

E-Poetry, Performance, and Identity: Perspectives from Latinx Canadian Poets

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Abstract

This project studies e-poetic expressions—e-text, hypertext, video and recorded live performances and audio files, and other electronic or expanded forms of poetry—of Latin American writers in Canada. The relation to space, identity and culture interweave with imagined and embodied awareness that is expressed creatively through web presence, word, sound and image. How poetry is coded, encoded and performed visually and across soundscapes is vital for analyzing the meaning production in the works. This initial research phase traces common themes, links and divergences among the works. Case-studies include current works, interviews and a theoretical literature review, to produce a systematic study of responses by authors to what they consider the role of their e-works in society. The project reveals specific ways that these e-poetries innovate, contest and question the notion of local/national identity vis-à-vis global digital connections. In particular, the works negotiate new mixed cultural resonances in the experiences and writings of Latinx artists and question overly homogenous definitions of what is described by the term ‘Latino’ culture in Canada to posit an emergent “fourth space” of cultural expression. (180 words)

Keywords: E-poetry, Digital Arts, Performance, Latinx Identities, Diaspora Studies, Hispanic Cultures

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Introduction

This project studies the e-poetic expressions of Latin American diaspora authors in Canada. Representing what I posit as a “fourth space” that is between interstices or areas of identification, communication and representation, these intermittent states-in-flux harbour an enigmatic sense of what being a Latino in Canada means.

A sociocultural approach resting on embodied hermeneutics allows the project to expand the terms of “third space” or hybrid identity theories (Bhabha, Vygotsky, Bourdieu, and Soja) to examine the state of ‘in-between-ness’ or ‘cultural interstices’ beneath the surface of “Latin-ness” in Canada. A growing sense of identity, beyond hyphens, has begun manifesting in several recent works by Latin American diaspora writers in Canada of several generations. These groups build upon previous networks forged by Hispanic diaspora communities and literary studies of Latino Canadian writing (Cheadle and Pelletier; Hazelton; Torres-Recinos), yet a cohesive cross-Canadian study of the current sense of identification of each to being “Latino,” the differences among these and literary works have not been studied to a significant degree in recent decades. This research is needed to produce a clearer understanding of these voices, particularly those creating digital media poetry, and who are thus at the forefront of literary innovations representing Latinx identity.

The best known proponent of Third Space Theory is Homi Bhabha. He posits two initial sociocultural imaginaries and geopolitical positionings related to identity. These correspond, in Bhabha’s theories of postcolonialism, to the first space of the indigenous culture of origin, and to the second as a colonial space that superimposes itself upon the first. The encounter of the two spaces creates a ‘third space’ of *inbetweenness*, where the persons of the original culture must negotiate what they can bring forth from the first subjugated space, to then interact with the second, the superimposed dominant space of colonial origin. It is in the emergence of the interstices that the overlap and displacement of the domains of each become enmeshed with gains and losses being incurred mainly by the first. As Bhabha suggests:

difference [is] that [space where] the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. ...Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (Bhabha 1994)

“The ‘interstitial perspective,’ as Bhabha calls it [in *The Location of Culture*, 1994] (p. 3), replaces ‘the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation in itself and extrinsic other nations’ with the notion of ‘cultural liminality within the nation’ (1994, p. 148). He elucidated that, in “The liminal figure of the nation—space would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. This is because the subject of cultural discourse—the agency of a people—is split in the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contest of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative” (p. 148).

This project proposes that in the diaspora experience of Latino Canadians there is a fourth space that is also constantly in flux—such as the Bhabha’s third space—but remains it hidden and undefined to some degree (thus is behind, beneath the third space). It could be described as the doubly peripheralized subject, or one that remains in the substrata of marginality; what remains hidden is, thus, of greater difficulty to negotiate and voice. This aspect questions to what extent there have been integrations of Latino identities into the multicultural possibilities in the country. As Mary Maguire indicates:

Canada is frequently portrayed as a multicultural society. This portrait of diversity is a result of centuries of and different waves of immigration patterns. ...[When children ask where they come from, they engage with the history of their families and community. Thus,] ...identities are discursively constructed. I use discursive here to mean particular ways of being, talking and writing about or performing one’s practices that are coupled with particular social settings in which those ways of being, talking, writing and being are recognized as more or less valuable (Maguire & Graves, 2001). Third space then is an open text offering differing and multiple possibilities for selfhood and dialogue with others in particular places. (Maguire, 2005, p. 1427)

For Latino Canadians, however, there is a ‘fourth dimension’ that resides as yet outside the mainstream links with multiculturalism, and harbours a multiplicity of inherent multiverses of multicultural resonances within the Hispanic world as well.

