference in situatedness but also it conjoins and interrelates on the basis of commonalities. Thus, text is a no man's land constantly rediscovered and modified, but never completely colonized. Voloshinov and Bakhtin (Ibid. 60) observe that a word and, in this sense, any other unit of language is always a common territory, a space shared by both interlocutors. However, such a statement renders the metaphor of bridging redundant and effaces the disparate situatedness of speaker and addressee. Furthermore, it leads to allusions of monopolizing the conversation and transforms it into a more or less subtle monological form of communication. In addition, the authors do mention that both parties should be socially organized prior to the act of communication. However, regardless of sharing a common social environment, they may have developed distinctive social purviews and interact with others from specific positions within the common environment. Here it may be more productive if we think of territory as an archipelago or a cluster of islands that forms an archipelagic state.

The dialogic text as a discursive form for representing knowledge is conditioned on the situation of communication and the addressee for whom the text is intended. In this research project, the social context of the narrative text is set by the practice of interview. All verbal narratives that the project displays are generated in conditions of informal conversation with participants. In other words, the interviewee is aiming to become an equal partner in the process of text construction. However informal these interactions may have been, the TV Studio lighting and the presence of video camera, seen as a material extension of the researcher's identity and as such it becomes part of the project, have constantly reshaped the relationships between the interactors.

The verbal interaction between researcher and participant has been designed and implemented through semi-structured forms of interviewing. In this way, an initial set of general questions has been used in order to specify and narrow down the inexhaustible range of possibilities for self-representation and construction of identity. Each interview session allows the interviewee to perform a preferred identity.

Emplotting instances of lived experience and contemplating current positionalities, the interviewee, accompanied by the researcher, embarks on a journey of making sense of his or her own world. By and large, it is the researcher who more or less sets the course but most importantly suggests a point of destination. On the other hand, the participants choose the means of travelling and clarify the exact route to be followed towards the proposed destination. Eventually, they may not want to reach it, in which case the point of arrival is being constantly deferred. Destination, route and means of transport have been continually renegotiated between interviewer and participant within the dialogic space of interviewing.

Although empowered to compose identities of their own, the interviewees are unable to accomplish the task without any help from outside. The self manifests itself only in relation to the other and in the context of dialogic interviewing the other is the researcher himself.[8] He shapes the participants' narratives of self-construction by directing the attention towards a specific aspect of their world. To a certain degree the researcher's question contains half the answer of the interviewee. It allows the participant to focus on something particular framed by the researcher's interests. The provided answer, in turn, shapes the subsequent inquiries of the interviewer and so forth. Situated within the dialogic space of the interview, researcher and participant interact with each other from the positions of speaker and interpreter simultaneously, coauthoring a mutually accepted text.

The practice of dialogic interview articulates the relationship between researcher and participant producing a narrative text. Production delineates the material dimension of a communicative event and always involves some kind of physical act towards actualization or verbal articulation in the case of interviewing (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001: 66-85). Production does not merely realize what has already been designed but performs an indispensable semiotic role. Imbuing the interview text with relationships of power, the interview-as-production discloses the interpersonal nexus between interviewer and interviewee and, hence, actively contributes in the process of meaning making.

All narrative fragments are produced through the application of multimodal and multiplatform resources. Once generated the text enters the realm of

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[8] Although a certain degree of narcissistic construction of the self may be in play, the interviewee's forms of self-expression are being partly determined and realized through an interaction with the other that is in relation to the interviewer.

postproduction (editing) that is mainly concerned with the reception and subsequent transmission of the now modified text for purposes of further communication and dissemination. Here we can think of the interview text as reported speech that is a form of utterance inserted into another utterance whose sole author is conventionally taken to be the author (researcher) himself. Voloshinov (1973: 115-123) describes reported speech as *speech within another speech* but ascertains that it is also *speech about another speech*. In this way, he markedly differentiates the two locales where the interaction between reported speech and the act of reporting may take place. The latter definition regards the reported utterance as compact semiotic unit with secured meaning potential; it foregrounds the referential meaning of the reported speech. An utterance about utterance posits the existence of at least three interactors – the initial originator of the message (interviewee), the one engaged with its reporting and transmission (researcher), and the person to whom the reported speech is intended (user that traverses an online interactive environment of mediated and fragmented forms of self-expression). As we will see, these positionalities are fluid and intertwined, constantly permeating each other and can only be disentangled in abstract terms.

On the level of construction, reported speech becomes a syntactic or stylistic self-sufficient unit submerged into authorial context. It stands to reason, then, that reported speech can be examined as an enclave that is syntactically attached to another territory with which it has no thematic congruence. However, reported utterance (the edited interview data) becomes an enclave only in relation to its reporting or editing and it is an exclave in regard to the initially composed message (the raw interview data).

Voloshinov (1973: 116) rightly remarks that the relation of one utterance to another is plausible only as long as the two messages are grammatically bound together by means of established syntactic patterns of the semiotic mode in use. The unity of this stylistic design goes against the very logic of dialogue. Any type of dialogic text consists of syntactically emancipated utterances that work together in order to achieve a common understanding (meaning). In other words, dialogic bonds are being created and sustained by means of common referential meaning, not through applying a stabilizing constructional model, as is the case with reported speech. Thus, if in the context of interviewing utterance is decisively dialogic, postproduction practices of reporting appear to be categorically monologic. However, as long as the

potential user is considered, this postproduction text is reset in a prospective dialogue with the viewer. The monologic text is composed in the absence of the initial originator but, at the same time, it suggests the presence of an addressee (the potential interpreter of the interview text). Here the achievement of utmost transparency and aptness of the semiotic resources utilized and the presence of common linguistic and cultural codes is essential for initiating a meaningful dialogue with the viewer.

The evaluative reception of the utterance to be reported, according to Voloshinov, occurs within the inner speech of the person engaged with reporting that is the researcher. Here the utterance takes the form of a mental image and, through design, it undergoes some sort of modification. These modifications bear the stamp of conscious and interpretative engagement with the message to be reported and go beyond the mere transferal of referential meaning from one form of reporting into another one. In other words, the utterance is made anew but this time in accordance with different interest and perspective. The applied interpretative practices are then realized as reporting context that encloses the reported message. It should be noted that the extent and quality of these modifications vary according to the purposes that their author seeks to fulfill. Each interrelation between authorial text and reported message prescribes more or less rigid/plastic borderline between the two.

The dynamism and interpenetration between reported speech and reporting can be seen in all interview clips that this project has generated. To put it differently, editing (i.e., the manner in which both researcher and participant (re)shape the interview materials) and the data to be edited condition and transform each other. The act of reporting never simply registers the text to be reported by enclosing it in quotation marks. This would place the author onto the plane of objectivity and would bring about a false perception of his role as a reporter. A clear-cut borderline between the two is impossible and hardly manageable; reporting or editing itself is already a form of engagement with the text, it implies a certain interpretative position from which the author undertakes continual interventions into the territory of reported speech.

The retorting and commenting affordances of the authorial context not only should be taken into consideration, but also examined in close relationship with the referential meaning of the narrative clips. However, even though there is not an absolute demarcation line between reported text and reporting context, we still need some sort of provisional division that would determine and initiate the process of

interaction between the two. Voloshinov (1973: 120-160) makes this impetus for redrawing the fluid contours of utterance and context part of what he calls a pictorial style of speech reporting. Furthermore, he examines in detail its various manifestations in direct and quasi-direct discourses of speech. In respect to the digital outcome of this study, we will outline the two extreme poles or modifications of pictorial style of reporting.

By its very nature, the reported speech of the interviewees is an edited speech. The initial interview text has undergone substantial modifications. The video clips feature only a small portion of the initially generated text and have often been composed regardless of their original context. All stories are highly fragmented without a reference to their immediate context and in many cases they have been realized through loosely related statements of the interviewee. Most of the peculiarities that usually accompany every verbal implementation (pauses, repetitions, hms and so forth) have been disposed of which in a way have restrained the individualization of the reported interview fragments.

The impossibility to follow a coherent and gradually unfolding storyline acts as detraction from the interview stories and significantly weakens the referential weight of the reported message. These interrupting digressions from the interviewee's individuality are additionally heightened by the fact that none of the participants introduces himself or herself. They have no names, which in turn makes their personal accounts dispensable and easy to be replaced by any other instance of lived experience. Thus, a given verbal narrative could be substituted for any other story told by the same participant. At the same time, sharing intimate and personal experience usually requires a close-up shot of the interviewee. However the visual design of the project favors the long shot composition, which furthers the depersonalization of the interviewee and draws the attention away from the actual referent of the reported utterance. Here the long shot functions as a stylistic device of digression that distantiates the user-interpreter from the reported message. On the other hand, it advances upon the speech being reported and infuses it with the researcher's own accentuations. Indifferent to the interviewee's individuality, the researcher transforms the reported message into a stage for his own performance. Thus, deprived of thematic significance, the reported text becomes a decorative layout (context) upon which the author-narrator deploys his contrived commentary and retort. In this way, the act of reporting, taking over the reported message, starts to sound like a message

on its own. Consequently, the new status quo privileges not what has been reported, but how the reporting has been done, in what distinct manner and through what constructional and stylistic devices. Weakened and deemphasized, the reported speech has been typified in a direction that best suits the researcher's needs. Coerced to emphatically renounce its signifying competence, the reported interview collapses inward upon itself. The implosion of meaning transforms the reported story into an object of subjectification continually remolded by contingent and subjective interests.

The pictorial style of speech reporting can take the interpenetration between reported utterance (edited interview text) and manner of reporting (editing) in the completely opposite direction. This modification underlines the dominant role of reported utterance in the process of speech reporting. Here elements of the message to be conveyed infiltrate and dissipate throughout the entire authorial locution undermining its relative explicitness and autonomy. The decomposition of the context under the pervasive incursion of the message has significant implications for the position of the researcher as reporter. His authority to direct and orchestrate the various constituents of the reported utterance is challenged and overthrown. Now the researcher's new position is being defined as subjective as is that of the interviewees. Assuming the position of participant in the project, the researcher begins to speak their language, enacts similar patterns of behavior, and shares common values and understandings.

The researcher has given direction to this study by determining its subject but, at the same time, he makes himself as an object of study. As an interviewee, the author of the project has provided narratives of self-construction on the basis of research questions similar to those formally answered by the other participants. His explicit position of narrator, subjectively recalling lived experience pertaining to common cultural-linguistic formations (Australian and Bulgarian), bespeaks a sense of identification in values and orientations with the other interviewees. The previously distinct and incommensurable positions of researcher and interviewee now overlap - it is the participant who speaks for the researcher and, at the same time, it is the researcher that comes to be a participant.

However the alleged equality in terms of power between the interviewee and the researcher-interviewee is pseudo-equality, a subtle and skewing exertion of power that serves the interests of the researcher. Here the dynamic relationship between reported interview text and author's evaluative intonations is deprived of any dramatic

or compelling nuances. The researcher voluntarily surrenders his toolbox of assertive commentaries and retorts, and reappears in the attires of interviewee. It is the possibility of realizing such choice or option that unveils the above suggested equality as an intricate act of power. Likewise one may consider the change in power relations exposed within the different compositional designs of the interview data. From a position of less power, the interviewee steps further to an upper level of authority and acquires a capacity for commenting on the message conveyed. In this way the participant assumes responsibility for the reporting of the text and becomes its author. Within this new configuration of relationships, the act of speech reporting (projected onto a Mac monitor) appears to be merely the speech to be reported.