The relation to space, identity and culture interweave in this study with imagined and embodied awareness that is expressed creatively through web presence, word, sound and image. Themes of immigration, nostalgia, belonging and transcultural futurities are communicated in hyper-space encounters that amplify the texts. Previous work I have published (Figueredo 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2020) in this area includes analyses of video-poems by Hispanic women poets such as Melisa Machado (Uruguay), Rocío Cerón (Mexico), Lía Colombino (Paraguay), and Belén Gache (Argentina), the interrelationship of poetry and sound/music, and in spatially rendered works such as art and online installations.

The operational definition of e-poetry in the project is that posited by the Electronic Poetry Center (EPC). This organization, established and headed by Loss Pequeño Glazier and Charles Bernstein at SUNY-Buffalo, defines e-poetry as:

digital, visual media arts, sound, and language-based arts. Its emphasis is on literary practice in an encompassing sense, i.e. the practice of thinking through engagement with the material aspects of media forms, the building of community, and the exchange of ideas across languages, borders, and ideologies. Rather than considering ‘new form’ a qualifying criterion, it seeks to locate innovative artistic practice in its cultural, conceptual, and media milieu. Hence if digital literature is going to point to emergent artistic processes in a New Media age—inasmuch as they inform the digital—e- poetry can exist in any number of formats, including programmable, performance, visual, sound-based, conceptual, book art, hand held, tablet, immersive environments, game-based, and more. (2014-2018)

The specificities of “e-poetry” has been elaborated in Loss Pequeño Glazier’s book *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries* (2002) who proposed that new technology

impacts not only the reception of poetry, but also how authors envision their work and the creative process. He posits the 'digital field' as "a real form of practice and immediately relevant to any informed sense of what we will call 'poetry' in coming years. But one must learn to see through a new lens, one with expanded focal points" (2002, p. vii).

Other terms to take into account of digital poetics include "two complementary categories of electronic poetry" laid out by Kevin Stein: "1. Video Poetry [that includes] Docu-video-poetry, [and] Filmic poetry/cin(e)-Poetry". 2. New Media Poetry [that is:] Fixed-text, computer-based poetry; Alterable-text electronic poetry; [and] collaborative/participatory media poetry" (p. 116). Each is rooted in 'the notion of 'play'' (pp. 115-116) associated with digital poetry in general, and to particular poetic forms we will be considering in greater detail.

In addition, and with closer cultural relation, the definition of e-poetry in this project also takes inspiration from the way the concept is elaborated by Mexican contemporary poet Rocío Cerón. Her preferred term is 'expanded poetry' as she specified in an interview during the Poetry Parnassus in London 2012, and about which she offers workshops (2016). As described on her official website, Cerón was one of the first poets to experiment with sound, performance and video to express the poetic word. Cerón's poems dismantle imperial by juxtaposing visual imagery with post-feminist and post-colonial symbols; she records and performs her poetry by reciting them in her voice with added sound elements that echo and interplay with the text projected visually in video and hypertext formats. The *Mexicanness* of her poems is at the forefront of these e-poems. Let us turn now to see how Latino Canadian poets perform theirs.

Methodology: Close Readings and Interviews of Latinx Poets

Three spoken word authors—Sergio Faluótico (Uruguay), Spin el Poeta (Guatemalan refugee) and Lady Vanessa (Colombia)—have been interviewed and recordings are being studied and mapped in relation to project themes. Faluótico's "Blues del inmigrante" [Immigrant Blues] and Spin El Poeta's Guatemalan rap duet with Indigenous musician called "Tz'ij: Cosmovisión Maya" fuse sounds from their original cultural heritage and generate contemporary dialogues. Lady Vanessa is a spoken word youth artist who grapples with the loss of language while persisting in her attempts to define herself as a *Latina*.

The resulting non-space or questioned space, which I term the fourth space, appears in the e-work to create a new social scape in which to express the voice of the hybrid, taking what one wishes to persist about the culture of origin in a new space of arrival, while healing from the aftermath of negative valences of migratory displacement. While this is constant for all immigrants, throughout history and across the world, in Canada it can achieve multiple resonances within the framework of its own culture, such as within an anglophone or francophone political inheritances (Spin, for example, resides in Quebec), and of Canadian multicultural definitions. This is then, in turn, placed in relation to what a cultural fusion is inherited and meant by in the Latin American historical, cultural and social contexts.

For example, Lady Vanessa laments feeling like a ‘foreigner’ in both Canada and Colombia (2020). However, she expresses her gratitude for existing between worlds that have allowed her to explore her heritage, question her identity, and find an artistic community in both places:

It’s interesting that throughout my career, I’ve found it to be a responsibility to speak about Latinx identities, about gender roles in Latinx identities, even socio-political and the ways in which our community and ‘latinidad’ are known to be very problematic in racist, misogynistic ways. I also like to be hyper-aware of the Western context that I carry when speaking about those things. (2020)

The role of gender is placed in relation to the cultural affiliation, as both bear markers of their own to the creation of her identity. Overarching simplifications of the Latinx identities also do not offer a facile identification. How to capture being “latino/a”, therefore, in this regard?

Néstor Canclini (2004) explains the phenomenon of the hybrid that is the basis of Latin American identity. This plural identity spans various continents of the America’s; it links by language and common colonial experiences. Canclini’s work attempts to provide a theoretical context on interculturality and hybridization to reformulate the question of “latin-ness” or of the “latino” (itself a diasporic denomination, necessitated by the experience of difference in a dominantly non-Romance-language-based linguistic context, and now evaluated from the perspective of the “latino/a”). Canclini asserts that “latinidad” cannot be considered in isolation; rather, he posits that the “Latin American” has always been a hybrid construction, “a confluence of contributions from the Mediterranean countries of Europe, the indigenous American and African migrations. These fusions that constitute what is Latin American are now expanded in their interaction with the Anglo due to the voluminous presence of Latin migrants and cultural products in the United States. Beyond this, what is “latino” interacts and also remodels itself in a dialogue with cultures in Europe and even in Asia” (2004, p. 1). Works by Latin Canadian writers can be seen to deconstruct language assumptions and stereotypical associations of identity.

By designating his work as “Latino” Spin reflects his desire to make this stance evident. By using mainly English, rather than Spanish, for his performances, he reaffirms a specific choice. As Ramón H. Rivera-Servera explains:

This shift to performance and latinidad also avoids the settler-colonialist assumptions behind the privileging of Spanish or Hispanic as the primary unifying feature of Latin American-descent populations by extending the repertoires of cultural practice to Latina/o studies beyond those centered on linguistic genealogies, especially writing, and moving beyond Spanish European heritage and colonial history into an engagement with the plurality of the region and its traveled histories, including African, Asian, and Indigenous routes and communities. (2017, 152)

Spin’s insistence on clarifying his distancing from the Hispanic, and the variations of rap, spoken word, slam, and work with indigenous youth, testify to this main tenet of his work. He also incorporates indigenous languages. According to Rivera-Servera, Latinx expressions such as Spin’s cause a shift, a critical performative feat in and one

itself, also anchored an increasingly comparative and inter-Latina/o focus for Latina/o studies, which, while maintaining the significant legacy and current value of the varying ethno-national specificities within Latina/o culture (Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Dominican, and so on), sought to understand the promises and frictions of constituting an amalgamated ethno-racial category within the national and international spheres. Performance offers an object of study and an analytic for understanding *latinidad*. (152)

The project's main challenge is theoretical: to elaborate and expand the concept of third space. This stems from analyzing Latino-Canadian writings in concert with mapping of cultural exchanges in the country. This is needed to understand fully how these writings reflect and impact the notion of local/national identity in Canada as a 'fourth space.' Close readings reveal cross-themes of perceptions of multicultural, multiethnic and translingual identity constructions.

Results

In relation to space and Hispanic digital poetry, the emergence of a new imaginary of digital forms and communities in contact blend with inherited cultural values. In their study on digital visual art, John Hess and Patricia Zimmermann discuss that: "In digital work, history and the future can morph together, assembling a new imaginary construct that repairs this fracturing of space and time but does not fully restore it to its previous, analog configurations" (p. 182). On the other hand, the imaginaries that can connect across time and space must be rooted in an individual lived and shared experience. Those dimensions—rooted in embodied presence, voice and kinetic qualities—are the other half of the story. As Ken Hillis notes: "the real and embodied places of the world—and their synthesis of meaning, nature, and social relations—are central to grounding self-identity and organizing sociocultural practices in a coherent fashion" (p. 201). The bridging of these aspects is reflected in the artistic practices of the Latinx e-works. In *Faluótico's* and *Spin* there is a direct relation to space, identity and culture. For Lady Vanessa the emphasis is on the effects of displacement evident in linguistic tensions for speaking a "grammatically correct" Spanish (2020).