By reviewing the reported message, the participant-author decreases the modality of the authoritative text and demands that its interpersonal dimension be reassessed and constituted anew. However the reporting competence of the interviewee is not an intrinsic feature of his or her position in the world; it has been granted to them until the author decides to withdraw their duties as a reporter.

The two extreme modifications of speech reporting i.e., the dominant position of either the reported events or the style of reporting, not only do not exclude each other but, on the contrary, they exist simultaneously within the text. Reported interview story and reporting context complement each other coloring the text with a plenitude of intonations and accents. It is exactly this ambience of perpetual interpenetration and overwhelming tension between synchronous accentuations that stylistically inform the referential overtones of the project's digital outcome. The dynamic and synchronous projection of author-participant and participant-author is merely one among many other expressions of unresolved tension. Speaking from fluid and ambiguous positionalities, researcher and interviewee enact parallel performances of self-expression and, consequently, produce a ramified text that features the simultaneous multileveledness of identity construction. The text takes multiple directions of reading and compels the user to decide on what is worth being reported. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that practices of reading could possibly resolve the ambivalent status of the text, as there would always be textual elements demanding to be approached or at least acknowledged as deliberately *being made strange or difficult*, to use the language of Russian formalists (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1996: 135-160).

As pointed out earlier, narrative forms of representation enable us to perceive aspects of reality as existing through time and space. Any narrative representation evinces the unrelenting passage of time and, moreover, manifests a never-ending desire to render fragments of this temporal actuality comprehensible. Thus, the idea of movement through time underlines the very essence of narrative. It is believed that a narrative event should direct to something particular that, as being narrated, undergoes changes of state. This trajectory of novelty, that we usually call storyline, is a chronological and mental construct that unfolds gradually in the mind of the user through a specific narrative script. The story seen as an action time (Abbott 2008: 18) always occurs within established narrative discourse that on its turn determines the time and manner of viewing the narrated events. In reality a story cannot exist outside its pertinent discourse of narration and in that sense it is a fiction, an imaginative act that comes about only within one's own mind.

Taking in the narrative particularities, the user rearranges them in thin diachronic strings and constructs a story in order to make sense of the narrative content. On the contrary, the narrator always embarks on telling a story that has already taken shape in his/her mind and is simply being conveyed by conventional means of narrative discourse. The researcher of this study has taken a different approach to storytelling starting from the narrative discourse. In the first place, he has designed and established the stylistic envelope of narrative texture that only at a later stage has been supplied with specifics and examples of lived experiences. Determining the narrative discourse in advance, to a certain degree, anticipates the story. Rather than being implemented within a discourse of narration, the story has already been made part of it and emerges from the discourse itself.

In this respect, Voloshinov (1973: 134) mentions the following example. As soon as we catch sight of a comic character dressed in a grotesque style and made up, we feel amused and get ready to laugh even before hearing his jokes. In other words, the style of narrating takes precedence over the entertaining content of the jokes. Here we should emphasize that one should have a prior understanding of what a clown looks like otherwise the experience may take a rather unexpected turn e.g., small children seeing a clown for the first time.

Likewise the theme of reconsidering diasporic identity formation begins to develop independently of the recollected lived experiences of the interviewees exposed through the fragmented movie clips. The preset discourse of narration is able

to carry out the functions of a story on its own. Here once again a prior familiarity with the discursive style of narrating should be posited otherwise the story will be taken in regardless of its pictorial effects and as a result it will discard the semiotic value of the narrative's discursive composition. However the example Voloshinov cites seems rather inappropriate and ill suited for bringing out the dominant role of reporting (narrating) over the referential meaning of the utterance (story). When performing on a circus stage, rarely does a comic character resort to verbal expressions of language. The story that he offers to the audience is being implemented exclusively in visual terms and may only be partially complemented by verbal speech. Nevertheless it is the character's costume, makeup and other visual attributes that give us a pronounced feeling of what is about to happen next. Even so, one can only experience the visual performance in full if attending simultaneously to the peculiar style of narrating and the actual story that is being narrated through the character's actions and events that take place on the stage. Whether the style of narration has the leading role or not is of minor importance as both authorial style of expression and events to be expressed contribute to the meaning of the text. Therefore, rather than investigating their relationship in terms of dominance or submission, it seems more productive to consider how textual meaning takes shape through the interaction between manner of reporting and reported story.

Within this interplay of authorial context and interview stories, the researcher enacts different performance roles and has made himself visible as both inquirer and respondent. Every story imparts an aspect of the interviewee's world but, at the same time, it reveals reflexive considerations on the selection, design, and representation of that aspect. Moreover, this positional reflexivity of the author is transformed into a textual one since the story constantly draws the attention back to its terms of construction. Reflexivity goes beyond the researcher's concerns about how exactly narrative representation has been fixed (in terms of mode, genre, and discourse) and becomes more or less evident in the self-performances of the interviewees (Macbeth 2001).

A performance is always created and creative; it is both a text and a transformative process through which the actor may come to know himself or herself better. A performative text overwrites its reflective capacity to demonstrate with reflexive marginal notes on the act of performing. These reflexive inscriptions enable the actor to trace back his or her actions and reset the performance unfolding another

text. Hence, the performative and reflexive text works similarly to a palimpsest. It is a multilayered text about the performance of a performance (metaperformance). In this sense, the narrative fragments reproduced in the study amount to a (meta)performative script [9] based on the author's research endeavor and the interviewee's experiential reality whereby their self is being (trans)formed; both researcher and participant simultaneously enact context-specific narratives and reflect back on them. However, it should be noted that most of these narrative fragments lack a distinct storyline and are being defined by low degree of narrativity. They withhold the experiential specifics and are comprised of merely reflexive statements on what appears to have been concealed or ruled out. While being interviewed, the participants reflect back on themselves and to a certain degree reveal themselves to themselves. It is in terms of this performative reflexivity that the interviewee becomes both subject and object. When contemplating their own subjectivity, the interviewees make themselves an object for themselves to reflect on (Turner 1992: 103). This can be seen within the visual composition of reviewing and commenting on the (co)authored narrative texts. Here the interviewees are depicted as something that they both are (actors performing on stage for audience) and that they see (self-performing actors that experience themselves throughout the performance). Furthermore, the participants keep acting as if being another for example one of the participants has even expressed doubts about the personal account provided by claiming that these are not his words.

Let us consider the interview stories embedded in the project in relation to having a diasporic identity. All clips are designed as informal and bilingual conversations, conducted in both English and Bulgarian. The stories revolve around cultural practices and activities from everyday life revealing various degrees of connectivity and interaction between distinct cultural-linguistic affiliations. Each verbal utterance features a specific attachment towards the interviewee's immediate cultural milieu or to a far-off and virtual cultural environment (two of the participants born in Australia have never been in Bulgaria). At the same time, each verbal articulation in Bulgarian or English allows the participants to think about themselves and relate themselves to other individuals on the ground of common cultural and linguistic characteristics. As performers of cultural-linguistic diversity, all

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[9] Here by script we mean a copy of the text created and used by the researcher and realized as a performance.

interviewees, regardless of whether or not acquainted to each other, become members of the same imagined community of contingent and ambiguous cultural attachments. Nothing brings them all together but the imagined sound of cultural and linguistic polyphony (Anderson 2006: 145).

However the collated data has been organized in such a way that all stories that make prominent the identifications with Bulgarian culture are narrated in (Australian) English whereas the ones that accentuate on an affinity with Australian culture are related in Bulgarian. Thus, the verbal expressions of each participant flow across two disparate and equivocal narrative strings that intersect and permeate each other forming an ensemble of cultural multiplicity and simultaneity. Each narrative, whether related in Bulgarian or English, articulates two (multiple) parallel storylines that can be only perceived in a synchronous manner. The ensemble maintains a high level of tension between its synchronous cultural constituents. It has no sense of purpose and does not strive at reaching a point of disambiguation. Thus, it is constructed as a rhizomatic organism sustaining perpetual tension and unresolved dissonance.

Depending on the user's interpretative behavior, this dialogical simultaneity may be turned into a rigid utterance that boldly disregards one line of self-expression while most assuredly realizes another one. Even if this is the case, the suppressed accent always reiterates its factuality restoring the initial state of tension. For instance, throughout a personal account being articulated in either Bulgarian or English, the interviewees frequently resort to verbal expressions from another language. This explicitly illustrates the inability of self-expression by means of just one language.

Inscribed with simultaneity and multiplicity, these deliberately generated cultural entanglements impede the possibility of considering 'Bulgarian-ness' and 'Australian-ness' on their own terms. There is no 'Bulgarian-ness, neither can there be any 'Australian-ness'. These can only exist as static and reductionistic terms; they may be envisaged as mental constructs that, by their very nature, are always politically motivated and saturated with essentialist modes of thought and action. However, when considered in a context of simultaneity and multiplicity, the two heterogeneous terms become enmeshed, that is, they are no longer differentiable and together with other modes of cultural affinity they constitute the process of *becoming*; the process of fostering multiple and simultaneous rhizomatic identities subject to constant practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and forever evading

the constant reemergence of centripetal tendencies in the assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The thematic line of the featured narratives deals with identity formation in an environment of cultural multiplicity. Identity construction always takes place within the realm of culture seen here as a semiotic mechanism for the production and communication of meaning (Hall 1997a: 2). This cultural meaning organizes and regulates the social activities and conduct of those sharing the respective cultural space. In addition, all members of a culture are familiar with the specificity of its codes and conventions that promote mutual understanding (but can also be challenged, resisted or rejected) and render comprehensible any (self-)representations constructed within that culture. Thus, if meaning always resides in a particular (socio-)cultural environment, one can only make sense of themselves and the surrounding world as long as they occupy physically or virtually a certain cultural space from which a projection of identity is launched. For instance, the identity of being a mother may acquire different cultural nuances depending on the various signifying practices that the concept of motherhood accommodates in a given cultural context. This fact suggests that identity is always cultural i.e., it is constructed in accordance with the semiotic material and conventions of a given culture, and demonstrates the tautological character of the expression 'cultural identity'.

It is often acknowledged that in conditions of growing global interconnectedness culture cannot be envisaged as a fixed and static system of representations enclosed inside a geographically bounded nation-state. Moreover, the digital world that we live in allows for inhabiting multiple virtual cultural spaces. Rather than being a stable structure of categories and measurable variables, culture and identity are seen in terms of performance that unfolds through a great number of changes and permutations; they began to be considered as active verbs, not nouns (Conquergood 1989: 82-95; 1991: 183; 1992: 84; Denzin 2003: 191; Bauman 1997: 19). Nevertheless, culture and identity can only be envisaged in verbal forms if their more or less temporal and anchored manifestations are taken into consideration. In other words, regarded as nouns, the two concepts are being set in motion in order to become verbs.

This conception of the dual character of culture and identity as both noun and verb has been embedded into the digital outcome of the project. Each media fragment is tagged with a particular word (verbal noun) in English or Bulgarian depending on

the spoken language in the clip. All stories told in English have English labels whereas the Bulgarian clips are supplied with markers in Bulgarian.[10] They are all formed on the basis of a verb taken from the participants' accounts and modified by the researcher into a verbal noun. Thus, the English verbal nouns are constructed from the infinitive form of the respective verb (the particle 'to' has been omitted) or by adding an -ing ending to the infinitive. Likewise, the clip tags in Bulgarian are formed on the basis of the past tense form of the selected verbs plus -ни/-ние (-ni/-nie) suffix. For the non-Bulgarian speaking user the Cyrillic script should be regarded as a visual aid that enables the viewer to follow separately either the Bulgarian or the Australian narrative strings or, alternatively, they can traverse the online narrative content by switching continuously between accounts in Bulgarian and English.