To illustrate, we take a look at *Faluótico's* "Blues del inmigrante" [Immigrant Blues] and *Spin's* Guatemalan rap duet with Indigenous musician called "Tz'ij: Cosmovisión Maya". Each fuses sounds from their original cultural heritage and makes it contemporary in dialogue with a new geopolitical position. Lady Vanessa's incurrence into performance reflects a shift away from the written toward oral transmissions of poetry. For the purposes of this article we will focus mainly on the first two poets, and subsequent publications will delve into Lady Vanessa's work in greater detail.



Figure 1: Espejo/Reflejo [Mirror/Reflection]
Source: Faluótico (2018), *Poesía Multidimensional*

In Faluótico's poem "Blues del inmigrante" a large eye alludes to the Uruguayan flag through its chromatic metonymy in sunny yellow, celeste and tan, set against a deep sea blue reminiscent of the Atlantic Ocean coastline of that River Plate country. The subject is "able to see at last / that things are the way they are / reflection [or I reflect] in the mirror of the present / reflection in the present of the mirror." The final verses focus on the looking in the mirror and affirming "there I am," while later this sense locatedness evaporates: "and when I realize that / I am no longer there." The disconnect from the body belies the outsider stance of the new immigrant. To deal with the immigrant experience and grappling of being between two spaces, Faluótico recommends embracing the process:

being Uruguayan is not a hindrance or advantage—it is just who I am. But we must also accept that we are also Canadian that we are part of another culture that can benefit from my experience as Uruguayan. That is something that I tackled in my book *ESPEJO/REFLEJO Blues del Inmigrante*. Do not deny who you are by becoming someone else...do not also stay as you were denying you the chance to change and advance, grow. Take the best of both worlds. The process of thesis/antithesis/synthesis works very well as a way of describing the process of becoming. Don't just stay Uruguayan—translate yourself into Canadian (interview, May 2020)

To transcend feeling blurred by betweenness, the individual attempts to rearrange affiliations in a new way. The sense of loss of identity evident in "Blues del inmigrante" is expressed in the eye that sees but does so incorporeally. It witnesses, yet is disconnected from the body, which belies the outsider stance of a new immigrant. The blue of the background anchors and amplifies the allusion to the musical blues of the title that the voice laments but does so creating anew.

The ways that the migratory experience can be expressed through cyberspace and in various types of media, have a direct bearing on these creative productions. As Sara Wiederkehr González affirms in her study on migration, political art and digitalization: “Cyberspace has a direct influence on migration and the formations of communities in diaspora, as well as the direct relation of building and strengthening of the imagined community in a transnational context.” (2017, p. 215). Furthermore, the ways that cultural resonances are translated into digital spaces merges what we have been discussing in a sense of play, embodiment, and connection across geopolitical spaces that transcend national or supranational boundaries in attempts to rearrange these at the will of the individual voices and/or their closest affiliations.

The e-poem is, thus, not stable in its scripted form, but rather a point of departure or springboard for a mobile experience towards meaning. For example, Faluótico’s poem “Es un círculo el tiempo” [Time is a circle], presents a page/screen cast as a tornado of verses in four versions, whereby variations of the same words are rearranged in different order and in variously hued fonts.