This process-centered approach of considering culture and identity is evident in the work of Stuart Hall (1993: 273-327; 2000: 21-34). Hall describes identity as a matter of both being and becoming. Identity comes from a certain place as a projection of the individual's positionality and, at the same time, it undergoes transformations. Each attempt to frame one's identity as *being* is registered on the plane of *becoming* as a more or less supple (in regard to further transformations and interconnections) and temporal positioning. Hence, being Bulgarian or Australian may provide a sense of personal location and cultural belonging but it is not an essential and exclusive source for such sentiments. Being Bulgarian or Australian could congeal into an essential, permanent and stable core of the self only if it begins to be considered outside the context of becoming.

Our knowledge of identity formation is being shaped by the currently prevailing discourse of cultural hybridity (Canclini 1997; Lowe 2003). In fact, what is now called hybrid forms of culture and identity have been existing for a long time and should not be considered as unique and specific phenomenon of our time. Nevertheless, as a social subject capable of being studied and represented, the 'cultural hybrid' could only exist within a relevant discursive formation that has come to the fore only in recent times (Hall 1997b: 46-47; Pieterse 2009: 90; 98-100). The term 'hybrid' has its origin in the field of biology and usually refers to mixing or combining heterogeneous and distinct entities in order to produce a third one (Bhabha and Rutherford 1990; Bhabha 1994; 1996). However, it is often added that the hybrid

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[10] Hover your mouse over any preview clip (widget) and its tag will become visible.

retains the initial characteristics of its constituents intact (Schöpf and Schöpf 2005; Fisher 2005: 237; Kraidy 2005: 60-65).

Within the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, hybridity becomes a framework for addressing the rising issues of constantly shifting cultural landscapes and outer-facing sense of belonging. It allows for examining and thinking of a wide range of phenomena in terms of cross-category processes that subvert the boundaries between distinct entities and focus on their fuzziness instead. In the discourse of hybridity, the concept of border becomes more flexible as accommodating a 'not-only-but-also' perspective. Thus, hybridity goes against the very notion of culture and identity as fixed blocks of essential features bounded to the territorial confines of a nation-state. Hybridity discourse has diluted the confidence in arranging things into strictly defined classes and has become increasingly preoccupied with the ambivalent and incomplete nature of socio-cultural phenomena. The hybrid is to be found everywhere nowadays and almost anything (culture, genre, text, nation, ethnicity, cars, "new species of media"[11] and so forth) can be represented as a form of hybridization, which to a greater extent weakens the meaning of the concept. If everything already exists as hybrid, then, hybridization of culture and identity is merely another tautology (Pieterse 2009: 64).

Within the context of hybridization, identity formation proceeds through both a displacement from one territory of residence and a consequent (re)connection to another place/space (Papastergiadis 2000: 14-16; Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk 2005: 71). In this process of cultural mixing, the dislocated individuals come into contact with aspects of another culture and by reworking them in a novel configuration the now reconnected individuals produce a hybrid form of identity or culture.

According to Papastergiadis (2000: 129-131), this process of hybridization can be understood through the practice of translation. In considering the nature of the hybrid, the author refers to a variety of concepts ('energy field of forces', 'multidirectional circuit board', 'syncretic dynamics') but gives prominence to the framing potential of translation. In this framework, the hybrid becomes a construct of displacement and correspondence in an act of translation (Ibid., 194). Furthermore, translation is defined as constantly being aware of its point of departure and never able to reach its destination (Ibid., 137), which somehow contradicts an earlier

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[11] Manovich (2008: 75) sees media hybridity in "the coming together of the DNAs of different media to form new offsprings and species".

statement that translation inevitably creates some kind of a new utterance (Ibid., 129). In fact, the practice of translation always strives to produce a text of mutual understanding and, therefore, it has a specific destination point, though accessible through a plenitude of interpretative paths. If a text cannot be delivered as a result of translation, then, what is the point of having something translated in the first place? In other words, the 'hybrid' as actively being engaged in translation between different languages of culture would not be able to perform their role of 'cultural translator'.

Turning to translation as production of new textual arrangements, we encounter another insoluble problem. The construction of a new semiotic entity through an act of translation seems to bring hybridity back on the plane of segmentarity. It implies a sense of rigidity that re-establishes the hybrid as a distinct and conceptually cued category. The same could be said about the terms 'third space', or 'third term' (would they still be called 'third' if there are more than two constituents simultaneously undergoing hybridization?) and 'in-betweenness'[12]. They are all grounded upon the visibility of a unique entity generated through hybridization of disparate aspects of culture.

At the same time, translation is unable to account for the power relations between the various cultural constituents of the 'hybrid'. Neither is it capable of handling the coexistence of multiple cultural languages or spaces, both physical and virtual. How many translations do we have to perform if more than two heterogeneous cultural elements are involved in the process of hybridization and which one will come first? The same questions can be raised in regard to the energy field of the hyphen conceived as in-between space of two different constitutive parts (Papastergiadis 2000: 142-3). How would the concept of hyphenated cultural forms accommodate the multiple and simultaneous attachments to diverse number of cultural territories? Should we envisage the hyphenations in a syntagmatic of paradigmatic manner?