| Es un círculo el tiempo | Es el tiempo un círculo.... | es un tiempo el círculo... | es el círculo un tiempo... |
|---|---|--|---|
| viento que arrastra momentos mezcla palabras y pensamientos arma memorias, viejas y nuevas arrasa recuerdos borra felicidades y tristezas trae otras vivencias todas diferentes pero iguales verdades Nada es cierto y no es mentira seguimos viviendo seguimos soñando seguimos aferrados a este momento para olvidarlo y recordarlo como no era como no fué pero en realidad ya se fué ya fué fue como era (¡tal cual!) | viento que arrastra pensamientos mezcla palabras y momentos arrasa memorias, viejas y nuevas arma recuerdos borra felicidades y vivencias trae otras tristezas todas verdades pero diferentes, iguales Nada es mentira y no es cierto aferrados seguimos seguimos soñando soñando a viviendo este momento para olvidarlo como no fué y recordarlo como no era en realidad pero ya se fué como era fue ya fué (¡tal cual!) | viento palabras y momentos mezcla que arrastra pensamientos arma recuerdos arrasa felicidades memorias y tristezas borra nuevas vivencias y trae otras viejas todas iguales verdades pero diferentes, Nada es mentira y aferrados seguimos seguimos no es cierto seguimos soñando para olvidarlo como no fué y a recordarlo como no era en realidad viviendo este momento ya se fue pero como era fué (¡ya fué!) | mezcla pensamientos que arrastra memorias, arma viento palabras y momentos borra recuerdos y trae nuevas tristezas arrasa felicidades y otras vivencias viejas todas diferentes y no es mentira pero Nada es cierto viviendo verdades seguimos iguales aferrados seguimos soñando este momento seguimos para olvidarlo a como no era recordarlo y como no fue ya fué pero ya fué como era en realidad se fué (¡tal cabeza!) |
| lo tengo grabado en mi cabeza fuego que incendia mi memoria esa que el viento sin pena ni gloria comienza a borrar pieza a pieza | lo tengo que incendia mi memoria fuego grabado en mi cabeza esa que el viento pieza a pieza comienza a borrar sin pena ni gloria | lo tengo pieza a pieza viento grabado en mi memoria fuego que ni incendia mi cabeza gloria esa que el comienza a borrar sin pena | pieza que incendia lo que ni en mi tengo el viento cual fuego grabado pieza a borrar sin memoria a mi pena esa gloria comienza un círculo... es el tiempo |

Figure 2: En un círculo el tiempo [Time is a Circle]
Source: Faluótico (2019), *Poesía multidimensional*

The title of each of the four iterations shifts the components slightly: i. “Es un círculo el tiempo” [Time is a circle]; ii. “Es el tiempo un círculo [which is the same translated into English though in Spanish a different syntax from the first is possible]; iii. “es un tiempo el círculo” [the circle is a time]; and iv. “Es el círculo un tiempo” [different syntax in Spanish, but with the same meaning in English as iii.] These iterations also make evident the challenges of translation and transposing word play from one language to another. By effect, this also reflects what can be ‘lost in translation’ to one’s identity when one cannot express the same nuances in a newly acquired second language.

Another example is found in a different way in Faluótico’s poem “Thoughts, Birds and Woes.” Here we see two citrus tones of deep mustard yellow words interwoven with others in a burnt orange tinge that depict words which seem to ‘fly’ across the page.

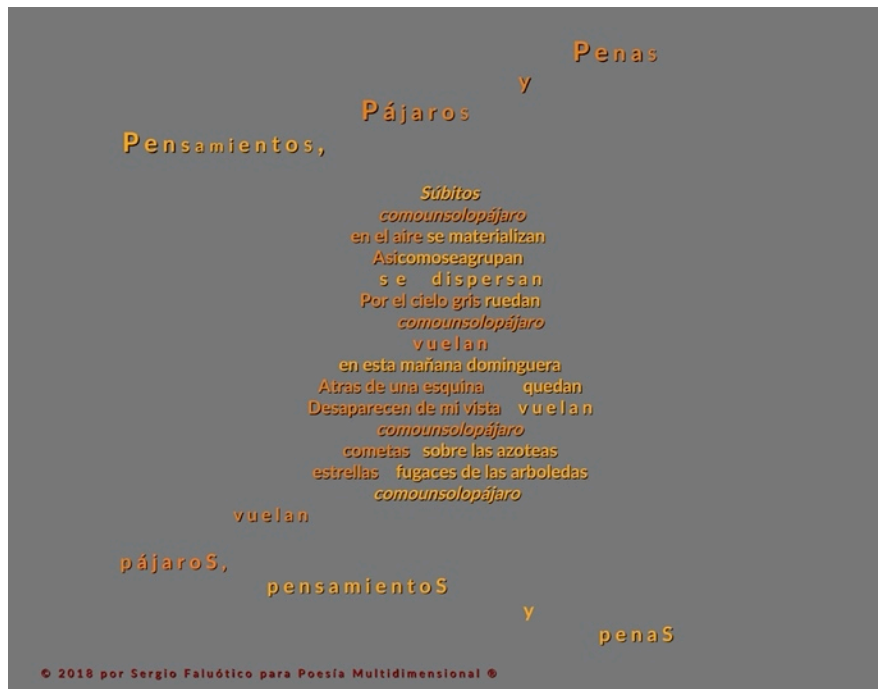


Figure 3: Pensamientos, pájaros y penas [Birds and Woes]
Source: Faluótico (2019), *Poesía multidimensional*

The variations in font sizes create the illusion of distance and proximity, much the same as a painter would create a sense of perspective using variations in hue and shapes. The title itself is possible to read in two ways, placing the word “woes” first, and reading backwards from “birds” to “thoughts”, or vice versa. And it is interesting to note that the final verse, placed moderately in linear reading sequence, at the end of the poem, rearranges these same three words: “birds, thoughts and woes” (vv. 17-19). They appear in descending order towards the right side of the page, whereas the first of the title seem to ‘fly’ up to the right, depending on how one perceives the text. These outlying verses form two wings at the top and bottom on the page. Mirroring this is the dual tonality of the text, in various spacings and with some larger sized font than the rest. The content refers to birds that appear and disappear in sight of the poetic voice, and tells of a collective group of birds that at once merge into one large bird entity, thus, one word-object: “comounsolopájaro” [asonebird], the combination of words becoming a single unit. When they disperse [“se dispersan”] in verse five, the font expands in concert with the meaning, to visually reinforce the effect.

There is a rhythmic quality to the displacement of words on the page/screen here, too. This ties in with Faluótico’s work as a musician. Hence the rapprochement between literature and other forms belonging to popular or oral literature (De Campos p. 281), of “hybrid genres” that De Campos defines as “autobiographies, letters, reports, brochures” (p. 281) and “the products from popular culture that exist on the periphery of literature, journalism, vaudeville, gypsy song and police history” (p. 281), explain such e-poetic innovations also at work today as a voice of hybridity in Latin American identity. Beyond neologisms such as Faluótico’s (“asonebird”), the sound elements express a new space of identity that is interactive, placed among repeating texts, that fuse times before/after/now, and thereby create a ‘fourth’ dimension that is hidden until spoken, performed and meditated upon through synaesthesia.

The percussive elements inform the apparently nonsensical drive that the poet lets erupt on the page. The performance of reciting a poem liberates the logical sense of the meaning to open to greater psychological depth, as does the creative design of poem as graphic art. This has evolved in the 21st century with the synthesis of these attributes on the lit screen. Faluótico comments on this in his interview with us:

I call my work Multidimensional Poetry and the slogan I use is: Poetry to read, see and hear. Colour is essential to it. Colours allow me to, first, create an emotional state where they can experience the poem with another disposition. They also invite the reader to play with the many possible readings highlighted by the colours and in that way find poems hidden inside the overall poem. That can be done in a digital medium that will contemplate not only those publishing possibilities but also that the poem can be easily shared and easily retrieved. This also allows me to add music to them if, for example, I put together a video, let's say the *POSTCARDS FROM WARD'S ISLAND* series then I am truly able of creating a poetry that someone can read, hear, or just be or just allow the music to take them to another level. Poetry can also be expressed without words through rhythms and sounds that can create an aural picture and generate a mood that allows the listener to recreate a moment that those sounds put together. So music is also essential to what I do. The digital medium allows to mix all those elements into one poem. (May 2020)

Faluótico makes clear the creative process in letting language play lead the meaning and to be amplified with sound. This allows for freedom at the textual level of creation, but also signifies a release of 'outer' strictures that would censure or limit the expression of subjectivity in a mother tongue or a newly acquired language. In the work of a poem that amplifies its referential system to the play on sounds and printed letters and/or words, these create new spaces of meaning.

Memory plays a key role in pluralizing the sense of self, and this must be reconciled with the location of the subject vis-à-vis the body. If poetry is a metalanguage in constant movement—against the former stasis and towards a new, ever-expanding sense production—then for Faluótico and Spin it is created by juxtaposing words, sounds and their associations whereby the past and present collide.