All of the aforementioned concepts and ways of thinking about identity downplay the complexity of having multiple and simultaneous cultural attachments. Rather than working through practices of translation and hyphenation, 'hybridity' may be better comprehended by the process of *cultural mélange*. Consider, for

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[12] The concept of in-betweenness requires special consideration. A detailed account is provided in *The Wanderer*. It will suffice here to say that in-betweenness is inscribed with fixed and resolved relationships that disambiguates hybridity and elucidates it as a clear-cut category.

instance, the following example. As residing in a particular cultural environment, one may identify himself/herself with aspects of another culture by using representational resources whose forms of expression and content belong respectively to a third and forth cultural territories.

As a socially constructed repository of resources, each culture offers certain possibilities of self-expression and different opportunities for self-construction. The affordances for identity construction are always limited and specific for a given historical and socio-cultural context. Furthermore, they may vary from culture to culture offering different options for self-expression. It seems logical, then, that individuals having multiple cultural attachments would be also familiar with a greater number of resources for self-expression in comparison to those who remain bounded within a particular cultural space. However, staying confined to a cultural territory is no longer a feasible option. As Clifford (1998: 367) points out, in a time of accelerated globalization, there is no need for one to leave their realm of cultural meanings in order to confront another culture as the outside world would certainly find them.

One main feature of this current phase of globalization, the technological innovations in the domains of transportation and communication, has made the boundaries of nation-state porous and ill-suited for handling the great appetite for cultural diversity and realizations of the self elsewhere. Once set free from the tense grip of their culture of origin, the individuals turn into nomads that do rarely return to any sedentary forms of life. Scattered across fields of unfamiliarity, they traverse foreign cultural landscapes and constantly refashion their identities through the kaleidoscopic prism of another place. Being a nomad is an ongoing process, a becoming inscribed with multiple acts of physical dislocation or appealing notions of imaginative spaces.[13] This reality of ceaseless displacement, whether physical or virtual, constitutes the very essence of nomadic life; it enables some sort of residing-in-displacement that yields a plenitude of ever changing possibilities for identity construction.

Speaking from different cultural spaces simultaneously, the participants of this project have designed and constructed their identities by making good use of the expressive potential of both Bulgarian and Australian cultural environments. Their

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[13] As put forward by Appadurai (1996: 34), nowadays a growing number of people confront the prevailing circumstance of having to move or deal with the incessant desire for being able to move.

various attachments to the two cultural semiospheres are significant as long as the interviewees are able to make their way into the world by utilizing preferred and meaningful cultural resources. Moreover, these attachments are neither essential and absolute nor innate and inherent to the self as some sort of inner core or center that structures and organizes all past and present activities of the individuals. Nevertheless, a belonging to a culture is often treated as natural as the physical features of the human body. This fact merely suggests a lack of detachment from an initially occupied culture of origin or scarceness of prolonged exposures to other cultural influences. In such cases the self resides in the rigid space of a culture until the mechanism of physical or mental detachment is set in motion.

One's belonging to a culture cannot be comprehended as a natural process whereby each individual possesses essential qualities that resemble those of the culture they feel connected to. Neither should it be understood as conventional (symbolic) procedure towards developing distinct cultural awareness i.e., an attachment acquired throughout the individual's residing in a specific cultural environment in accordance with pertinent discursive mechanisms. Instead we can grasp the way one belongs to a culture in terms of *indexicality*. An index indicates something; it directs the attention of the viewer to the object that it stands for. As a sign, the index "refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that object" (Peirce 1955: 102). To put it in other words, the indexical signifier to a certain degree becomes constrained by its referential meaning. For instance, 'smoke' as signifier has been defined by the referential meaning of its object, 'fire'. Peirce suggests that since the index is kept within the limits of the object referred to, then, they should share some common qualities. However, this relationship is not realized by mere resemblance or analogy. Neither can it be regarded as a result of some sort of intellectual operation as the viewer simply remarks what has already been established as a relationship. Indexicality works through associations by *contiguity* as a specific form of attachment that promotes closeness but also indicates distinctiveness and peculiarity and, hence, a sense of remoteness. Smoke may be conceptually close and contiguous to fire but, at the same time, it is not fire. In addition, it may stand for a steam railway locomotive; direct the attention to a power plant whose emissions are thrown into the atmosphere; or indicate a bee smoker used in beekeeping. In each of the mentioned instances, the index is associated with the object of reference through contiguity while remaining adjacent to other fields of referential meaning that may be

given prominence at a later stage. Once the object is no longer of interest to the viewer, its respective index becomes a decoded and insignificant entity ready to enter into another association by contiguity but never completely losing its potential for re-attachment with the object being removed.

Likewise one's belonging to a particular cultural territory may take many different forms of realization but they all will be affected by the respective culture(s) that the individual belongs to and also those that s/he is exposed to. At the same time, one stays in touch with their culture of residence as long as it supplies them with resources for new identity construction and making meaning in the world. Nonetheless, in a world shaped and transformed by the relentless forces of globalization and virtual inter-connectivity, the resources pertinent to a specific culture seem to have become rather insufficient for accommodating the fast growing and ever shifting need for self-expression. Globalization has problematized the attachment by contiguity not in terms of blurring or erosion but by making it more complex and contingent. The organic and adjacent connection to a culture of dwelling has come to be perceived as one among many other possible connections to other cultural territories. This fact, in turn, has important and direct consequences for the nature of belonging to a culture of residence. The subject remains close and in real connection to his/her cultural environment but at the same time becomes distanciated or remote from it by enacting diverse number of attachments to other adjacent or virtual cultural territories. This state of constant contiguity with diverse and multiple aspects of the surrounding world pluralizes the sources of the self and allows for the emergence and implementation of novel and contingent identification possibilities.

The following excerpt taken from the media clip titled 'REALIZE' illustrates the situation of being contiguous with disparate cultural territories.[14]

> I think that was the first time I really realized that I was an Australian person growing up in a Bulgarian family. Yet, in my community, outside of the Church where I was the Australian or, you know, the Church House, 'cause my father is the Bulgarian priest, I was a Bulgarian in an Australian community, so somehow I was on the…
> *outer* of both.

The interviewee uses the word 'outer' suggesting that she occupies no definite space within any of the mentioned cultural territories. However, it is because of being

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[14] Please see http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=264.

able to maintain multiple and simultaneous cultural attachments that the participant can see herself from the outside as not having a single and essential cultural connection. Being close to several separate cultural milieus, the interviewee nevertheless feels distant and estranged from either of them. She becomes a stranger with no fixed or essential attachment to any cultural segmentarity she may come in contact with. According to Simmel (1971: 143-150), this sense of being simultaneously near by and far-off defines one's becoming a stranger. In other words, being estranged or living in constant remote nearness constitutes the process of becoming a stranger. Theo Angelopoulos (2001: 108) refers to the concept of *xenitis* in order to illustrate the situation or feeling of being a stranger wherever one goes including in their own lands.[15]

Let us look at another example, but this time taken from the personal accounts of two different participants.[16]

> They see you're not from here, the local children know that after all you're not Australian…It's always been like this until now, despite being able to speak almost fluent English, they can see that you're a stranger. (Participant 1)

> I wouldn't say I feel like a stranger after living in Australia for 8 years… and having a good social environment doesn't make me a stranger at all. But whenever I meet a new person the question of *where are you from* always comes up. (Participant 2)

Both participants have been enunciated as subjects within a specific discursive formation. However, they are depicted as strangers (meaning here non-Australians) not on the basis of some individual characteristics but in accordance with a common quality that they may easily share with any other non-Australians, that is their accent, seen here as a marker or index of 'non-Australianness'. In other words, the subjects are defined not as distinct individuals but as a type. In addition, they challenge the authority of the set discursive framework by stating 'I do not feel like a stranger'. This ambiguous position of being both inside and outside a group of others lowers the modality of the text and makes its interpretation uncertain and incomplete. It brings forward the conjunction of *'I may be a stranger'* that suggests a permission of being a

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[15] See also *Eternity and a Day (1998)*.
[16] See clips 'ЗАПОЗНАВАНЕ' ('zapoznavane' that is 'being inroduced to another'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=7334 and 'ЗАЯЖДАНЕ' ('zayazhdane' meaning 'teasing'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=12850.

stranger and indicates an awareness of the other's presence, and, on the other hand, refers to a possibility of becoming a stranger.

The stranger is both inside a territorial assemblage (culture) and at its edge intending to cross over into other assemblages. He "comes today and stays tomorrow" (Simmel 1971: 143) that is he dwells in a particular cultural space as long as its representational resources are capable of accommodating his shifting desires for meaning making. Because of this mobility across cultural heterogeneity, the stranger is unable to develop a stable sense of belonging and is not interested in acquiring any possessions that may later obstruct the endless flow of comings and goings. Possession, whether material or immaterial, restricts mobility and leads towards a dwelling-in-rigidity. It harnesses the process of becoming by creating organic bonds to distinct content of culture or by directing to and requiring compliance with particular expressions of culture. Rather than being a landowner merely exploiting the signifying potential of his immediate discursive environment, the stranger lives through renting and borrowing. There is nothing that could possibly bind him to a place/space of temporal residence or somehow block his desire for moving across. This does not preclude the possibility of establishing connections with aspects of the inhabited cultural territory. Nonetheless, the attachments developed are not based on affiliation or affinity in terms of kinship, origin, language or any other commonality. They are being constituted as alliances that last as long as the stranger needs them. These non-essential associations through contiguity imbue the act of becoming with the logic of not-only-but-also. Becoming a stranger is a process that cuts across diverse cultural terrain, drawing on a pliable multiplicity of possibilities for expedient alliances, and continuously uprooting emerging forms of sedentariness.

Cultural estrangement works through a symbiosis of detachment from one cultural space and a subsequent (re-)attachment to any other cultural segmentarities.[17] An act of detachment entails outward movement from a currently occupied cultural space to a new one. Thus, if detachment indicates the process of leaving a territory, then, re-attachment should be understood as an inward movement whereby one becomes located in an unfamiliar environment. This is the way detachment (or dislocation) is usually being considered in the field of Cultural Studies especially with

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[17] Here the concepts of detachment and (re-)attachment will be developed in close relation to the notion of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Deleuze, Parnet and Boutang 2011).

respect to diasporic individuals (Cohen 1997; Gilroy 1997; Radhakrishnan 2003). In this vein, the diasporic subject is by definition being displaced from their home environment and thrown into a foreign space filled with uncertainty and doubt. Moreover, detachment acquires distinctively negative nuances. It is inscribed with never fading sense of loss and trauma that accompany the diasporic subject throughout their entire life (Papastergiadis 1998: 1-16, 72; Braziel and Mannur 2003: 1-23). Even if this is the case, such an approach towards detachment renders incomprehensible or completely discards the positive and creative connotations of the concept.

Here we will think of the practice of detachment merely as an *opening* towards a multiplicity of possible connections with both physically or virtually contiguous cultural territories. Through detachment, the stranger extracts heterogeneous aspects of reality and brings them into interaction with already extracted ones. Each act of detachment drives the stranger towards unexpected alliances. We will further elaborate on the transformative potential of detachment by referring to the following example taken from the online narrative construct. In a series of fragmented movie clips[18], one of the interviewees, while reviewing the researcher's work, flips over the pages of a daily newspaper in a hazy fashion and, then, starts tearing and folding it into a fine example of origami bird.

A newspaper is a printed publication of news about privileged events tendentiously chosen from a current temporality. We can say, then, that any newspaper has distinctive signifying potential since it constitutes the surrounding world for us and serves as a representation of this world. Thus, newspaper can be considered an indexical sign as long as it points to certain aspect of reality and establishes a connection between that aspect and the reader's mind. This is important as it shows us that the main function of the newspaper is not to inform, but to attract and direct the attention of its readers. Newspaper is meant to keep one's mind focused and occupied with selected particularities while ignoring everything else that falls outside its focus. It is only after the reader gets attracted that does a newspaper provide ready-made and easily assimilable chunks of (mis)information.