The reassessment of the status of "Immigrant Indigenous Friendships" in the collective video poem, which Spin organized with his organization One Mic Educators, tackles the traditional and historical injustices and the resulting traumas. The juxtaposition of various cultures are poignant in the collective poetry recitations that speak of family, massacres, tribal bloodshed, aggressions against equity, and the "constant pressure to explain the skin I'm in,... constant battles to explain the skin I'm in" (2018). The 'fear of the truth' and the prevalence of lies that the poetic voices in the video poem associate with the 'Canadian' is put in the focus that make the uncomfortable truth hard to ignore. Indigenous historicities intersect to remind listeners there is much work to be done to undo the effects of traumas caused by the past collective transgressions. Far from being simply a forum to air grievances, however, the artform is proposed as a way through to another solution: hearing, understanding and creating a different future, one that inhabits a fuller, filter-free zone of truth-telling, mutual respect and authenticity.

The terms of performance in designating Spin's work as "Latina/o" reflects his desire to make evident this stance. Instead, his usage of English language mainly for his video poems, spoken word performances, and other recordings, and the careful attention to terminology of naming reflect what Ramón H. Rivera-Servera has termed in his research on Latin American descent populations:

This shift to performance and *latinidad* also avoids the settler-colonialist assumptions behind the privileging of Spanish or Hispanic as the primary unifying feature of Latin American-descent populations by extending the repertoires of cultural practice to Latina/o studies beyond those centered on linguistic genealogies, especially writing, and moving beyond Spanish European heritage and colonial history into an engagement with the plurality of the region and its traveled histories, including African, Asian, and Indigenous routes and communities. (2017, p. 152)

Spin's insistence on clarifying his distancing from the Hispanic, and the variations of rap, spoken word, slam, and work with indigenous youth, testify to this main tenet of his work and vision. As Rivera-Servera writes when describing Latinx expressions such as Spin's: "this shift, a critical performative feat in and of itself, also anchored an increasingly comparative and inter-Latina/o focus for Latina/o studies, which, while maintaining the significant legacy and current value of the varying ethno-national specificities within Latina/o culture (Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Dominican, [Uruguayan, Chilean, Argentinian, Ecuadorian,] and so on), sought to understand the promises and frictions of constituting an amalgamated ethno-racial category within the national and international spheres. Performance offers an object of study and an analytic for understanding *latinidad*" (p. 152).



Figure 4: One Mic Educators Logo

Source: Spin El Poeta (2020)

In Spin's spoken word poetry and video art, words lean into the body's conscious awareness physicality; the subject takes a self-aware stance before what it aims to decipher in relation to a political position as communicative agency. The ambiguous social protest against a colonial past, links and channels a personal affiliation with lost time and disconnection to a cultural history that figures first as a working through the loss of the father ("Spin Youth Transitions" 2012), in search of connection to truth and self-affirmation ("6ix in the 6ix" 2019), and second, to an affirmation of the strength of the mother (see for example his spoken work performance of "My Mama Raised Me Proper") and a recuperation of power against a repressive system of discrimination from external forces.

The videos of slam events, musical poems, and community projects exhibited on Spin El Poeta's company website One Mic Educators, house a unified collage of art as

activism. There is a therapeutic dimension that figures in Spin's approach, particularly in support for those who feel disadvantaged or underrepresented in Canadian society. The cathartic and restorative qualities to the act of spoken word poetry has been studied by researchers such as Alvarez and Mearns (2014) who identify psychological benefits that reassure the subject by having a forum of communication, internal drive and for achieving balance in everyday life. In Faluótico's voice the fusion of the past and present serve as a catalyst to remake the past as sound symbols in the present, pointing to a disintegration of a normative stance before language and the binary codes of then and now. His drumming performances merge with his recitation and graphic calligram poems to create multilayered works that are in continual transformation. The change is not an unstable flux, but rather a sense of sedimentation of layers of new insights that flow one from another.

Conclusions

These e-poetries reflect and impact the conception of literature and the notion of local/national identity vis-à-vis global digital media. Memory, nostalgia, contestation of stable definitions of "Canadian" —these connections or discontinuities are placed in high relief. Presence and the voice of the poet are inherent to both poets' creative articulations. Social media and internet platforms allow these to reach audiences across spaces and leave the confines of the book or of print. Yet the word's plural symbolism must return to the body's grounded state. Through its extensions, via cyberspaces and multiplied resonances in videos viewed by others and its multifold performative spaces online and recorded live, these e-poetries can extend their reach. Whether it can resist this and remain in a dynamic flow, is the caveat we glimpse in the poetic perspectives observed. Their resistance finds support in performance, online texts and video formats infused with the lightning scope of the internet and its extensions.

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