At the same time, newspaper as a sign possesses certain symbolic values. It represents particular forms of power and the capacity to frame knowledge

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[18] See clips 'СЪНУВАНЕ' ('sanuvane' meaning 'dreaming'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=1424 and 'ИЗМИСЛЯНЕ' ('izmislyane' meaning 'figuring out'), http://diasporic.tv/#/?snu=3634.

discursively. In other words, as a symbolic sign, newspaper constructs fragments of reality as news in such a way as to nourish the interests of a dominant group (Hartley and Montgomery 1985).

Finally, reading a newspaper (let us say in Bulgarian) may be regarded as a marker of belonging to a common cultural-linguistic territory. Here we are dealing with a meta-sign that fosters a sense of communion and an awareness of sharing a commonality.

Newspaper as a sign exists within the confines of a certain regime of signifiance. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 111-149), a signifying regime is characterized by a constant referral of the sign to other signs whereby the same signifier is endowed with a different signified. In this way, the regime rests upon a process of perpetual reinterpretation i.e., interpreting signs that have already been interpreted. The territory of a signifying regime is segmented in a circular fashion into clusters of signs and, depending on its rigid or supple specifics, the regime may have one or many centers of signifiance. A rigid signifying regime works through concentric segmentarity whereby all clusters tend to overlap or gravitate around a single center of power. In a supple regime each cluster may have its own center of resonance that organizes the signs included in that cluster. The example of the newspaper refers to a supple signifying regime. Newspaper as a sign consecutively enters the three aforementioned distinct segmentarities of signifiance in order to be interpreted as a symbol, index or meta-sign. In other words, it continuously leaps from one signifying circle into another one to become a new sign or should we say the *same* signifier but imparted with *another* signified.

Thus, the sign is being defined by a constant detachment from its immediate signifying environment and through an incessant referral to a new sign; it is constituted as a sign on the basis of its possible connections to other signs, as always becoming, rather than being a concrete representation within a circle of signifiance. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 508-510) describe this traversal of the sign as a relative deterritorialization (detachment) as it takes place within the limits of a certain territorial assemblage. The latter could be better envisaged if compared to a molar organism partitioned by molecular segmentarities of clustered signs or, to put it in other words, an archipelagic federal state comprising of distinct and adjacent centers of local power that regulate the movement of signs across the state. The presence of state apparatus here indicates a more or less loose connection to a common center of

power. In this sense, it is only within a signifying regime that rests upon the practice of reading, being the common resonator within the assemblage, that newspaper can be (re)interpreted in a variety of ways.

Through the act of tearing up the newspaper, we become confronted with a new regime of signs, one that does not proceed by circular expansion but through sequential instances of subjectivity. A newspaper is made of wood fibers and their orientation usually determines the tearing strength of the paper. In our case, the fibers run horizontally in parallel lines and if one tries to tear the newspaper in that direction, the tearing will proceed smoothly and evenly in a straight line without affecting the integrity of the fibers. It will simply separate them individually and, in a sense, decompose the molar unity of the signifying regime into its molecular constituents. Nonetheless, the interviewee chooses to tear up the newspaper vertically cutting through the fibers and destroying their integrity by an uneven and zigzag line of tearing.[19] The sign becomes decoded and completely detached, through an act of absolute deterritorialization, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it. It is freed of any previous relations of signifiance with other signs and starts working on its own account in pursuit of a new regime of signs. Newspaper is no longer *being read* or defined through its referral across a signifying regime of reading practices. Instead it breaks through another territorial assemblage, one that hinges on practices of aesthetic contemplation and within which the re-attached sign becomes an origami bird capable of relating to other signs of creative and artistic recycling.

Cultural estrangement depends on both relative and absolute detachment. The latter may engender abrupt and unexpected conjunctions across the cultural landscape as the detached sign crosses over between heterogeneous territorial assemblages. Although proceeding in a linear fashion, movement through absolute detachment is a multidirectional and contingent process. For instance, the origami bird may be unfolded at any moment and, hence, drawing back into the regime of reading. The sign is never completely estranged and absolutely detached for prolonged periods of time existing outside of a pertinent signifying regime. It simply leaves one regime only in order to determine and enter into another territory of signifiance. These impetuous comings and goings induce a rhizomatic network of interlaced signifying

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[19] Usually it is the other way around – the maximum tearing strength is across the horizontal direction. However, the tabloid used features a horizontal orientation of the fibers, which makes the tearing of the newspaper harder along its perpendicular direction.

territorialities that works through impulse, precipitation and tension. As constituent of this intensive multiplicity, the sign becomes increasingly more susceptible to experimentation and, therefore, difficult for or less capable of sustaining interpretations.[20] In contract to interpretation, experimentation stands on its own as always a-centered and nonsignifying practice outside the bounded space of any regime of signs. It simultaneously sabotages the signifying framework of a regime and gives rise to new and unexpected territories of signifiance.

The emerging trend for more experimentation and less interpretation relies on increments of multidirectional movement through absolute detachment and lies at the very core of becoming-a-stranger. The stranger is neither an interpreter nor a translator; he experiments, designs, and constantly reshapes a culture of his own by appropriating others' signs in order to address contingent and practical needs. In this sense, the stranger resides in a laboratory of cultural experimentation, always sampling, testing and morphing substances in different states of matter but never being able to produce a stable formula of cultural belonging and constantly embracing states of becoming.

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[20] It is in this vein of thoughts that the digital outcome of the project should be considered as an act of experimentation rather than a merely interpretative undertaking striving to reach just another representation.